

**Welcome to the Coven:
Organising Feminist Activism in the Connective Era**

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Abstract

The highly publicised protest wave of the early 2010s triggered a reconceptualization of the organisational practices and structures of contemporary activism. Prior research was focused on analysing the new sociality of the internet, primarily organisational websites and forums, and how this was affecting, influencing, and extending collective action (Bimber et al., 2005; Chadwick, 2007; Earl, 2010). The traditional model of collective action was found to no longer account for the full range of actions that were occurring in digitised spaces. In response to this shift, Bennett and Segerberg (2012, 2013) proposed the logic of connective action to account for new models of protest organising with social and digital technologies. However, their large-scale networked analysis, while insightful, fails to capture the finer-grained relationships between activists particularly within less transparent networks. In addition, since the development of their theory, there has been an explosion of feminist protests epitomised by the recent #MeToo movement. The scale, reach, and seeming permanence of these feminist actions demands further examination. Thus, this thesis provides a theoretical account of the organisational structures and practices occurring behind the scenes of contemporary feminist actions. Drawing on a social media ethnographic approach, this thesis documents the post-digital and hybrid feminist social movement repertoire that is resulting in a globalisation of feminist protests. The research is based on in-depth interviews with feminist activists and focuses on three case studies of feminist protests: the original Hollaback! campaign hosted on a photoblog, the series of #TakeDownJulienBlanc post-digital protests, and the solidarity feminist hashtag #EndViolenceAgainstWomen. The thesis also incorporates a discussion of the #MeToo movement due to its significance in the contemporary political climate. Its key contributions are challenging the myth of structurelessness within contemporary protests; reaffirming the hybridity of organisational practices; and conceptualising the franchising of feminist activism. Overall, the thesis identifies the profoundly feminist issues that impact contemporary organisational structures and practices, resulting in an expansion and partial contestation of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) connective action typology.

Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature:

Date: 29-01-2019

Sections of this thesis have been published elsewhere. Early theoretical work and findings from the research were published as ‘Connected Feminists: Foregrounding the interpersonal in connective action,’ published by the *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53, no. 1. Further, findings from Chapter Six have been used in the book chapter ‘Connective Crowds: The organisational structure of a feminist crowd in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc campaign’ in *From sit-ins to #revolutions*, edited by Olivia Guntarik and Vicki Grieves, which is currently in print.

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Chapter 1: **Introduction**

In the past decade, there has been an eruption of feminist protests around the world that has gained widespread media attention and has been enabled by the development and penetration of social and digital technologies (Khoja-Moolji, 2015; Mendes, 2015; Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2019; Thrift, 2014). More broadly, the proliferation of social media platforms as sites for activism and the role of digital technology in large-scale protests such as the Occupy movement and the Arab Spring have prompted scholars to rethink the organisational structures of contemporary activism (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl, 2005; Castells, 2007; Chadwick, 2007; Flanagin, Stohl & Bimber, 2006; Karpf, 2016; Morozov, 2009). Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action has emerged as influential in understanding new organisational models of activism with digital platforms yet it has not been used to assess examples of feminist actions. Moreover, there is a growing body of scholarly work examining contemporary feminist protests however much of this research focuses on the role of social and digital technology and the effects and meaning of such actions. Understanding contemporary organisational structures and practices within the feminist movement is valuable for a few reasons. First, it will allow for more conscious and deliberate organisational practices by activists within the feminist movement and allow them to overcome a tendency to operate in informal ways (Freeman, 1972). Second, it will expand upon the current body of literature that examines organisational structures but focuses on other social movements. By examining feminist case studies this research highlights the profoundly feminist issues that impact organisational practices. And third, it will contribute to an understanding of contemporary forms of feminist activism, including how they are developed, sustained and reactivated over time and across the globe.

To better understand the organisational structures of contemporary feminist campaigns, this thesis will analyse three case studies: the original Hollaback! campaign that was hosted on a photoblog and that transformed into an international organisation; the post-digital series of protests #TakeDownJulienBlanc; and the solidarity hashtag campaign #EndViolenceAgainstWomen. Along with the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen analysis, this thesis incorporates a discussion of the international #MeToo movement to extend the analysis into feminist hashtag campaigns. The enormity and effects of the #MeToo

movement on the current political climate make it an important example to include within an analysis of contemporary feminist protests. The analysis draws on Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) three-part connective action typology to assess the organisational models of feminist protests and draws on several other key theories to advance the analysis of the feminist case studies. These key theories are Andrew Chadwick's (2007) organisational hybridity, Jo Freeman's (1972) problematisation of structurelessness, and Jeffrey Bradach's (1998) conception of franchise organisations. The study adopts a digital ethnographic approach using case studies and interviews that combine to establish a useful methodology for studying contemporary feminist activism.

This introductory chapter will first provide a contextualisation of each of the case studies within the most recent history of feminist protests online. This is used to explain the significance of researching each of these examples of feminist protests and the importance of examining feminist activism specifically. The chapter also explores the research problem, introduces the thesis's theoretical framework, presents the two central research questions, and explains the research design and thesis structure.

1.1 Contextualising Contemporary Feminist Protests

One of the earliest digital feminist actions was triggered by an event in 2005, in which a woman in New York City used her mobile phone to take a digital photograph of a man who was masturbating in front of her on the subway. The woman then shared her story and the photograph online. The post was consequently shared across digital platforms, generating more and more attention until it captured the interest of mainstream media and ultimately led to the man's arrest. These events inspired the development of the blog, Hollaback!, on which individuals from around the world submitted their own stories of street harassment and had a pin generated on a digital map, visualising the widespread epidemic of street harassment. Hollaback! became one of the earliest forms of feminist activism to deploy a range of innovative online and offline strategies to protest street harassment and resulted in a global movement. Its global visibility and established presence now positions it as a first point of contact into the feminist movement for many young activists. The early and innovative use of digital technologies and big data analytics for the Hollaback! campaign and its continuation over a decade later is one of the reasons why it has been chosen as a case study for this thesis and will be the thesis' first substantive case study. In addition, the extensive training practices that have been

developed by Hollaback! have extended its influence in the education, recruitment and socialisation of new feminist activists. In combination, this makes it a significant case study for analysing the organisational structures and practices prevalent within contemporary feminist actions.

In 2011, social media was used to facilitate and coordinate a physical mass mobilisation: Slutwalk (Mendes, 2015). Beginning in Toronto, Canada, Slutwalk was a march in response to the 'slut shaming' and victim blaming that a sexual assault survivor experienced due to statements made by a Toronto police officer. The police officer questioned what the victim was wearing and suggested that women should avoid 'dressing like sluts' to avoid being sexually assaulted. Not only did social and digital technologies enable the coordination of the original march, but they enabled the global spread of the Slutwalk narrative, which resulted in imitation marches across the world. Digital technologies did not change the fundamental structure of the movement, as it was a mass mobilisation rooted in a traditional activist format, and it was compared to the 'take back the night' or 'reclaim the night' marches that were popular during the 1970s (Mendes, 2015). However, Slutwalk set a precedent for using social media for feminist organisation and demonstrated the potential widespread transmission and scalability that digital platforms offered.

Later in 2011, a number of protests that were not feminist in orientation garnered significant attention for their use of social and digital technologies, demonstrating innovative uses of these technologies, which were adopted in subsequent protests as well. The anti-austerity movement in Spain resulted in the 15-M and Spanish Indignados movements. The foregrounded role of digital platforms in these actions, along with the attention garnered by the Arab Spring actions, partially inspired the development of the Occupy movement. The use of hashtags and digital technologies was central to all these movements and led to large-scale global actions that relied on digital tools to coordinate, organise and transmit the key messages of the actions and to connect activists within a broader community (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Boler & Nitsou, 2014; Newsrom & Lengel, 2012; Radsch & Khamis, 2013). These technologies disrupted traditional social movement theories and, in the wake of these actions, triggered a range of other protests (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

In 2013, the #BlackLivesMatter movement was instigated by three African American women who were inspired by the civil rights movement and employed digital strategies to generate civic discourse addressing the issue of police brutality against African Americans (Williams, 2015). #BlackLivesMatter developed in reaction to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting of African American teen, Trayvon Martin, and the movement incorporated a range of online and offline activist tactics, including physical mobilisations. Incorporating the activist logic demonstrated by #BlackLivesMatter, the hashtag #YesAllWomen emerged in 2014 after the shootings in Isla Vista by Elliot Rodger, who was motivated by deeply rooted misogynistic beliefs. In the wake of the shootings, some Twitter users responded to the attack by stating that ‘not all men’ were violent and misogynistic (Thrift, 2014). In response to this argument, the #YesAllWomen hashtag was used over a million times to share women’s experiences around the world and to highlight that, while not all men may perpetrate sexist and gender violence, all women must live with the threat of such gendered violence (Thrift, 2014). This laid the foundations for an affective public (Papacharissi, 2015) that was receptive toward personalised expressions of solidarity and that could be reactivated in future feminist hashtag protests.

The activist logic developed by #BlackLivesMatter also shaped another feminist protest that moved beyond a hashtag campaign, and which will be the thesis’ second case study. In 2014, after her experience with the #BlackLivesMatter movement, Jennifer Li instigated the hashtag #TakeDownJulienBlanc. The hashtag protested the violent and misogynistic teachings of Julien Blanc, a self-proclaimed ‘pickup artist’ from Real Social Dynamic, a group that hosted seminars teaching men how to aggressively sleep with women. The hashtag triggered a series of international protests that incorporated a creative range of activist tactics and strategies, including conventional offline and innovative digital-based techniques. A diverse protest repertoire was employed to raise awareness of the Real Social Dynamic group and to protest at venues hosting their seminars. The informal and loosely connected networks that developed during the first wave of protests in 2014 were reactivated in 2016 in response to another attempt by Real Social Dynamic pickup artists to host the seminars. #TakeDownJulienBlanc was chosen as a case study due to its international success, the absence of an officially established advocacy group, and the demonstrated reactivation and reconfiguration of the activist network for future actions. The reactivation of the protest network during the second wave

in 2016 indicates the significance and influence of the organisational structures and practices behind the protest. Moreover, the protest's global spread, resulting in multiple countries banning or cancelling Julien Blanc's visa, indicates effective organisational practices that can be adopted in future protests. Lastly, several scholars have argued there has been a shift away from formal group affiliation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) and the #TakeDownJulienBlanc case study provides an opportunity to examine and interrogate a successful campaign driven by informal networks rather than established advocacy groups.

In addition to the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests, there have been numerous feminist hashtag campaigns that have developed to address gendered sexual violence, propelling the term 'rape culture' into the public domain. Rape culture refers to a society in which the act of rape has become normalised and is supported structurally by the institutionalisation of patriarchal values, as well as the toxic and rigid notions of masculinity and femininity that frame men as aggressive and macho, compared to women who are considered weak, vulnerable and nurturing (Roze & Koss, 2001). Hashtags such as #BeenRapedNeverReported, #IllRideWithYou, #NotOkay and #FreeTheNipple proliferated across the online sphere and contributed to an international feminist discourse surrounding rape culture, building awareness of women's experiences and, ultimately, elevating women's voices (Mendes, Ringrose and Keller, 2018).

On a smaller and more local scale based in Australia, the hashtag campaign #EndViolenceAgainstWomen disrupted Twitter in 2015 with a display of solidarity for women in the media and protesting the gendered online abuse of women. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign is the last case study examined in this thesis. The campaign contributed to a growing 'call out' culture in which feminist activists name and shame the perpetrators who send them online gendered abuse; the culture attempts to provide resistance to an epidemic of gendered violence that lacks institutional responses. Call out culture achieved new heights in 2017, with the international eruption surrounding the #MeToo movement (Mendes et al., 2018). The #MeToo movement was triggered by American actress Alyssa Milano after she shared a tweet expressing solidarity. The phrase 'me too' can be traced back to 2006 when African-American activist Tarana Burke used the phrase to raise awareness of the pervasiveness of sexual violence against women. Milano's tweet stating 'me too' transitioned Burke's act of solidarity from the private

domain to the public online sphere and prompted a chorus of testimonials that recounted the stories of millions of people worldwide who had experienced sexual assault; this ultimately resulted in public accusations of alleged high-profile perpetrators of sexual assault.

The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign and the #MeToo movement are used as case studies to examine the organisational structure of feminist solidarity and online shaming campaigns. These types of feminist campaigns have become increasingly prevalent and are a substantial aspect of the contemporary feminist movement rendering them important in an analysis of feminist actions. However, as the #MeToo movement only became viral in late 2017 and this thesis' primary source of data is from interviews, it was too late to be used as a central case study as data collection was not possible within the timeframe of this research. Consequently, only a secondary discussion of the movement is provided and the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign is used as the primary case study. Combined, these examples enable an analysis of the organisational practices of hashtag campaigns and the distinctly gendered issues that impact contemporary feminist organising at both a local and international level.

As demonstrated in this brief outline contextualising the case studies, this is a rapidly evolving field of research and the full affects and ramifications of some of these contemporary actions such as #MeToo are still being realised. However, it is the scale and seemingly permanence of these contemporary feminist actions that prompts an analysis of the organisational structures and practices behind different types of contemporary feminist activism.

1.2 Research Questions and Research Design

At the beginning of this research project, connective action and digital feminist activism were emerging concepts. Previous research was focused on analysing the new sociality of the internet, which comprised primarily organisational websites and forums, and how this was affecting, influencing and extending collective action (Bimber et al., 2005; Chadwick, 2007; Earl, Kimport, Prieto, Rush & Reynoso, 2010). Political scientists alluded to the networking potentialities and power complications at the rise of social media (Bimber et al., 2005; Castells, 2007; Chadwick, 2007; Flanagin et al., 2006; Karpf, 2010; Morozov, 2009), while feminist researchers were concurrently identifying the ways

in which women and girls were using the early internet and blogosphere for political purposes (Daniels, 2009; Flanagan & Booth, 2002; Harris, 2008; Keller, 2012; Puente, 2011; Puente & Jimenez, 2011). However, the development and widespread attention of the Occupy movement from 2011 triggered an explosion of new scholarship analysing activism in the era of social media (Bimber, Flanagan & Stohl, 2012; Boler & Nitsou, 2014; Bridwell, 2013; Ganesh & Stohl, 2013; Harlow & Guo, 2014). This was further reinforced by other actions in which social media played a major role, such as the Arab Spring and the Spanish Indignados (Bruns, Highfield & Burgess, 2013; Della Ratta & Valeriani, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2017; Mico & Casero-Ripolies, 2014; Newsrom & Lengel, 2012; Radsch & Khamis, 2013).

In response to these large-scale actions, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) developed their three-part connective action typology to explain some of the changing organisational dynamics observed in contemporary actions with digital platforms. The three categories of their typology consist of the more traditional organisationally brokered collective action, a new crowd-enabled connective action, and a hybrid between these two models classified as organisationally enabled connective action. Since this theory's conceptualisation, several studies have partially adopted or critiqued it in regards to other contemporary issues and actions (Caraway, 2015; Lim, 2013; Halupka, 2018; Papacharissi, 2015; Poell, Abdulla, Rieder, Woltering, & Zack, 2016; Vromen, Xenos & Loader, 2015; Wright, 2015). Several scholars have used connective action as a basis from which their own examinations into contemporary actions have developed. Connective action has been used as a basis for exploring youth activism (Vromen et al., 2015), legitimising clicktivism (Halupka, 2018), analysing digital networks and activist publics (Papacharissi, 2015), and examining social media vanguards present within digital actions (Gerbaudo, 2017). Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) book, *The Logic of Connective Action*, has to date been cited 924 times, according to Google Scholar, emphasising the impact and influence of their theory within the field of contentious politics. Yet the usefulness of the logic of connective action in regards to understanding and assessing contemporary feminist actions has not been considered. This thesis seeks to understand how useful Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action is for assessing and analysing contemporary feminist activism.

There have been rapid changes in the social landscape since the publication of *The Logic of Connective Action* (2013). In recent years, there have been some high-profile, large-scale international feminist protests (#YesAllWomen, #MeToo) that have garnered corporate media attention and that have triggered significant civic debate, leading to a proliferation of digital feminist activism scholarship (Fotopoulou, 2016, 2017; Gleeson, 2016; Khoja-Moolji, 2015; Mendes, 2015; Mendes et al., 2019; Meyer, 2014; Thrift, 2014; Williams, 2015). These protests emphasise just how rapidly the spaces in which feminist activists operate are changing, as well as the evolving norms and practices that are being adopted. This quickly evolving space and social movement repertoire prompts the need to reconsider the organisational practices behind such large-scale contemporary movements.

In addition, the popular reconceptualisations of activist practices have focused on other types of social movements, such as the economic and environmental actions that Bennett and Segerberg (2013) addressed in the development of their connective action logic. However, there are several issues that specifically affect the practices of feminist activists. First, feminist activists have endured an increase in hostility and abuse, or e-bile (Citron, 2014; Jane, 2014a), for operating publicly. This can result in a change of practice; feminist activists often operate privately and covertly, to help ensure their safety. Second, internal debates regarding an avoidance of formalised structure, hierarchy and official leadership have been ongoing issues for the feminist movement for decades (Freeman, 1972) and have led to constant negotiations and changes within feminist groups. When combined, these factors are indicative of the rapidly transforming practices of feminist activists, which are shaped and influenced by specifically feminist and gendered issues present within the contemporary environment. In order to further understand these changing organisational practices, this thesis is centred around two primary research questions:

- 1) What are the organisational structures and practices of contemporary feminist actions?
- 2) How useful is Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action for assessing the organisational practices in the feminist movement?

To address these questions, an ethnographic approach combining case studies, interviews, content analysis, and thematic analysis is used. As previously outlined, three primary case

studies are examined: Hollaback!, #TakeDownJulienBlanc, #EndViolenceAgainstWomen, as well as a discussion of the #MeToo movement. Interviews with 24 activist organisers across the three primary case studies were conducted to provide behind the scenes knowledge of the organisational structures and practices of each case study. Content and thematic analysis were also used at two stages: first, to help analyse comments left on petitions related to the #TakeDownJulienBlanc campaign, and second, to analyse the tweets from the #MeToo movement. The research into #MeToo also takes advantage of big data analytics created by Twitter that visualise the protest network.

1.3 Thesis Argument and Original Contributions

Overall, the thesis provides a theoretical account of the organisational structures and practices occurring behind the scenes of contemporary feminist actions. The research is based on rich, in-depth recollections of feminist activists' experiences engaging with and organising feminist protests. It reflects on the lateral violence and external online abuse each of the activists have experienced and how they continue to overcome these issues to drive a powerful feminist movement that is penetrating civic discourse across the globe. Drawing on a social media ethnographic approach, this thesis documents the post-digital and hybrid feminist social movement repertoire that is resulting in a globalisation of feminist protests. The findings demonstrate the (in)visible labour occurring within contemporary feminist activism and highlights the significant role of covert organising and networked backchannels that facilitate the coordination of activity. The thesis argues for a stronger intersectional consideration by activists and scholars to recognise how activist labour is affected by the policies and practices of formal and informal organisational structures. It argues for a hybrid methodological approach to examining contemporary actions that captures the invisible and covert activities occurring via backchannel networks. Further, the analysis foregrounds the multiplicity in organisational tactics across contemporary actions and how the structure of a campaign can evolve over time. Notably the structural evolution of some of the campaigns which began with an intersectional critique, led to a whitewashing of the campaign. Overall, this thesis contends that new organisational logics are not necessarily being created in the contemporary digital terrain; rather, digital technologies are enabling a greater potential to draw on multiple logics.

This thesis advances both political organisation and feminist research by making one primary contribution: an up-to-date theoretical account of contemporary feminist activist organisation. This is achieved through five key components. First, it analyses the feminist movement that was missing from Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) research, which resulted in the logic of connective action. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) present a typology of contemporary activism that distinguishes between (1) collective action, (2) organisationally enabled connective action and (3) crowd-enabled connective action. They employ big data and network analysis to generate illustrations of large-scale network patterns. In combination, their typology provides new ways of comprehending social movements and activist structures in the digitised landscape. While their research is undeniably valuable, this thesis argues that their focus on the organisational power of digital platforms and their reliance on publicly available large-scale network data makes it difficult for their theory to assess less transparent feminist actions.

This thesis extends Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) research by adopting a social media ethnographic approach (Postill & Pink, 2012) that will enable the study of less visible organisational structures and practices and by focusing on case studies of contemporary feminist actions. Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 76) do themselves note the need for a 'finer-grained ethnographic' approach to examine the relationships between activists; this thesis addresses this need by providing a more granular approach to understanding the organisational dynamics occurring behind the scenes of feminist protests. A methodology like this is needed to effectively account for the boundary crossing between the private and public domains that Bimber et al. (2005) have identified as characteristic of contemporary activism. The ethnographic approach provided within this thesis offers insight into the relationships that transpire within the private sphere—which is something that a network science approach is unable to fully capture. Further, this type of fine-grained ethnography is intended to complement rather than replace quantitative methods.

In Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) logic of connective action, they use arrows to symbolise hybrid forms of organisation but the extent and nature of this hybridity is not fully explored. The second contribution this research produces is a reaffirmation of Chadwick's (2007) theory of organisational hybridity. Informed by Berry and Dieter's (2015) notion of 'post-digital,' in which digital technologies are no longer seen as 'disruptive' and have become ubiquitous in the contemporary landscape, this research

documents the 'post-digital' activist repertoire employed by feminist activists and supports Chadwick's (2007) contention that protest networks incorporate hybrid organisational configurations and practices.

This research also makes a third contribution: a conceptualisation of franchised activism. Drawing on Bradach's (1998) account of franchise organisations, the research identifies how the feminist advocacy group Hollaback! adopted a model of a franchise organisation in order to provide support for the development and maintenance of the Hollaback! campaign around the world. By applying Bradach's (1998) marketing theory, this research provides a novel theoretical pathway for advancing analyses into the organising practices of advocacy and social movement groups. Using the concept of franchise organisations also provides a means of understanding some of the hybrid configurations that are supported within the Hollaback! campaign. The Hollaback! case study highlights how the campaign is adapted locally but also sustained globally, and a franchise model theoretically captures the multiple structures that are simultaneously at play that enable the spread and support of the Hollaback! campaign.

The fourth contribution this research provides is a contemporary update of Freeman's (1972) research into the organisational structures and practices in the feminist movement. Freeman's research developed from her experience in the feminist movement in the 1960s. Since then, there has not been a comprehensive analysis of the organisation practices within the feminist movement. Given that new theories like connective action have developed to conceptualise the changing protest structure of contemporary campaigns, it is logical to conduct an analysis of the changing structures of feminist actions as well.

Freeman's (1972) warning is renewed in the connective context to emphasise the importance of recognising and addressing with caution campaigns that are considered informal and crowd driven. In addition, it is used to unveil the problems and dangers associated with campaigns that aspire to be leaderless and structureless in a digitally connected era. Previous scholars such as Acker (1990) have identified an existing assumption that organisational practices are gender neutral; however, this assumption in itself serves to reinforce masculine dominance. Therefore, it is pivotal to critically analyse these structures and the feminist movement in communication, along with organisational theory.

The last contribution this thesis produces is the identification of specifically feminist and gendered issues that affect the organisational structures and practices of contemporary feminist actions. The case studies highlight the additional costs of participation in feminist protests that are not considered by collective action theorists. The research identifies the risk of increased online abuse that feminist activists experience, as well as the emotional and psychological labour that feminist activists exert in the organisation of protests. This thesis's research reveals that informal and interpersonal dynamics are core aspects of feminist organising, along with covert organisational practices and an additional layer of security within feminist actions. The importance of affective and solidarity action frames that complicate and extend Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) notion of personalised action frames is also foregrounded in the analysis of feminist actions.

This research originally intended to develop a feminist model of connective action; however, the results that emerged from the case studies were not able to be reduced into clear cut categories that could be visualised as a model or typology. Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) large-scale network analysis may have helped them document patterns and models of organisation but my more granular approach has in turn revealed a complex hybridity of organisational practices that underlie public networks. In addition, as demonstrated by the recent explosion in literature, the landscape for political organising is rapidly changing and new and hybrid forms of protests are achieving attention on a global scale. Moreover, the consequences of movements such as #MeToo are still being traced, as the effects ripple across countries, industries and communities, and as further protests and actions are continually prompted and energised by the affective public that is borne from these movements (Papacharissi, 2015). Thus, the ramifications of such large-scale movements are still being realised. The radically shifting nature of our digital, globalised society requires a continual analysis of the organisational practices being employed by activists. Consequently, the case studies analysed in this thesis should not be considered representative of organisational practices in the feminist movement; though they offer insights into common concerns and issues surrounding organising within the feminist movement.

The results of this thesis highlight a number of distinctly feminist concerns that affect the organisational practices of feminist activists and that complicate Bennett and Segerberg's

(2013) conceptualisation of connective action. This research emphasises the specific negotiations and struggles that feminist activists consistently engage with in terms of organisational practices and highlights how the online gendered abuse that feminist activists encounter (Citron, 2014; Jane, 2014b) affect how they choose to operate. This thesis deconstructs the organisational structures and practices behind the three case studies and highlights the key elements involved in each protest, as well as the specific issues that affect and shape the organisational and communication networks. These findings complicate the usefulness of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) logic of connective action in assessing the organisational structures and practices of contemporary feminist actions.

1.4 Chapter Overview

This chapter has discussed the background and significance of researching the organisational structures of contemporary feminist actions, introduced the primary research questions, and outlined the original contributions of this thesis. The second and third chapters function as literature reviews that develop the thesis' conceptual framework and argument through a discussion of key theories in the field. Chapter Two documents the shifting landscape of contentious politics and provides an outline of the leading theories that have developed in response to this. In particular, the chapter discusses Mancur Olson's (1965) theory of collective action and Bennett and Segerberg's (2012, 2013) logic of connective action, which attempts to expand Olson's theory. The theory of connective action is used as a centre point for this thesis; thus, Chapter Two is used to outline the key elements that comprise the logic. In addition, the chapter refines and justifies how and why ongoing debates persist in relation to the structure of contemporary actions and uses these debates to demonstrate how the research in this thesis is framed. Chapter Two identifies contemporary debates surrounding clicktivism; introduces the concept of 'post-digital', which is used to inform the analysis of feminist actions; and introduces the notion of franchise organisations as another pathway for understanding organisational structure.

Chapter Three provides a more specific analysis of how the structure of feminist activism has previously been conceptualised. It documents the structural issues that feminist scholars have identified in the feminist movement since the 1960s to help frame a contemporary analysis of feminist groups. The chapter also illustrates key cyberfeminist

and technofeminist debates regarding the liberating and oppressive potential of digital technologies and the internet for women and feminist activism. Drawing from these debates, the chapter presents a technofeminist stance in which technology is considered to be part of a complex and mutually shaping network that combines society, people, cultural meaning, politics and history. This perspective is used to develop the contention of this thesis, in which the research highlights how technology interplays with other factors in the development of feminist activism. Last, Chapter Three documents the more recent explosion of literature surrounding large-scale feminist actions that are enabled by technology and from which the effects are still to be fully realised.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological approach to the research. It considers previous epistemological approaches and substantiates the choice to employ a feminist epistemological position in the research of feminist activism. The key methods that are explained in this chapter are semi-structured in-depth interviews, case studies and social media ethnography. The chapter also discusses why these methods are consistent with a feminist approach and why this qualitative approach was particularly important for researching the organisational structures of feminist actions. Furthermore, the chapter notes the potential limitations surrounding the methods and choice of case studies.

The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of this thesis each address a respective case study. The primary research material presented in this thesis—drawing from semi-structured interviews and the three case studies—is organised and selected with a particular intention. The case studies were selected as a purposive sample, representing different types of contemporary feminist actions and were chosen based on their success and significance within the feminist movement. The case studies are analysed in chronological order based on the original inception of each of the protests. This allows the analysis to document the changing trends within organisational practices over the course of the protests. Bennett and Segerberg's full three-part typology of connective action is used to help assess each case study, and each research chapter deconstructs the organisational structures, practices, networks and individual actions behind the feminist protests.

Chapter Five introduces the first case study: the original Hollaback! campaign, which developed as a blog in 2005 and on which people shared their stories of street harassment. This case study was chosen due to its success as an international movement and its role

as an introduction to feminism and activism for many young female activists. Additionally, its early innovative use of digital and social technologies and its utilisation of personalised submissions by the public onto the blog suggest the campaign moves beyond the traditional collective action model of organising. The chapter reveals that the Hollaback! campaign incorporated elements from the organisationally enabled model of connective action, originally developing as a very loosely coordinated, personalised action and, over time, evolving into a more structured action, with the established Hollaback! group strengthening their organisational practices. The chapter demonstrates how the Hollaback! group franchised the Hollaback! campaign to enable and sustain its global spread. This chapter also highlights issues associated with group affiliation and how these issues specifically affect the feminist movement. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) identify a decline in group affiliation and membership, arguing that citizens display a preference for personalised and individualised forms of engagement at the expense of collective membership. The Hollaback! case study highlights the continuing role of established groups for the recruitment of newer and younger activists, as well as for sustained actions. However, it also documents the intersectional issues that arise from globalised actions and the factors that lead to disaffiliation, which remain concerns for similarly structured feminist actions. Overall, it demonstrates how feminist groups are constantly re-evaluating, experimenting and changing their organisational practices to sustain feminist actions.

Chapter Six examines the second case study: #TakeDownJulienBlanc. The series of protests that operated under the hashtag #TakeDownJulienBlanc from 2014 to 2016 spread internationally and was chosen as a case study due to its success and its reactivation and reconfiguration of the activist network. This case study offers an example of a contemporary action network that diverges from the traditional logic of collective action in that there was no clear collective frame or established group driving the protest. Its international success and its reactivation in 2016 indicates the existence of communication and organisational networks making it an interesting case study to examine and one in which Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) logic of connective action may be useful in assessing. However, from an initial analysis, it quickly became evident that the campaign made use of elements identified in both Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) crowd-enabled and organisationally enabled connective actions; the chapter consequently highlights a deeply complex and messy organisational structure. The chapter also

introduces the notion of post-digital protests, in which actions cease to be deliberately digital and, instead, social and digital technologies are interwoven with non-digital processes. In these cases, digital technologies are no longer considered a new and disruptive force—they are simply part of the social fabric of activists' everyday lives. Consequently, this adds another level of hybridity in terms of the organisational and communication practices that are prevalent in contemporary feminist protests. Further, the chapter identifies key organisational networks and individuals that affected the development and spread of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests and highlights how many of the organisational issues that were prevalent in the feminist movement in the 1960s (Freeman, 1972) continue to exist in contemporary activist groups.

Chapter Seven analyses the final case study: the feminist hashtag campaign, #EndViolenceAgainstWomen, that disrupted the Australian 'twittersphere' on 4 December 2015. This chapter also provides a discussion of the international #MeToo movement. These case studies were chosen as examples of feminist solidarity and online shaming hashtag campaigns, which have become increasingly prevalent forms of feminist activism in the past few years. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was chosen as a local knowledge case study (Thomas, 2011) because it provided a useful and accessible example of feminist hashtag activism for the researcher. The #MeToo movement was also crucial to include due to its enormity and significance within the feminist movement and the broader political arena. The results from this chapter show that the organisational practices behind the scenes of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign include elements from organisationally enabled connective action, as well as more traditional collective processes. This chapter also provides an understanding of key issues that affect and shape the organisational structures and the ways in which feminist activists operate. The chapter underlines the experiences of online abuse that women and feminist activists encounter, highlighting how gendered abuse shapes the practices of activists. It additionally documents the emotional and psychological costs of participating in feminist actions, adding a deeper level of meaning to Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) notion of personalised action frames.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by drawing together the case studies, followed by highlighting this research's significance in relation to existing literature and practical implications. The findings from each of the case studies will be discussed and the key

themes will be identified to determine what the results signify for an updated account of feminist activist organisation. The chapter will discuss the implications the analysis has for Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) connective action typology by underlining the profoundly feminist concerns that arose from the research.

Chapter 2: **Reconceptualising Collective Action in the Digital Age**

The popularity and widespread use of social and digital media has complicated conventional theories of collective action. The tactics and strategies that are enabled by digital technologies to negotiate with, challenge and resist existing power structures are no longer completely accounted for by the traditional collective action theory. The theory of collective action also no longer addresses the shifting organisational structures of contemporary social movement groups that can be observed in the current political landscape (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Bimber et al., 2005; Bridwell, 2013; Bruns et al., 2013; Earl et al. 2010; Flanagan et al., 2006). This chapter explores a reconceptualisation of collective action theory by contemporary social movement scholars and introduces the influential theory of connective action for understanding activism in the digital age. It continues to interrogate and critique Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action to establish the groundwork for analysing its utility for assessing contemporary feminist actions.

The chapter commences by outlining the conventional understanding of collective action and where it fails to address current trends in social and digital technology. It highlights some key problems that collective action theory has traditionally faced, such as the free rider effect, and how large-scale access to digital technology has supposedly led to a transformation and mitigation of this effect. It establishes an understanding of why new theories such as connective action are needed to illuminate technologically-facilitated activism. The chapter goes on to introduce Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action and describes the key characteristics that comprise their three categories. Following this outline is a detailed critique of the theory that identifies the ways in which it has overlooked the feminist movement. The review also highlights the limitations of a categorical approach to understanding contemporary activism. The critique questions Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) capacity to capture hybridity and identifies the limitations of their methodology to assess less transparent activist networks.

The chapter outlines the debates surrounding 'slacktivism' and argues for a shift beyond conceptualising digital tactics as separate from offline activism. It reviews scholarship on both sides of the debate, including critics of social media who argue that it distracts from

genuine activism and that it leads to what they call ‘clicktivism’ or ‘slacktivism’, as well as supporters who believe in the potential of social media to liberate and empower all. The chapter then draws on scholarship (Chadwick, 2007; Karpf, 2010; Olcese, 2014) to shape a more balanced understanding of how the online and offline spheres are inextricably intertwined and to reveal how one can begin to understand the nature of organisational structures in a technologized ecology. It explores how the post-digital aesthetic can provide a framework for understanding the current landscape in which technology has become part of the everyday, and introduces the notion of franchise organisations as an alternative pathway for theorising structure in advocacy groups. In summary, this chapter establishes the foundations for analysing the organisational structures of contemporary feminist actions and determining how useful connective action theory is for this investigation.

2.1 Revisiting Collective Action

Collective action was until recently—and arguably is still—the presiding model of understanding social movement organisations. Yet social movement scholars have been increasingly interested in reconsidering activism in the contemporary media field. This section introduces traditional notions of collective action theory, the problems it faced and why it struggles to account for actions in the digitised landscape. It then discusses the ways in which the theory of collective action has been reconceptualised and prompts an exploration into new theories, like connective action, that help explain activism in the digital age.

Most famously associated with Mancur Olson (1965) and his book, *The Logic of Collective Action*, collective action refers to the behaviour that a group takes towards achieving a common goal. Olson identifies the one characteristic that all organisations share: a desire to further the interests of members (Olson, 1965, p. 5). Members of a group or organisation have a presumed common interest, as well as their own individual interests that may differ between members of the same group. It is the common interest shared by all the members that the organisation aims to further (Olson, 1965). Olson believes that individual, informal or unorganised actions will be unable to advance the group’s interest adequately, if at all, because of what is described as the free rider problem.

Free riding occurs when rational self-interested individuals will not participate and join collective actions because the cost (resources, time spent, general effort) proves higher than the benefits they would gain from participating. Free riders reason that as an individual, their specific engagement will not make a significant impact on the movement's success. On the one hand, if individuals do not join and there is significant support, they will benefit from the achievements of the actions without having to contribute. On the other hand, if there is not enough support for an action and it fails, individuals feel their time and energy would have been wasted if they had participated (Olson, 1965). Thus organisations are necessary to facilitate and unite a group and advance their interests.

The development of collective identities is an essential component for collective action. Movements are not often comprised of entirely separate individuals; they are usually linked to existing communities and are communicated through social networks. Communities already have a shared collective identity and this can be extended to social movements. Movements are aggregated out of solidarity and tap into indigenous social networks that comprise interpersonal bonds between individuals and that provide the incentives for engaging in the movement (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 1996). The idea of a collective identity is at the centre of many organisational struggles: the battle for control of a group or organisation, the forging of certain coalitions and alliances, negotiating with authorities and the output of content that maintains a consistent message of articulating to a unified group (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 23).

Collective action has been the primary logic for understanding contentious politics and social movements. Contention depends on mobilisation—the capacity to create and sustain a collective interaction that aims to make a claim on others (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 17). Contentious politics scholar, Sidney Tarrow, describes social movements as ‘collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities’ (1993, pp. 3–4). Although the exact definition of a social movement is debated, it is commonly agreed that these definitions all involve the dynamic of a group challenging power holders in a prolonged engagement (McAdam et al., 1996; Olson, 1965). Many different forms and styles of political and social activism (social movements, rebellions and revolutions) comprise this contentious terrain and it is important to consider the socio-political context that gave rise to them.

While collective action remains an important theory, a number of revisions have been suggested in recent years, particularly due to the rise of social media.

2.1.1 Reconceptualising Collective Action Theory

Social and digital technologies have significantly reduced the cost of organising and participating in political actions, as well as facilitated new modes of organising; this has led scholars to argue that digitally enabled contemporary activism has overcome the free rider effect (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Bimber et al., 2005, 2012; Flanagin et al., 2006). However, the argument that digital technology has enabled social movements to avoid the free rider effect is somewhat overly simplistic. Digital technology has complicated the free rider issue in that it is easier to physically and technologically participate in, such as liking or sharing a post on social media. However, this thesis finds that there are other costs, such as emotional and personal costs, that may inhibit participation. Further still, some scholars have argued that digital technology has only decreased the cost of what they consider low-quality participation and that it ultimately detracts from meaningful engagement (Harlow & Guo, 2014). This argument will be explored later in the chapter, but it raises the question of the relative value of different types of engagement in the digital landscape, and whether there are new barriers to participation.

The collective action model alone is unable to account for emerging behaviours that have occurred since the development of digital networking tools. Collective action is associated with high levels of organisational resources and the formation of collective identities (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 12). Bennett and Segerberg (2012, p. 760) claimed that:

Collective action based on exclusive collective identifications and strongly tied networks continues to play a role in the political landscape, but this has become joined by, interspersed with, and in some cases supplanted by personalised collective action formations in which digital media becomes integral organisational parts.

With this in mind, a reconceptualisation is best considered as an expansion of conventional theory, rather than as a complete dismantling.

Bennett and Segerberg (2013) claim that the difficulty of convincing individuals to contribute is bypassed with new forms of digital and internet activism. They argue that there is a low cost of engagement online, which contributes to a broader inclusion of individuals who may engage for little cost. However, their analysis does not consider the other potential costs of participation, such as the emotional labour required and the risks of being vocal in the online sphere. These costs and risks are discussed in Chapter Seven, which highlights the undervalued emotional cost that women and feminist activists pay to engage in movements such as #MeToo, as well as the risks of online abuse and harassment that they are exposed to (Jane, 2016).

Social and digital technologies and the novel capabilities facilitated by them are challenging and problematizing conventional collective action theory, and leading to new theoretical approaches (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Bimber et al., 2012). Tools such as mobile phones, Twitter and Facebook have become valuable resources for facilitating mass movements, broadcasting alternative viewpoints and hosting political discussions. These digital resources are facilitating a political renewal in which personal and public discourses are traversing online and offline networks and are empowering ordinary people's voices in the public sphere. Online spaces and mobile technologies are enabling loosely organised networks to operate and organise informal actions, while also harvesting ideas and discourses that can prompt further and larger political action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

Some scholars have underlined the need for a reconceptualisation of contemporary activist practices. Bimber et al. (2005, p. 365) in their article, 'Reconceptualising collective action the contemporary media environment', argue that due to new information and communication technologies, contemporary action challenges the central social movement organisational structure observed in conventional collective action. Bimber et al. (2005) contend that the availability of advanced communication technologies has resulted in less restrained, less time-consuming and cheaper collective action efforts. They suggest that online participation is an interactive process rather than the deliberate pursuit of a specific goal. They also argue that reconceptualising collective action will better account for new and emerging phenomena associated with the rise of social and digital technology.

The emergence of significant informal groups, facilitated and united through social media, challenges traditional collective action theories because of their unconventional organisational structures. Social networking sites amplify already existing personal networks and extend them further to create connections across geographical borders (Newsrom & Lengel, 2012). These emerging, extensive digital networks are shaping collective identities and imagined communities (boyd, 2010). Although the notion of collective identities at the centre of social movements is not new—as previously explored—digital resources enable groups and individuals to connect and develop shared identities in original ways (Papacharissi, 2015). New theories, such as connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) have surfaced to account for evolving methods of organisation in the contemporary and digitalised political field.

2.2 Understanding Connective Action Theory

Bennett and Segerberg (2012, 2013) propose an alternative to the logic of collective action: the logic of connective action. The logic of connective action was developed to provide a new framework for analysing current social structures and understanding how contemporary dialogues and actions regarding contentious politics are organised and engineered. Connective action is founded on personalised content sharing across media networks; it aims to be inclusive and have an easily adaptable message so that individuals can connect with the cause in many different ways that suit their own beliefs and lifestyles (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 742). This logic stems from a distrust of hierarchy and authority and because participants are increasingly moving away from formal organisations and affiliations. It is particularly important to note that this move away from formal membership and the distrust of hierarchy underpinned the feminist movement long before the contemporary era (Freeman, 1972). While this chapter presents a close analysis of connective action theory, the next chapter examines structural trends in the feminist movement. In combination, they lay the foundation for analysing the organisational practices of contemporary feminist actions and, ultimately, contribute to an expansion and partial contestation of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory.

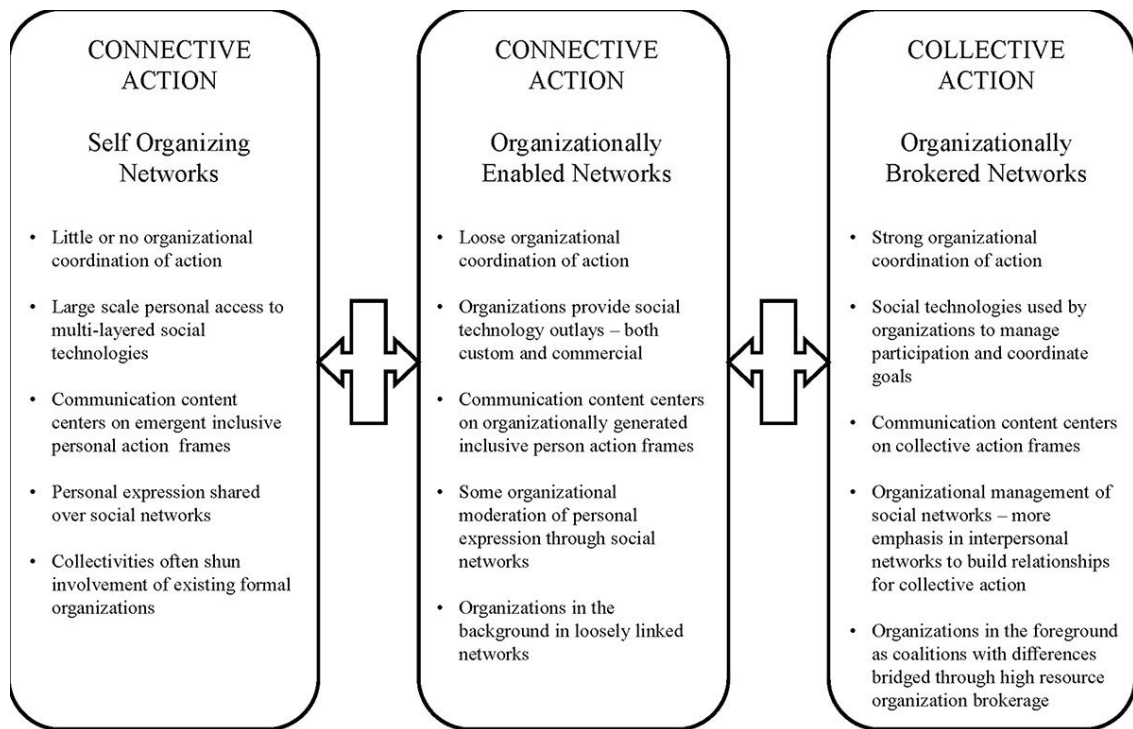


Figure 2.1 The Logic of Connective Action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 47)

In *The Logic of Connective Action*, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) introduce three categories of organisation for contemporary activism, which are illustrated in Figure 2.1. They retain the traditional collective action theory as their first organisational category, arguing that while new activism styles are emerging, they are not replacing traditional activism. They rename this first category organisationally brokered collective action. Organisationally brokered protests maintain a traditional, hierarchical structure and are driven by formal, established organisations that carry the burden of facilitation and create a unified collective (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 46). While this category of activism is traditional, it may still incorporate digital technologies if used for cost-saving and efficient means of coordinating and messaging, rather than as ‘organisational infrastructure’ characteristics of the two connective action categories.

The remaining two categories of activism constitute the new logic of connective action that Bennett and Segerberg (2013) propose. At the opposite extreme from organisationally brokered collective action sits crowd-enabled connective action (also called self organising networks), in which media platforms act as organisational hubs instead of any particular formal organisation or group. A crowd-enabled connective network is characterised by personalised action frames that are easily adaptable and

individualised by a wide collective of participants. Individuals can participate in an action in whatever way that suits their lifestyle and are able to adapt the overall movement's message to fit their own beliefs and personal experiences. Crucially, participants can engage with a cause without prescribing to the totality of beliefs and ideological ideas that others in the movement share (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 744). Crowd-enabled action networks are predominately constructed of non-membership organisations and participants who are not aligned with, or have very loose ties to, established groups. In this case, leadership is dispersed and there is a 'relative absence of purposeful association, boundedness, and core actors' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 89). This self organising capacity is why Bennett and Segerberg have chosen to label crowd-enabled networks as 'self organising' within their diagram (as seen in Figure 2.1). Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue that the burden of organising is shifted onto dense digital platforms, enabling a crossing of traditional network boundaries that remain fluid, yet reaches a high scale of participants.

The final category is a second type of connective action, and is positioned between the previous two organisational styles. Labelled 'organisationally enabled connective action', it can be considered a hybrid of the more traditional collective action and the crowd-enabled organisational network. Organisationally enabled actions consist of organisations sponsoring actions and creating opportunities and invitations for followers to personalise their own engagement. Formal groups are considered another connection in the network and adopt a repertoire of personalised expressions to maximise engagement with the cause. As with crowd-enabled connective action, the messages are easily adaptable and personalised, which, therefore, appeals to a wider range of participants.

2.2.1 Critiquing Connective Action

This critique of connective action focuses on two key areas. First, it observes the methodological limitations present in Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) analysis. This includes their chosen case studies; their preference for a large-scale analysis rather than a finer-grained analysis of the relationships between activists; their focus on physical marches and formal organisations; and a preliminary assessment of the issues that the feminist movement raises in relation to connective action theory. Second, it interrogates Chadwick's (2007, 2013) work on hybridity and the challenge it poses for a categorical analysis.

Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) analyses into collective and connective activism primarily focus on economic and environmental protests. They rationalise their focus on these protests by arguing that they are two central concerns of the current era and are particularly relevant, following the global financial crisis. The book focuses on the economic-based activism of the Occupy movement and the British Robin Hood Tax, and environmental protests targeting the G20 London Summit and the United Nations climate conference in Copenhagen in 2009. The scale of these mass mobilisations drew much publicity and became popular examples for many scholars in the field (Boler & Nitsou, 2014; Bridwell, 2013; Bruns et al., 2013; Della & Valeriani, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2017; Harlow & Guo, 2014; Newsrom & Lengel, 2012; Poell et al., 2016). However, this is relatively limited in both topical focus and campaign method. It might be the case that alternative examples and approaches would impact their analysis.

As it stands, Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) analyses into economic and environmental causes maintain a slight bias towards what has been perceived as traditional activism with mass mobilisations, as well as the preoccupation of achieving legislative change when these are not the only effective types of activism in play. Bennett and Segerberg still maintain a heavy focus on participation in coordinated physical actions, whether that is enabled by brokered coalitions or by a loosely organised network that allows individuals to participate on their own terms. Examining the feminist movement will extend the analysis to view and understand the organisational dynamics of protests that may not have a physical mass mobilisation or legislative change central to their objective.

A second concern is that Bennett and Segerberg fail to acknowledge that there was a trend toward less formal, and more loosely organised structures within the feminist movement long before the existence of social media and online networks (Freeman, 1972). If environmental and economic protests are indeed following similar patterns of the feminist movement, then it may be valuable to regard the feminist movement as a pioneer for alternative activist strategies. As explored in the next chapter, the feminist movement has a tradition of attempting to avoid formalised hierarchy and leadership structures. Women have historically participated in politics through different means (Harris, 2008). As can be observed in the next chapter, discursive and affective activism has played an important role in the feminist movement. Discursive forms of activism have been vital for women, particularly for those in communities that restrict their engagement in the public sphere

(Keller, 2012; Piela, 2015). The online sphere can provide a space for women to access information that may not be freely available to them in their immediate communities (Piela, 2015). To account for these alternative forms of activism, this thesis adopts a social media ethnographic approach to analyse several feminist protest case studies: Hollaback!, #TakeDownJulienBlanc, #EndViolenceAgainstWomen, as well as a discussion of the #MeToo movement. Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p.13) recognise that within connective actions, individuals play a role in activating their digital networks—but the authors do not detail how they do this or how it might affect a protest. While they focus primarily on the role of digital platforms, the research in this thesis takes on a more granular approach and analyses the interpersonal dynamics and role of individuals within actions.

2.2.2 The Role of Individual Activists

While Bennett and Segerberg do not specifically examine the role of individuals within protest networks, they do draw upon previous research to supplement their analysis. Bennett and Segerberg briefly reference Walgrave, Bennett, van Laer and Breunig's (2011) claim that the burden of mobilisation is shifting from organisations to individuals (as cited in Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 57). Walgrave et al. (2011) surveyed how digital media enable activists to connect and sustain multiple protests and, from this, the authors develop networks that are comprised of linkages and connections between different groups, core activists and even different social movements (p. 325). Consistent with Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) focus on platforms as organisational hubs, Walgrave et al.'s (2011, p. 326) study focuses mainly on the digital platforms and how they permit connections between individuals, making them more 'mobilisable' for various causes and protests. While their study offers valuable insight into the nature of networks enabled by social media and the increased ability to connect with a wide range of protests, they do not recognise the various power dynamics between individual activists and the variables that may shape who they can connect with digitally. Other factors, such as friendship groups and popularity, may influence digital connections and function as gatekeepers, regarding who is allowed into various digital networks and platforms (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe 2011). These other factors that shape digital networks are further explored in the research chapters presented in this thesis.

Walgrave et al. (2011) have other significant findings that must be considered for this research. First, they argue the existence of a link between the use of digital and social

networking sites and engagements with multiple campaigns. Second, they suggest that age matters, arguing that older activists have acquired multiple engagements and a larger network due to an activist ‘career’, and that young people have a less diverse network due to their limited experience (Walgrave et al., 2011, p. 340). This finding is supported throughout the research chapters and is used to deepen previous analyses that argues online activism is the domain of young people (Schuster, 2013). Walgrave et al. also suggested that the nature of the internet and digital media as a ‘fluid’ medium leads to more informal and short-term political engagements, as opposed to long-term memberships of formal organisations (2011, p. 340). They use the term ‘core activists’ to describe deeply engaged activists who are positioned close to the organisational centre of a protest, with Bennett and Segerberg (2013) also borrowing this term in the conclusion of their book. Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 204) briefly recognise that core activists can play a crucial role in the ways in which organisational processes combine or collide; however, they do not expand on how this might happen. Walgrave et al. (2011) suggest that these core activists may be utilising digital technologies to effectively activate their networks, gather resources and facilitate events in much the same role that organisations traditionally performed.

Taking a similar approach to Walgrave et al. (2011), Poell et al. (2016) shift the focus of contemporary activism to the individual activist and challenge the foundation of connective action by arguing that leadership plays a more significant role in steering activism on social media platforms, rather than the self-motivated sharing of resources. By conducting a study on the interactions between administrators and users of a Facebook page, they illustrated how the administrators’ marketing strategies, combined with the infrastructure of Facebook pages, helped shape exchanges and political debates online. They argued that these types of administrators should be considered what they call ‘connective leaders’, as they facilitate the connection and development of online communication streams and networks (Poell et al., 2016, p. 994). Poell et al.’s (2016) analysis of so-called ‘connective leaders’ provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding the role that some activists played in the case studies researched for this thesis. In addition, the role of connective leaders is useful to understand how individual administrators shaped and influenced the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen Twitter protest, as a secret Facebook group was constructed to facilitate and organise the campaign—which is documented and analysed in Chapter Seven.

For their analysis of the role of connective leaders, Poell et al. (2016) used the example of the Facebook page Wael Ghonim and AbdelRahman Mansour's Facebook page, We are all Khaled Said, the most popular platform during the Egyptian revolution of early 2011. The Facebook page brought attention to the Egyptian man Khaled Mohamed Saeed and his violent death in police custody, ultimately helping to incite the Egyptian revolution. Neither Ghonim nor Mansour claimed a leadership role for their page and initially used a shared pseudonym as the administrator. This is particularly interesting for two reasons. As Freeman (1972) argued, movements are designated a leader or a face by the media and the public regardless of whether they formally appoint one. Although Ghonim and Mansour were eventually revealed to be behind the page, the face of Khaled Saeed was used to represent the movement and the protests. Similar occurrences are documented in the feminist movement, particularly in relation to pages and mass mobilisations developed in response to the murder of a woman.¹ These types of pages have no need for the activists to be positioned as a public face because the face of the victim works as a type of martyr, representing and activating protests in their name. These types of actions were also not conducted by formal organisations, so they could be considered crowd-enabled networks by Bennett and Segerberg (2013). However, as Poell et al. (2016) reveal, there is a clear leadership behind the platforms that triggered the protests and set the agenda for the dialogue surrounding the issues.

Continuing the emphasises on the role of individual activists, Paolo Gerbaudo (2017, p. 185) argues that there has been a rise of social media activist teams, which he terms 'digital vanguards', that work in an informal leadership structure to organise actions through digital communication. Gerbaudo (2017) maintains the emphasis on digital technologies as central to organisation, similar to Bennett and Segerberg, but challenges their conception of crowd-enabled connective action as being leaderless by illustrating the informal leadership structures that exist behind the scenes of digital platforms. He shifts the burden of organisation from digital media platforms to 'often invisible' small activist groups who wield digital tools to develop, coordinate and shape political discussion and protests (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 186). Gerbaudo pinpoints the type of leadership often presented by digital vanguards as being 'covert', which touches on a

¹See March for Jill Meagher (<https://www.facebook.com/jillmeaghertribute/>) and Yellow Balloon, previously RIP Stephanie Scott (<https://www.facebook.com/yellowballoonpage/>).

limitation of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) methodology—it struggles to reveal information about less transparent activist groups. This limitation is further highlighted by the fact that Gerbaudo, Bennett and Segerberg all examine the Occupy movement as an example, yet come to different conclusions regarding the organisational structures involved. For Bennett and Segerberg (2013), the Occupy movement is an example of a crowd-enabled connective action—an action that has little, if any, formal structure and a broad and diverse demographic of participants who engage in ways that they individually frame. However, Gerbaudo's (2017) analysis, which incorporated interviews with activists, reveals covert leadership groups that directed the dialogue surrounding the protests. He also identifies the significant role that microcelebrity activists can play in a network, in relation to their larger followings on social media platforms, enabling them to acquire a more central and powerful position in political conversations (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 197).

Gerbaudo (2017, p. 186) argues that rather than 'doing away' with leadership, the adoption of social media and hacker culture has actually led to the rendering of leadership as invisible, resulting in the unaccountability of social media teams—something that can consequentially have serious organisational effects. In this way, cliquish behaviour can remain unchecked alongside discrimination and other ethical issues that can be tied to unaccountable leadership. He documents suspicion of leadership in the 2011 protest wave, going so far as to state that leadership itself has become a taboo topic (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 187). He adamantly argues that this growing fear of leadership, and the consensus that contemporary movements are characterised by a type of leaderlessness, needs to be confronted urgently, due to the ethical and political dangers of unaccountable and informal leadership structures. Gerbaudo frames his contemporary analysis with Freeman's (1972) conceptualisation of 'structurelessness'. Freeman's essay is explored in further detail in the following chapter. Applying her theory to assist in analysing digital vanguards, Gerbaudo (2017) illustrates the informal but clearly structured nature of these obscured social media teams. Gerbaudo's (2017) theory of digital vanguards, along with Freeman's (1972) conceptualisation of the impossibility of structurelessness, questions the usefulness of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action, particularly for less transparent actions.

Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 46) contend that each of their three categories may help explain the different dynamics in large-scale action networks ‘in event-centred contention, such as protests and sequences of protests’. Bennett and Segerberg neglect to directly define what they mean by ‘event-centred contention’. From their case studies it can be deduced that they mean physical protests, as each case study involves at least one or a series of physical protests. This is problematic, as it discounts various other forms of political participation and only values actions that can be linked to a physical march. It is surprising that they would adopt such an approach, given that the basis of their theory of connective action lies in the personalisation of politics and its capacity to be adapted to individual lifestyles.

One central element that Bennett and Segerberg (2013) attribute to connective action is the personalised framing of actions. The shift of focus onto personalisable action frames instead of collective frames is reminiscent of Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), in which he argued for a re-evaluation of how ordinary citizens reappropriate and repurpose tools and cultural artefacts for everyday situations as political acts. His analysis of people’s practices entails two distinctive acts: tactics and strategies. The everyday individual methods that users or consumers employ to accomplish a goal are referred to as tactics, while the activities applied by broader institutionalised powers are recognised as strategies. For de Certeau (1984), people use different tactics to negotiate with authorities and these practices make them political agents. Simple, everyday behaviours can become a form of creative resistance that is enacted by ordinary citizens. De Certeau’s (1984) work emphasises that these routine, everyday practices are sites for political resistance and negotiations with authoritative powers, even though these behaviours are not formally considered political. Although de Certeau’s work was written in 1984, his message remains valid for contemporary connective politics. As partially described by crowd-enabled action networks, individuals politically engage in ways that fit into their everyday lives through the use of social and digital technology. Rather than subscribing to a collective identity or activist framework established by a formal group or institution, citizens are personally deciding how to engage and express themselves. This thesis furthers the analysis into personalised action frames by examining specifically the action frames present within feminist protests. It considers what specific issues affect the framing of feminist campaigns and how feminist activists are attempting to build inclusive and personalised modes of engagement.

2.2.3 A Categorical Approach to Internet Activism

In terms of understanding new forms of activism with technological developments, previous scholars have also identified a tendency for academia to focus on physical mass mobilisations in the study of contemporary activism. Earl et al. (2010) also provide their own reconceptualisation of contemporary activism and illustrate how different approaches have led to conflicting results on the role technology plays. They argue that the online facilitation of offline activism has been the most commonly studied type of contemporary activism, which has led to conservative results in relation to understanding the internet's effect on collective action theory. They propose four typologies of internet activism:

- Online facilitation of offline activism. In this case, the internet is employed as logistical support for the facilitation and recruitment for an offline protest
- “Brochure-ware” (Earl et al., 2010, p.429): This form of internet activism is where websites function as information hubs about a cause. The internet is used as a broadcast medium for the distribution of information rather than an interactive medium.
- Online participation: The internet is employed as an avenue for political participation, such as online petitions and forums. People are given the opportunity to participate in an action while online and individuals who may not otherwise engage in an offline political action may engage with online political actions due to their convenience, ease of access, and affordability (Earl et al., 2010, p.432). The nature, motivation, and structure of activism are altered in this variation and prompt an update of collective action theory.
- Online organising: This category in particular challenges conventional collective action theory as the low costs of organising protests and campaigns online draw in radically different types of organisers that may not have prior experience with activism (Earl et al., 2010, p.432).

The types of internet activism that Earl et al. (2010) posited are limited by their view of the internet as a separate medium from other forms of political engagement. Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory expands from Earl et al.'s (2010), as they do not limit activism

by medium type in their conceptualisation. They define their logic by organisational styles while attributing digital media platforms organisational power.

Bennett and Segerberg are careful to emphasise that their three categories must be taken broadly, and that they ‘simplify more complex realities’ that are composed of overlapping and hybrid combinations from all three categories (2013, p. 13). However, the potential for overlap between each style of action described by Bennett and Segerberg, as well as the converging of the types proposed by Earl et al. (2010), raises some concerns. The relationship between each type of action network and the nature of how they may overlap is unclear. Do protests transition between the styles, or do they simultaneously incorporate traits from all of them? Questions also arise concerning the value of categories when examining cases from the feminist movement.

A few scholars have questioned the limitations and problems of applying categories to help understand the protest ecology. In his review of *The Logic of Connective Action*, John Postill (2015) questions the idea of ‘logic’ and whether such a thing exists when it comes to connective action. He argues that the idea of ‘logics’ is unexplained in the book and illustrates how the logics are presented in a ‘manner of causal linearity’ (Postill, 2015). By this he means connective action presumes that once a logic is identified within an action network, everything else—such as the political outcomes, media adopted and internal structures—follows on logically. Further, Postill questions whether the ‘power and agency of network participants end at the very point at which they have co-created a given “logic” or action’ (2015, p. 500). He concludes his review with a call for a revised theory of action that can sufficiently address the ‘messy, multidirectional causality of contentious politics’ (Postill, 2015, p. 500). Postill’s review is indicative of the majority of criticisms that connective action theory has faced, particularly whether the categories account for the hybrid nature of activism in the digitised landscape. Chadwick’s (2007, 2013) theory of organisational hybridity, which precedes Bennett and Segerberg’s logic by several years remains useful in providing an alternative approach to viewing contentious politics and the evolution of activist styles.

2.3 Hybridity

Contemporary theories of activism often revolve around categorising new or altered types of activism (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Earl et al., 2010). However, categories can be

restrictive when it comes to understanding the nature of protests within a convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006). Chadwick (2007, 2013) argues that the internet and new media technologies encourage organisational hybridity—a contemporary repertoire for social movements that involves shifting between online and offline environments. Chadwick argues that organisational hybridity is built by ‘creating appealing and increasingly convergent forms of online citizen action, fostering distributed trust across horizontally linked citizen groups, promoting the fusion of subcultural and political discourse, and creating and building upon sedimentary networks’ (2007, p. 284). Like Bennett and Segerberg, he emphasises social and digital technology, arguing that they are especially valuable for hybrid organisational styles because they facilitate a fast-paced and flexible ‘repertoire switching’ between online and offline tactics (Chadwick, 2007, p. 284).

As Chadwick, Bennett and Segerberg all agree, political organisations now incorporate diverse mobilising methods, in which online and offline acts are entwined and both local and national communities are engaged. However, Chadwick embraces a more fluid and blurred notion of contemporary action compared to Bennett and Segerberg, who attempt to categorise organisations. Chadwick supports Flanagin et al.’s (2006) conceptualisation of engagement in their article, ‘Modelling the structure of collective action’. They describe modes of engagement as being on a continuum rather than in distinct categories, and Chadwick embraces visualising collective action in their fluid manner (2007, p. 286). Flanagin et al. suggest that modes of engagement range from “entrepreneurial” (without hierarchy and central direction) to “institutional” (with hierarchy and central direction), with modes of interaction ranging from “personal” (face to face) to impersonal (mediated), and that political organisations are adapting these approaches in various and changing ways (as cited in Chadwick, 2007, p. 286). Analysing collective action from a continuum can offer much more flexibility in grasping the evolving and adapting nature of organisations and social movement repertoires in the digital age.

Chadwick’s (2007) description of organisational hybridity, as documented above, is initially appealing, as it allows an open and fluid framework for analysing social movement structures. However, there are some critiques of his theory. First, the notion that organisational hybridity fosters ‘distributed trust across horizontally linked citizen groups’ (Chadwick, 2007, p. 284) is problematic, as, like Bennett and Segerberg (2013), he does not delve into a finer analysis of the relationships and power dynamics that exist

between individual citizens, as well as the inherent social structures that are often built into technology. Second, the blurring of organisational boundaries associated with hybridisation is problematic (Wright, 2015). Organisational hybridity, as Wright (2015, p. 3) suggests, can help further an understanding of the blending of digital network repertoires and sidestep dichotomous thinking. However, despite this blurring of organisational boundaries and an increasing hybridisation between older and newer media logics—which renders categorising contemporary activism problematic—there is still value in considering broad categories for a range of case studies (Wright, 2015). A categorical approach provides a way of understanding and easily identifying patterns within protest networks.

Chadwick also supports Grewal's notion of network power: the power of an individual or group to persuade others to take action when they normally would not (Grewal, 2013, p. 17). He further explains that networks develop shared norms and accepted behaviours that facilitate and strengthen the group's cooperation and relationships. This type of group culture echoes Freeman's (1972) theory suggesting that friendship groups play an important role in activist group dynamics, which will be further discussed in the following chapter. Chadwick (2007) argues that larger networks also have greater access to resources and, by joining a larger network, one can gain access to these extended resources, or to the 'network power' that has arisen from the affinity between members that was developed from shared meanings and norms.

There are two aspects in the study of organisations that Chadwick (2013) emphasises: the shifting nature of life in organisations and the increasingly fluid interactions between organisations. Chadwick (2013, p. 11) argues that these two components of organisational structure are being influenced by hybridity. While political parties and social movement organisations have historically maintained different mobilisation approaches, Chadwick (2013, p. 16) suggests that conventional organisational forms are now blending together their own styles, incorporating a variety of techniques and forms of actions.

Chadwick (2013, p. 23) argues that technologies are never really 'new' but are recombinations of older media, with video, text, audio and images. New media, he argues (2013, p. 13), are simply refurbishing and refashioning older media, while older media reinvent themselves to stay competitive with newer media forms. They are examples of 'hypermediacy' (Chadwick, 2013, p. 25). Chadwick is perhaps too essentialist in his

claim that technologies can only be considered as ‘newer’ rather than ‘new’ tools, when for all intents and purposes these technologies are enabling enhanced or reappropriated actions that require examination in their own right. A transformative medium or hybrid technology can still be considered new, insofar as it holds the potential for new patterns or enhanced behaviours to occur. However, newer technologies must never be analysed in isolation from their broader sociotechnical contexts. Chadwick (2013, p. 24) argues that it is essential for people to observe media technologies from a holistic stance, treating them as ‘a package, a repertoire, a system’. The social conventions of a medium’s development, initial rise and use are significant in that they shape how a medium or technology will be adopted. This thesis adopts Chadwick’s holistic stance in the analysis of feminist protests, emphasising how media technologies are employed as part of a broader social media repertoire.

Chadwick’s (2013) argument regarding the continual hybridisation of technologies—that no technology is ever ‘new’ and that technologies are not separate influences that shape society—is reminiscent of Raymond Williams’ argument against the concept of technological determinism. Technological determinism is a radical theory that claims technologies drive social structure and values. However, for Williams, this approach fails to account for the significance of social relations and the process of technical invention, which he also deems a social process (Williams, 1989). Williams believed that technological innovation arises in specific social, economic and political contexts, rather than technology having an inevitable, predetermined logic of development. Williams’ ideas of technical innovation and the importance of social contexts informs the analysis in this research. This thesis considers the socio-political context of the feminist protests examined to help develop the analyses and understand the role digital and social technologies play in social movements.

2.4 Franchising Activism

Chadwick’s understanding of the blending of organisational styles by political parties and social movement organisations leads this review to the theoretical work of Bradach (1998). Although situated within the field of marketing, Bradach’s (1998) theoretical conceptualisation of franchise organisations provides a pathway for advancing the analysis of organisational practices of contemporary feminist advocacy groups. Bradach’s (1997, 1998) work focuses on the organisational structure of restaurant chains

and provides a discourse useful for understanding the structural processes within organisations that comprise local units operating under a single brand name.

Bradach's (1997, 1998) theoretical work provides a way to understand the myriad of organisational arrangements that can co-exist within a single organisation. Bradach (1997) argues that the franchised structure of large companies enabled plural forms of organising and management, allowing a company to adapt to local markets while maintaining system-wide control and uniformity. The benefits of a franchise structure, Bradach (1997, p.283) identifies, are the franchisee's intimate knowledge of the local conditions and community, and the semi-autonomous operation of local franchisees. Local franchisees are allowed to focus on what is important to them and they can operate as a conduit between local decision makers and the wider franchised organisation (Bradach, 1997, p.296).

In addition to the strengths of franchised organisations, Bradach (1997, 1998) identifies some of the struggles and concerns that are characteristic of franchise organisations. He (1998) argues that some of the structural concerns revolve around branding and membership; financial resources; tensions surrounding uniformity and autonomy; and difficulties reconciling hierarchical structure and surveillance between the broader organisation and the local units. More specifically, Bradach (1997, p.299) argues it was difficult for franchised organisations to reconcile a balanced relationship between all of the local units, warning that the reputation of the local units and the organisation are mutually dependent. These issues are explored further in Chapter Five in regards to the structural issues of the feminist group Hollaback! and how the Hollaback! campaign was franchised into a global movement.

Bradach's (1997, 1998) research into franchise organisations provides an unconventional pathway for understanding organisational practices within contemporary feminist activist groups. Many of the structural practices and dynamics Bradach (1998) identified can be helpful in an analysis of contemporary activist practices, especially when observing how international feminist campaigns are adapting at a local level within different cultures and communities. It also provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how plural organisational styles and structures may co-exist and lends further support to Chadwick's (2007) notion of hybridity within social movement organisations.

2.5 Post-digital and the Legitimation of Clicktivism

In relation to hybridity and the idea of plurality within activist practices, there has been an ongoing debate amongst scholars in regards to the blurring between analogue and digital activist practices. Scholars have more recently begun to describe a shift in which computation and digital technology have become part of the ‘texture of life itself’, in what has been labelled a ‘post-digital aesthetic’ (Berry & Dieter, 2015). The post-digital has arisen from a blurring between the boundaries of digital and non-digital, online and offline and old and new media. Florian Cramer (2015, p. 7) argues that post-digital is the state in which the ‘disruption brought about by digital information technology has already occurred’ and that it represents a crisis of sorts in which people have not moved beyond the digital; rather, it has become ubiquitous.

In an analysis conceptualising ‘post-digital’, Cramer (2015, p. 13) identifies how older analogue technologies continue to be reappropriated and used in a type of ‘contemporary disenchantment’ with digital gadgets and that this revival of old media complicates how people view the media system. Cramer (2015) complicates the notion of post-digital, arguing that there is no end in sight for digitisation or computerisation, as the ‘post’ prefix would indicate. Cramer argues for a move away from a ‘periodising logic’, contending instead that the post-digital condition is a ‘post-apocalyptic one: the state of affairs after the initial upheaval caused by the computerisation and global digital networking of communication, technical infrastructures, markets and geopolitics’ (Cramer, 2015, p. 15). In this way, ‘post-digital’ is consistent with Chadwick’s conception of a hybrid media system, as both Chadwick and Cramer argue that the current media landscape is a hybridisation of both ‘old’ and ‘new’ media and technology. Cramer (2015, p. 21) goes on to describe how contemporary practices not only revive older media technologies, but that they functionally repurpose them in relation to digital technology. Further still, post-digital can be useful in describing the ‘new media’ cultural approaches to working with ‘old media’ (Cramer, 2015, p. 21). Cramer (2015, p. 22) also identifies a do-it-yourself practice, in which user-generated content has been co-opted into corporate-generated media and is no longer perceived as an alternative or separated form of media.

The post-digital is a useful conceptualisation for analysing contemporary activist practices and for contextualising the tactics and strategies that activists employ and engage with. Previous research into contemporary social movements, such as Bennett and

Segerberg's (2013) study, focuses on examples such as Occupy, the Spanish Indignados and the Arab Spring. These were some of the first movements in which digital platforms and social technologies were used on a large scale and, consequently, they were disruptive for scholars in their conceptualisation of collective action and for the media, the public and governments. However, the post-digital framework is also valuable for contextualising digital tactics within a broader activist repertoire and understanding the role and value of digital tactics for contentious politics.

There has been much debate surrounding the value of digital activist tactics. Critics (Harlow & Guo, 2014; Morozov, 2009) claim that social media are merely distractive to genuine radical movements by providing an avenue for 'slacktivism' or 'clicktivism': low-cost and low-risk actions that remain superficial. Shulman (2009) warns against emerging forms of activism, claiming that they weaken contentious politics. He believed that an onslaught of low-quality citizen comments will crowd out more effective forms of political participation and will even dispirit the public when their comments seem to go ignored. The novelty of online activism, critic Micah White (2010) declared, will wear off and leave previously politically engaged individuals discouraged by the impotence of online activism.

Supporters, however, often declare digital media an impetus for all contemporary social movements (Bridwell, 2013; Castells, 2007; Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014). However, both these perspectives view digital activism as a novel phenomenon and often analyse its effects in isolation. Building on William's argument, Terrell (2014, p.75) stated, 'technology is not determinist of social movements in that it neither entirely distracts from nor creates the desire for social change.' Along with Chadwick's push for understanding technologies as part of a repertoire and a system, Williams and Terrell help frame a way for understanding how technology intertwines with other social, political and economic aspects that can influence and shape contemporary contentious politics. Similarly, Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 14) also argue for the 'greater restraint' of critics who dismiss digitally mediated engagement as clicktivism, as well as for those with 'equally inflated optimism' about the power of digital platforms and the 'Twitter revolution'.

Karpp (2010) argues that critics of 'clicktivism', such as Shulman (2009), make a number of assumptions and errors. First, they are centred on the assumption that online acts such

as emails are entirely new activist behaviours. However, he points out that mass emails are ‘functionally equivalent to the photocopied’ petitions and postcards used in offline activism (Karpf, 2010, p. 7). Karpf argues that the incremental modifications of online alerts and petitions from their offline versions represent a ‘difference-of-degree’, as opposed to a ‘difference-in-kind’ (2010, p. 9). These tactics are extensions of traditional offline forms of activism.

Second, Karpf contends that email campaigns and similar online activist tactics are being evaluated as isolated acts by critics. Low-quality, high-volume tactics are just a single tactic in a broader strategic repertoire of contention. Mass email campaigns, like petitions and postcards, are an effective means of demonstrating volume of interest and can work as a first-step entry point of participation (2010, p. 14). When considering the purpose of online tactics such as mass emails in the context of the broader campaign, Karpf illustrates that they are used to demonstrate citizen interest, provide preliminary education about the issue at hand, make it easy for individuals to take action and create a foundational membership to draw upon later (2010, p. 14).

Third, through his own empirical analysis, Karpf reports that online alerts and petitions do not realistically reflect the disarray or erosion of contentious politics envisaged by critics. He claims that digital tactics have been mischaracterised and that their importance and value as first-tier action is underestimated (Karpf, 2010, p. 16). He also illustrates some of the practical limitations that organisations face when employing digital tactics, such as mass emails. Organisations do not normally generate a constant stream of emails as Shulman implies; they are faced with the possibilities of members ignoring and unsubscribing if they send out too many emails and alerts. With this threat in mind, organisations have to strategically plan how they use emails and which political issues they wish to promote. Ultimately, Karpf convincingly dismisses the case against online campaigns because it ignores the broader political context and assumes that actions are isolated tactics.

Extending Karpf’s work, Halupka (2018) argues for the legitimisation of clicktivism as a political act, contending that it is a multifaceted issue. Halupka (2018) develops a heuristic to help analyse clicktivist acts and to understand their legitimacy. Halupka’s research also builds on Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) connective action theory, arguing that while the movements they describe as connective actions enjoy a perception of

legitimacy, the individual personalised modes of engagement that comprise connective action are dismissed (2018, p. 130). Crucially, Halupka (2018, p. 131) identifies clicktivism as the ‘most prominent form of political expression in the world’, emphasising the schism that exists between its popularity and its repeated dismissal and devaluation. Halupka proposes a systematic heuristic comprising seven key features that he argues defines clicktivism. He describes clicktivism as situated online; an impulsive gesture; noncommittal; does not require specialised knowledge; is easily replicated; engages a political object; and, is an action performed (Halupka, 2018, p. 132). While Halupka’s heuristic is useful, it does not necessarily account for the extent to which emotional labour and risks are burdened by feminist activists. As Chapter Seven explores, in some contemporary feminist actions, such as the #MeToo movement, deep levels of thought and angst underlie the posting of tweets and the sharing of stories on social media, and involve great emotional and psychological costs. Additionally, many feminist activists strongly consider their participation and public involvement in feminist actions due to the increased risk of online abuse that women experience when they are vocal in the public and online spheres (Citron, 2014). While Halupka’s heuristic may not fully account for the practices of feminist activism, it is useful for emphasising the importance of understanding the context and intention behind clicktivism.

Ingrained in the debate surrounding clicktivism and slacktivism is the false notion that online and offline activism are separate. Linked to many criticisms of slacktivism is the notion that online actions occur solely in the virtual world, overlooking the inseparable relationship between the virtual and the material world. In *Democracy, Participation and Contestation*, Cristiana Olcese (2014) notes that previous research into social media has focused primarily on its capacity for mobilisation, rather than approaching it as a ‘window through which to view the larger protest ecology’ (p. 330). Olcese introduces a concept called ‘micro-abeyance’—the time or state between mobilisations (2014, p. 332). This state is typically invisible to the public eye; however, it is an essential process that maintains the developed protest network via the consolidation of key ideas and goals (Olcese, 2014, p. 332). Olcese describes the nature of this period of micro-abeyance alongside the fluidity of online and offline activism. She describes how decisions could be made offline, but that they only become meaningful when shared online; she also describes how ideas could be developed during informal chats online and inspire offline actions, which in turn may only become successful once they are documented, presented

and shared online (Olcese, 2014, p. 341). These processes are recounted by all of the activists interviewed for this thesis and will be explored further in the following research chapters.

In summary, substantial changes are occurring in political advocacy groups with the help of digital technology, though the nuances of this transformation have been clouded by accusations of slacktivism. Karpf, like Chadwick, attributes the changes to the hybridisation of organisational structures. However, he also notes that many of the structural changes are happening behind the scenes, which is problematic for scholars who base their analysis on public data; this was a limitation that was explored above in relation to Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) network analysis. Olcese's (2014) research refocusing the attention on the online and offline relationship of contemporary activism begins to illustrate and document the nature of these behind the scenes structural changes that social media are assisting. This thesis moves beyond the false dichotomy of online and offline activism, and past the outdated accusations of slacktivism to develop a more nuanced understanding of how contemporary actions can be regarded in a post-digital media ecology. This analysis is ultimately used for examining the organisational structures of contemporary feminist actions, and for determining how useful Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) connective action theory is for assessing feminist actions.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter revisited Mancur Olson's (1965) collective action theory and its problem of free riders to provide a foundational understanding of how activism has traditionally been understood. It then outlined how collective action has been reconceptualised since the development and proliferation of social and digital technology, as well as how digital tools and platforms are transforming the protest ecology. It questioned how one can understand the organisational styles of social movements with emerging digital networks and introduced theories that have been developed to help address this contemporary phenomenon—including Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action, which is the primary focus of this thesis. An outline of connective action's logic and its three-part typology was offered and then critiqued to build a foundation for analysing the organisational structures of contemporary feminist actions and how these may complicate the theory of connective action.

The outline of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) logic of connective action illustrates the three categories of organisational styles: organisationally brokered collective action, organisationally enabled connective action and crowd-enabled connective action. The two new styles of connective action that Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) propose are characterised by personalised action frames that are shareable and adaptable for individuals to connect with in ways that suit their own beliefs. The two new styles are also characterised by a growing distrust of hierarchy and authority, which has led formal organisations to take a step back and remain in the background of protests. In these connective action cases, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue that the burden of organisation has shifted from formal groups and parties to social and digital media platforms. However, they are careful to contend that this type of activism is not replacing traditional collective action; they retain a form of organisationally brokered collective action in which digital platforms are used for their cost efficiency, but in which they do not have any transformative effect on the organisational style employed by these established groups.

The critique of connective action theory raised a few issues, particularly related to the limitations surrounding Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) methodology. One of these issues was the limited focus of case studies on economic and environmentally related protests without a consideration of feminist protests, as well as the bias towards examining protests that centre on physical mass mobilisations. Second, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) recognise that their methodology and social network analysis lacks the ability to effectively examine less transparent protest networks. This limitation also prevents their research from being able to capture and illustrate the power dynamics between individual activists and the relationships and behaviours that occur behind the scenes, both online and offline. To capture this type of behaviour, this thesis employs an ethnographic approach, with in-depth interviews to shed light on covert behaviours and the relationship dynamics between activists that occur behind the scenes. This approach will further aid the analysis of how useful connective action theory is for assessing the organisational structures of contemporary feminist actions.

Further, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) only briefly mention the potentially shifting burden of mobilisation from organisations to individuals; however, their methodology is unable to capture this finer-grained analysis. A growing pool of more recent literature

(Gerbaudo, 2017; Poell et al., 2016) challenges the concepts surrounding ideas of structureless movements and horizontalism in protest networks and draws attention to individuals who are being charged with the duty of an unconventional leadership, such as social media administrators. The following chapter continues this theme by illustrating the impossibility of 'structurelessness', despite the existing taboo of discussing leadership in feminist activism. It also illustrates how many of the issues and characteristics attributed to contemporary connective action, such as a distrust of hierarchy and a personalisation of politics, existed in the feminist movement long before the prevalence of digital platforms. Focusing on Freeman's (1972) theory of structurelessness, the next chapter provides a framework for understanding how structure in the feminist movement was previously conceptualised, as well as a review of recent research into digital feminist activism. Combined, this contributes to the conceptual framework of examining the organisational structures and practices of contemporary feminist actions and whether connective action is useful in assessing these actions.

Finally, this chapter reviewed the debate surrounding criticisms of slacktivism that are repeatedly used to dismiss contemporary actions. Drawing on Chadwick's (2007, 2013) organisational hybridity and the hybrid media system, Karpf's (2010) rebuttal of clicktivism, and a conceptualisation of the contemporary post-digital society (Cramer, 2015), the chapter established an understanding of how digital and social technologies have become embedded in the current protest ecology. These 'newer' technologies are inextricably intertwined with 'older' technologies to contribute to a complex post-digital activist repertoire.

Chapter 3: Understanding the Structure of Feminist Activism

The previous chapter developed a thorough understanding of collective action and alternative social movement theories, specifically focusing on Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action. It explored some of the key ways used to conceptualise the organisational structure of activism and showed that these need developing to account for contemporary feminist activism. This chapter turns to a close examination of how scholars have researched and theorised the structures of feminist activism, with a view to develop these theories to account for the contemporary digital landscape. It develops a conceptual framework that will be used to help interrogate the theory of connective action and illuminate the organisational structures of contemporary feminist activism.

This chapter examines Freeman's (1972) conceptualisation of structurelessness, and other research that has investigated the capabilities of new technology for providing women with alternative structures for organising and engaging politically. This literature review will set the foundation for analysing case studies of contemporary feminist activism in the digital age to understand the current organisational structures that are being adopted and challenged by the feminist movement—and how this might complicate the theory of connective action.

The chapter also includes a brief review of some influential texts contributing to the conceptualisation of women's relationships with digital technology. Previous research has often been overzealous in its criticisms or praise of the liberating power of technology for women. However, Judy Wajcman's (2004, p. 108) theory of technofeminism provides a framework for understanding the 'mutually shaping relationship between gender and technology'—a relationship in which technology and society are 'mutually constituted'. This technofeminist approach is used as a framework for this research, as it prompts a contextualised understanding of how feminist activists are using digital technology. As an analysis of the case studies will highlight, feminist activists can exploit their digital networks and social technologies to strengthen their actions; however, the same digital platforms on which they operate can also be oppressing and can perpetuate misogynistic abuse towards women.

3.1 Structurelessness

Freeman's (1972) research examines the problems of power relations and leadership that have plagued feminist collectives. She argues that feminist and social movement groups have aspired to be structureless and to provide everyone with an equal voice and equal power to prevent re-enacting the oppressive structures they are battling. This commitment has, however, led to elitism within feminist groups. The preoccupation with structurelessness has led to what Freeman (1972, p. 151) describes as a 'looseness and informality' that encourages participation in discussion, but not much action beyond consciousness raising. Freeman argues that groups are unsuccessful at moving forward because they refuse structural change once consciousness raising has been exhausted and she contends that structure and organisation are not inherently bad, despite being often abused (1972, p. 152). She firmly denies the existence of a structureless group and states that structure is inevitable, regardless of intentions—although it can be flexible and may change shape over time.

If there is no such thing as a structureless group, as Freeman suggests, what might this mean for the theory of connective action and how might this complicate Bennett and Segerberg's crowd-enabled connective action? These questions are further explored in the analysis of the #TakeDownJulianBlanc and #EndViolenceAgainstWomen protests in chapters six and seven, which examine the structure of non-transparent connective actions. In summary, the term crowd-enabled can be misleading because it suggests an even playing field between the members of the crowd involved and it does not capture the importance and power of individual actors in a protest. Although it may appear that a protest is crowd-enabled and crowd-driven, key actors emerge as clear and distinct leaders and function as driving forces and motivators for the protest.

Freeman makes a clear distinction that is particularly valuable when analysing contemporary structures—that the 'idea of "structurelessness" does not prevent the formation of informal structures, but only formal ones' (1972, p. 152). In this way, structurelessness can be dangerous because it masks the power dynamics that have inevitably arisen in a group. Without recognition, the processes involved in decision-making cannot be made transparent and this risks perpetuating elitism. Further to this, Freeman clarifies that a formalised structure does not erase informal structures and power dynamics that may exist or develop; however, it does hinder the potential for an informal

structure's predominant control (Freeman, 1972, p. 153). Following Freeman's conceptualisation, this thesis incorporates the idea that structurelessness is impossible and that there are only informal and formal structures that can provide a framework for analysing the organisational structures of the feminist campaigns chosen as case studies.

While Freeman's essay focuses on the feminist movement and stems from her experiences with radical feminist groups in the 60s, the analysis and critique of structural organisational issues are relevant to most groups or collectives who seek an alternative structure and who resist traditional conceptualisations of leadership. The issues that Freeman identifies with feminist groups are often the same issues that prevent and exclude women from participating and having equal access to resources and power in conventional organisations. She also outlines various instances in feminist groups in which there were criteria for who was allowed to participate in the informal elite group, such as marital status, middle-class background, college education, being 'hip' and various other characteristics (Freeman, 1972, p. 155). Freeman recognises that a formalisation of structure does not prevent discrimination; however, she insists that it can make discrimination more difficult and leave it exposed to criticism. In his research that examines democratisation without hierarchy in relation to the World Social Forum, Teivo Teivaninen (2011) highlights issues relating to recruitment and the addition of new members in groups that strive to be structureless. He finds that the 'illusion of structurelessness contributed to the strengthening of [informal] organisational structures that prevented the inclusion of new members' (Teivaninen, 2011, p. 190). Using Freeman's theory as a basis, he demonstrates the paradox of trying to develop an open and structureless space. He outlines how others have argued that open spaces should have fewer explicit rules and procedures and indicates how the space becomes closed by default if there are no procedures for recruitment.

Another element that Freeman recognises as influential in the development of elitist groups—and in informal structures more broadly—is the existence of friendship groups. She argues that they work as communication networks beyond any formal channels established by a group and as the sole network and the elite of an unstructured group, if no formal channels have been developed (Freeman, 1972, p. 154). This network of communication is largely unavoidable because friends cannot be prevented from talking and sharing. However, Freeman suggests that having two or more friendship networks in

a formalised structure is often the most productive situation because people will compete with each other for more formal power and other members can fluctuate between the two networks, depending on their current position and concerns.

Leach (2013) provides a contemporary critique of Freeman's conceptualisation of structurelessness in relation to her experiences with the Occupy movement and radical leftist movements in Germany. Leach (2013) argues that Freeman's basis for her theory is a straw man and that it has never been any group's goal to avoid structure; rather, it has been to avoid formal hierarchy, with a more useful question being what kind of structure could best maximise participation while avoiding elitism. The non-hierarchical and alternative structural processes present within the Occupy movement, Leach (2013, p.182) argues, are not new practices, but have moved from fringe social movement groups concerned with social change to the mainstream. In this way, Leach (2013, p.182) contends that Occupy is a 'new kind of hybrid movement' that brings together contemporary anarchist practices with the more 'substantive' and traditional focus of older social movements. Further, Leach (2013) draws attention to the issues heterogeneous groups face when adopting non-hierarchical structures. She argues that the more diverse these activist groups are the harder it is for them to reach consensus, the more likely pre-existing inequalities will be reproduced, and the structure of the group will be more difficult to sustain (Leach, 2013, p.182).

While an interesting analysis, Leach's critique weakens throughout the article, as she falls into the trap of using terms such as 'unstructured' and 'structureless' to describe two of the case studies in the analysis and fails to provide a deep enough analysis of the so-called 'unstructured' components of the movements analysed. Leach conflates structure with the formal and explicit version of organising while overlooking the informal structures that constitute group dynamics in the collective that may shape and influence the cultivation of a culture. Leach suggests that this 'culture' is much more important than having a formal structure. She contends that rather than relying on a structure to prevent or curb informal hierarchies, groups should develop a culture that fosters 'solidarity, cooperation, mutual respect, and trust' (Leach, 2013, p. 189). However, what Leach does not recognise or acknowledge is the role that friendship groups play in the development of this culture and how they constitute the network for an informal structure.

Leach's description of the movement *Autonomen* and how it enables what is called a 'fight culture' echoes Freeman's outline of how multiple friendship groups in a movement can compete with each other, stimulating production and gathering support from members, which can fluctuate between friendship groups depending on the issue. It would be naïve to believe that each individual has equal power to participate and raise issues in a 'fight culture', regardless of the movement's intent. Therefore, without a more detailed analysis of the group dynamics and the influencing factors that shape the movement's culture, this thesis cannot fully identify what structure exists and, ultimately, the role and power that the informal structure maintains. Leach does make an important distinction that is useful for clarifying the difference between destructive or oppressive structures and more positive structures that strengthen a movement. Rather than simply trying to avoid structurelessness, Leach argues that researchers should aim to 'sustain structures of tyrannylessness' (2013, p. 183). Leach's reconceptualisation prompts a more positive dialogue that avoids the dichotomous debate of structure/structurelessness and proceeds to the more practical standpoint of beginning to understand how to develop a more balanced and inclusive structure.

Another issue that Freeman identifies with informal groups is the accidental positioning of women as 'stars'. These are usually women who have caught the public eye and who the press considers spokespeople because the movement has not elected or established any official spokesperson. Freeman states that because these 'stars' were not elected by people in the movement, they are often resented when the press presumes they speak for the movement as a whole (1972, p. 158). A similar pattern can be observed in the analysis of #TakeDownJulienBlanc and the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaigns that are examined in chapters six and seven.

Freeman suggests that the feminist movement's informal structures have led many women to turn to other political organisations that provide formalised, structured activity. She argues that these organisations view the women's movement as a recruiting ground and address women's issues as one issue among many (Freeman, 1972, p. 160). However, in her critique of Freeman's theory, entitled *The Tyranny of Tyranny*, Cathy Levine (1975) contends that Freeman only addresses one of at least two primary models for building a movement. The first model is mass organisation with centralised control, which Freeman supposedly argues for. Levine outlines the second model as smaller

groups in voluntary association. She argues that individuals can feel alienated by the size of the former type and face struggles, such as being heard due the size of large organisations.

Levine (1975) contends that small groups have the ability to multiply the strength of each member. She believes that small groups can utilise each member to their fullest potential instead of losing members in a competitive environment, in which members fight to be the loudest, smartest or wittiest. Levine critiques Freeman's assumption that small groups within the women's movement struggle to move beyond the consciousness raising phase. Rather, Levine finds that the consciousness raising phase of the women's movement is not over and is a vital process that continues to be necessary for revolutionary liberation. Although Levine's analysis was written in 1975, her argument remains valid almost three decades later. There continues to be feminist awareness raising protests in the contemporary political climate, as demonstrated by the proliferation of feminist hashtags and large-scale movements such as #MeToo, and these have contributed to and triggered numerous other actions. Levine qualifies her contention by arguing for a more useful definition of 'consciousness raising,' one which appreciates the role of consciousness raising for culture building. Levine argues that Freeman implies a false dichotomy by suggesting movement building is a process that follows on from consciousness raising instead of co-existing.

However, Levine's outline of the efficiency of smaller groups is romanticised and ignores Freeman's discussion of the role of friendship networks in activist groups, which was previously discussed. Freeman's theory does not specifically contend that larger organisations provide the only path for groups to move beyond consciousness raising, although she does state that they have more access to resources. Further, Freeman never states that the process of consciousness raising must be finished for a group to move beyond this phase. Rather, she argues that less structured groups fail to achieve anything beyond consciousness raising, not that consciousness raising in itself no longer provides any value. However, Levine's analysis should not be entirely dismissed. Her emphasis on smaller groups has merit in that it is usually a smaller group, or an elite group, that maintains the most power, even in a larger organisation.

Levine (1975) also uses an essentialist approach for understanding feminist activism and the movement more broadly. She described inherent differences in men and women, as

she argues that the feminist movement should disavow and disassociate itself from the male left-wing politics to break free from the patriarchy and capitalist values that the male left-wing perpetuates (Levine, 1975). She goes on to argue that there is a ‘tyranny of tyranny’ and that for women to create their own way of life, they need fewer structures and rules. Although Levine overstates her point by labelling Freeman’s theory ‘destructive’ and demanding recognition for an alternative structure, while also declaring that more structures are not needed, there is a valuable lesson from Levine’s analysis: that there is the possibility for a real political alternative to hierarchical organisations.

Both Freeman and Levine’s analyses support the development of personalised engagement for activism. Bennett and Segeberg (2013), as observed in the previous chapter, argue that personalised action frames have become part of contemporary connective action. However, as both Levine and Freeman revealed, a personalised approach has been crucial to the feminist movement long before digital technology. Levine (1975) argues that a reason why small collectives are important is because they allow people to fight on the level of personal dynamics. Levine (1975, n.p.) identifies a lack of self-esteem, or what she labels ‘feelings of personal shittiness’, as a force that prevents energised activism in the women’s movement and suggests that personal engagement in mutual trust groups can help counter those insecurities and fight the silencing of patriarchy. While Levine’s argument is not wholly convincing, it does hold some truth in relation to the barriers and silencing that women have traditionally faced. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) suggest that digital technologies are providing an easier path for personalised action frameworks on a large scale, to the extent that they have become important components of activism in general. This suggests that social and digital technology may be extending and amplifying frameworks that have previously existed in the feminist movement.

Overall, Freeman is too hypercritical in relation to informal structured activism. While she identifies key issues that affect these groups, they have proven to be more successful than she gave them credit for. Freeman claims that informally structured groups are incapable of drawing on resources to support their priorities, let alone even deciding what their priorities are (1972, p. 161). However, contemporary examples of informally structured campaigns such as #TakeDownJulienBlanc, which will be explored in Chapter Six, and the Arab Spring protests, challenge Freeman’s claims. While Freeman

recognises that ideas can be spread and diffused widely, she does not believe that they can be implemented without formalised structure. The question arises, then, that since Freeman's 1972 essay so accurately pinpoints the movement's issues and the nature of structureless organisations, is her conclusion of the global incompetence of informal groups complicated and challenged by the development of social and digital technology? This thesis examines the organisational structure of feminist activism in the digital age and ultimately critiques and extends the theory of connective action, with the help of Freeman's notion of structure and structurelessness.

In considering how digital technology has complicated conceptualisations of the structure of feminist activism, this research aims to avoid falling into the dichotomy of discussing how digital tools have been imagined as either emancipatory or oppressive. In a post-digital world in which digital tools are pervasive and have become normalised in everyday life, there is little point in examining digital activism as if it is a distinct type of activism. Feminist and cyberfeminist scholars, such as Haraway, Plant, Harding and Wajcman, have previously considered the role of digital technology and have fiercely debated their effects on women and whether or not women should embrace them. While there is immense value in this historical research, this debate has now moved beyond the point in which there is a separate cyberfeminism and has transitioned into a world in which technology is just part of everyday life. As observed in Chapter Two, there has been much debate surrounding slacktivism and whether digital tools enhance or distract from genuine activism. Once it is accepted that people have shifted into a post-digital society in which digital technologies are ingrained in the fabric of everyday practices, one can begin analysing and discussing how digital technologies are being used in the context of a broader, hybridised society.

3.2 Technofeminism

Judy Wajcman provides a solid framework for introducing a feminist perspective into social science and technology studies in her books *Feminism Confronts Technology* (1991) and *Technofeminism* (2004), and in her article 'Feminist theories of technology' (2010). Technology has been in recent history associated with masculinity and this association has led to the exclusion of women from technological industries and STS studies. Wajcman identifies a shift in thought regarding the relationship between women and technology. She documents that in the 1980s, feminists were exploring the 'gendered

character of technology itself' (Wajcman, 2010, p. 146). She supports Sandra Harding's (1986) contention that feminist criticisms were evolving from asking 'the "woman question" in science to asking the more radical "science question" in feminism' (2010, p. 146). By this, she means that feminists were beginning to question science and technology as distinctively masculine endeavours and she questioned how it might be refashioned and harnessed for emancipatory ends, instead of simply asking how women might gain equity from within and by science (Wajcman, 2010, 146).

Feminist technology scholars, as Wajcman outlines throughout her books, have attempted to reconceptualise the relationship between women and technology by deconstructing the masculine association with technology and suggesting women need to become less afraid and more embracing of technology. Donna Haraway (1987), one of the most influential scholars on this topic, provided a method for women to begin accepting technology and radically shaped the discourse surrounding women's relationship with technology. In her essay 'A Cyborg Manifesto', Haraway (1987) employs the metaphor of a cyborg to help deconstruct essentialist and oppressive dichotomies between technology and nature, masculine and feminine, and human and machine. Haraway's (1987) vision of the cyborg contributed to the development of cyberfeminist thought because it encouraged feminists to embrace technology and view it as a means of transcending essentialist boundaries and identities.

Stemming from Haraway's (1987) cyborg manifesto are theories of cyberfeminism. Cyberfeminist scholars considered the liberating and empowering potential of digital and internet technologies. First coined by Sadie Plant (1997), cyberfeminism as a movement consisted of a 'range of theories, debates and practices about the relationship between gender and digital culture' (Flanagan & Booth, 2002, p. 12). Cyberfeminist scholars like Plant (1997), Susan Luckman (1999) and even the more contemporary Jessie Daniels (2009) regarded cyberspace and cybertechnologies as potentially liberating for women. Often drawing on Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985), they held essentialist views of gender, believing that new internet technologies were uniquely suited to females and could empower them to deconstruct masculine hierarchies and politics. Meanwhile, other scholars such as Faith Wilding (1998) and Lori Kendall (2002) have argued that digital and internet technologies extend and reproduce traditional, heterosexual and masculine hierarchies. While these views were far too idealistic and often discussed the

power of technology as either utopian or dystopian, scholars such as Judy Wajcman and Sherry Turkle have helped develop a more balanced perspective of digital technology.

In her book *Alone Together* (2011), Sherry Turkle argues that we are now hybrid constructions that are mutually determined by experiences in both the virtual and material world. This is indicative of the shift to understanding digital technology as ingrained in our current society and the move to stop analysing the online sphere as separate from the offline material world. Indeed, this is why Wajcman developed the term technofeminism—in a bid to move beyond cyberfeminist discourse and to develop a more complex understanding of women’s relationship with technology. Wajcman (2010) claims that technological transformation is contingent on the acknowledgement that technology and society are inseparable and mutually shape one another. She envisages masculinity and femininity materialising in technologies; however, the gendering of these technologies happens through various points of contact, via their original design and how they are reconfigured and manipulated during their consumption (Wajcman, 2010, p. 149). Wajcman argues that technologies and artefacts are no longer regarded as detached from their societal contexts and that technology can be considered a sociotechnical product, a ‘seamless web or network combining artefacts, people, organisations, cultural meanings and knowledge’ (2010, p. 149). This thesis adopts this technofeminist framework in its examination of feminist campaigns in the digital age. The research situates technology as one element in a network of variables that shape and influence each other in the process of interrogating the organisational structures of feminist activism.

3.3 Digital Feminist Activism

3.3.1 Online Actions and Physical Mobilisations

In the past few years, there has been a deluge of research on women’s digital and online activism and feminist actions. Much of the literature has continued to privilege mass mobilisations, such as those that began in 2011 in the Arab world and the global spread of the Occupy movement (Boler & Nitsou, 2014; Harlow & Guo, 2014; Khondker, 2011; Lim, 2013 Newsrom & Lengel, 2012). Newsrom and Lengel (2012) consider the role that social media and online activism play in women’s participation in the Arab Spring, Tunisia and Egypt revolutions. Their research investigates how online activism works locally and globally and illustrates the absence of gender-based social change in

representations of the revolutions by both traditional and social media. They argue that local activists and groups can use social media to develop their message and connect with the global community. Most of their research is based on online content analysis and they examine citizen journalism and social media as a third space for feminist discussions. They also discuss the relationship between online and offline activism; though their emphasis lies on the virtual 'third space', which they describe as a 'space for contained empowerment' (Newsrom & Lengel, 2012, p. 32).

This third space that Newsrom and Lengel (2012, p. 32) envision offers women agency for revolutionary activism and works as a space that is designed to challenge 'hegemonic and patriarchal norms' by empowering marginalised voices. Their hope is that the virtual space can free itself entirely from oppressive forces and that it can create an entirely liberating arena for female agency. This perspective is overly optimistic and falls into the utopian vision indulged by previous cyberfeminist scholars. However, their research does illustrate a complex understanding of how the messages developed in third spaces are not isolated in society and can be mediated, reframed and repurposed by corporate media.

Newsrom and Lengel (2012, p. 32) explain the concept of digital reflexivity: the process of how online messages become a reflection of the medium in which they are created, through the 'constant copying and recopying of the messages' that can ultimately distort and blur their intention and effect. The authors find that gendered messages were often intercepted by Western media, who would repurpose them, rendering the gender-based element invisible. They conclude that digital messages often lose their power when adapted and translated for a global stage and that the mediated representations of the Arab women presented to the rest of the world were restricted and altered to fit other global needs and values (Newsrom & Lengel, 2012, p. 32). Newsrom and Lengel offer insight into the power struggles that women confront in the virtual domain and highlight how feminist activism can be hijacked and repurposed by organisations.

The power struggle between organisations and corporate media that Newsrom and Lengel identify is reflected in Bennett, Segerberg and Yang's (2018) recent work analysing peripheral protest networks and how meaning is negotiated in complex media ecologies. Bennett et al. (2018) analyse how the meaning of the Occupy movement changed and was influenced by corporate media and peripheral public figures. They argue that, as a result of social media networks in this complex media ecology, the central meaning of

the protest shifted from banking and democracy to inequality (Bennett et al., 2018, p. 659). The legacy media coverage was influenced and negotiated by peripheral communication networks that pulled the action frame away from banking issues that were the primary concerns for the core activists involved in the original protest (Bennett et al., 2018). This consideration provides additional insight into the role of peripheral actors and communication networks in Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) crowd-enabled or organisationally enabled connective actions. The struggle between corporate media and activists at shaping the protest narrative is further complicated in feminist actions due to whitewashing and the erasure of intersectional narratives. This struggle for meaning is also observed in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest examined in Chapter Six.

Megan Boler and Christina Nitsou (2014) continue the trend of analysing mass mobilisations; however, they provide a structural analysis of the Occupy movement by focusing on female activists' participation in the movement. They investigate the capability of the internet to subvert hierarchical structures and its potential for creating and implementing horizontal structures. Horizontalism is a non-hierarchical organisational structure that Boler and Nitsou (2014) believe is vital in contemporary contentious politics, particularly when it concerns minorities and groups that were historically oppressed. A key component of contemporary social movements that Boler and Nitsou propose is a commitment to the 'process of liberation'; horizontalism is instrumental in this liberation by offering opportunities for alternative and historically oppressed voices to assume a type of 'leadership' (Boler & Nitsou, 2014, p. 268). A horizontal structure is based on the assumption that inequality will 'always permeate every social interaction' (Boler & Nitsou, 2014, p. 270). Boler and Nitsou believe that movements incorporating an organisationally horizontal structure are committing to challenging ingrained social biases and are leading by example. Methods of organisation for social movements that are 'self-consciously non-hierarchical, consensual, and participatory' have been typically embraced by activists and participants of social movements (Chadwick, 2007, p. 285).

Boler and Nitsou (2014) apply their conceptualisation of horizontalism to female activists who participated in the Occupy Wall Street protests. They argue that a movement that focuses on equality benefits from a horizontal structure because it provides the opportunity for minority voices to be heard, and, attempts to deconstruct patriarchal

power dynamics and level the playing field from within. This preference for a non-hierarchical structure is too idealistic and is illustrative of Freeman's description of the feminist movement's inclination for a leaderless movement. Boler and Nitsou's (2014) view of horizontalism overlooks the reality that certain voices will maintain a level of privilege and amplification over others, regardless of a decentralised leadership. Privilege and how it affects and elevates certain people's voices needs to be recognised so that processes can be established to more effectively create a forum for marginalised voices.

Boler and Nitsou (2014) claim that people currently live 'hybridised lives in which "real life" and "cyber-life" overlap and mutually shape one another' (p. 287). Individuals log into social networking sites daily, browse and comment on various news articles online, interact with friends and communities via social media and create their personal online identities. Social movements are tapping into and encouraging these behaviours that have become part of the everyday life of citizens in the digital era. As these behaviours become habitual and inseparable from everyday life, they become inseparable from contemporary actions.

Social networking sites encourage self-expression and citizen journalism and emphasise the personalisation of politics. Social technologies equip individuals to become catalysts and producers of their own meanings and expressions regarding the political sphere. Boler and Nitsou (2014, p. 281) argue that these technologies enable a logic of organisation that is centred on the 'co-production and sharing based on personalised expression'. Individuals are able to adapt a movement's message to their own lifestyle and beliefs and can contribute to the cause and surrounding discussions in ways that are relevant and accessible to them. In this way, social and digital technologies enable the potential for women's voices to be elevated and for feminist activists to contribute to the creation of their own narratives and meaning.

The distinctions between production and consumption and active and passive in a mediated culture are becoming increasingly blurred with the opportunities that digital technologies are providing. Boler and Nitsou (2014, p. 285) emphasised Mark Deuze's (2007) view of convergence as not just a technological process, but as a cultural logic. A rethinking of conventional binaries around culture and politics is required if one is to understand the evolving nature of social movements, participatory democracy and organisational structures in a digitally mediated landscape. From this research, it can be

observed that the incorporation of personalised messages and the sharing of experiences has been extended with the help of social and digital technologies and has become a central characteristic of contemporary activism. This also remains consistent with Freeman's (1972) analysis of non-hierarchical groups in relation to the women's movement; she argues that they may be better at expanding participation and having a broader discussion, but it is in the next step of converting discussion into action that they fail.

While some researchers examine the role of female activists in broader mass mobilisations as discussed above, other feminist scholars focus on analysing the role of digital platforms in specifically feminist mobilisations. Kaitlynn Mendes provides a thorough examination of the mass mobilisation, Slutwalk, in her book *Slutwalk: Feminism, Activism and Media* (2015). Slutwalk became a global phenomenon due to the extensive reach that social media and online networking enabled. Although its primary focus was on the physical march that protested rape culture and victim blaming, online media, blogs and digital tools played an essential role in developing discourse about rape culture and representing feminist activism in a global context (Mendes, 2015). Through interviews with organisers and content analysis, Mendes examines how Slutwalk was represented in mainstream news and online feminist media sites. Her research provides insight into the ways that Slutwalk is 'represented, choreographed and experienced' and, more broadly, the 'storying' of contemporary feminism and feminist activism (Mendes, 2015, p. 3). She defines this 'storying' as the representation of feminism through mainstream media and she illustrates how feminist blogs and media are used to create 'counter-memories' that disrupt and challenge the mainstream representation of the feminist movement (Mendes, 2015, p. 13). While her focus is on the media representation of Slutwalk, her research offers insight into the protest's structures with digital technology. It also emphasises the importance of awareness raising during and after the physical march.

Mendes's (2015) research identifies blogging as an important element in online feminist activism, including in the facilitation of offline mass mobilisations. Blogging has been a central component of feminist activism and much attention has been paid to it, particularly in relation to how it has empowered the youth (boyd, 2007, 2014; Daniels, 2009; Keller, 2012; Seo, Houston, Knight, Kennedy & English, 2014; Shaw, 2012; Velasquez &

LaRose, 2015). Blogging became a common practice for third-wave feminists as it offered a space for girls to share their experiences and find solidarity with others who may not be in their geographical community.

3.3.2 Blogging, Online Spaces and Feminist DIY Culture

Jessalynn Keller (2012) examines girls' blogging as a method for reframing what it means to be a participant in feminist politics. She interviewed girls who contribute to and run two American feminist blogs to understand how they have used blogging to connect with a feminist community, develop their own political identity and further their understanding of feminism. The internet and blogging communities provide opportunities for girls to develop new understandings of community, activism, the political sphere and feminism (Keller, 2012, p. 43). Keller illustrates how online participatory politics and contemporary blogging can be considered an extension of traditional feminist activism and she provides a starting point for understanding the significance of girls' blogging in the history of feminist activism.

Frances Shaw (2012, p. 373) examines how the Australian feminist blogosphere challenged mainstream discourse to raise awareness of how the history of rock music excludes or erases women. She describes how the activists developed a 'cross-platform poll' that incorporated Twitter, Facebook and email and was heavily promoted through their blogs. The value of online communities for discursive change is made apparent by Shaw. Her paper accentuates the importance of these online communities and how discursive engagement should be considered a mode of activism. While individual blog posts are not necessarily politically significant, the 'network of interlinked blog posts on a shared topic' is politically important (Shaw, 2012, p. 375). As Shaw argues, it is the day-to-day 'interlinkage' and relationships between bloggers and resources that creates a political network of discourse between activists and the public.

Along with blogging, a strong online do-it-yourself (DIY) culture has developed alongside contemporary feminist groups. This culture encompasses blogs, forums, e-zines and other websites that 'operate as spaces for expression and dialogue' regarding social and political issues in an informal, often personalised context (Harris, 2008, p. 482). In her work involving young women's participatory politics and online cultures, Anita Harris (2008) recognises that alternative groups and expressions facilitated by DIY

spaces are not a new phenomenon that have emerged with digital platforms. Drawing on Nancy Fraser's conceptualisation of 'counter-publics' that provide alternative channels for political dialogue that challenge and subvert historically exclusive norms of the mainstream political arena, Harris shows that subcultures of politics have always existed and social technologies are making them easier to find (2008, p. 482). Harris is convincing in her outline of how digital and social technologies further facilitate such counter-publics and assist in their growth and development across geographical borders. She contends that young women are preferring to engage with politics in a more social and personal manner with the facilitation of these technologies. Harris argues for a shift in focus to non-traditional activities, such as social networking, the development of personal pages and the uses of mobile phones for a comprehensive understanding of contemporary political activism.

This DIY culture has evolved into what Emma Jane (2016) describes in some cases as 'feminist digilantism'. Jane's (2014a, 2014b) previous research conceptualised gendered online abuse as e-bile and argued that it is rooted in a history of sexist attitudes and practices, framing e-bile as a social phenomenon. Jane (2016) argues there has been an increase in the self-reporting and media reporting of gendered online harassment since 2011. However, Danielle Citron's (2014) research has found an increase in online abuse when women and victims speak publicly about gendered harassment. Combined with a lack of institutional solutions, women have developed a range of individualistic 'digilante' practices to respond against such abuse, in what has since developed as a 'call out' culture. Jane describes DIY initiatives in which individuals attempt to name and shame their antagonists online, which has resulted in some cases of abusers losing their jobs. This type of action is examined further in Chapter Seven, which focuses on the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign that was triggered when a man lost his job after feminist writer Clementine Ford reported his online comments to his employer.

The individualistic actions that construct this DIY feminist digilantism can provide a range of benefits, such as a sense of empowerment, catharsis, solidarity and to have one's suffering acknowledged (Jane, 2016). However, Jane (2016, p. 284) problematises the structure of these types of actions, arguing that there needs to be a 'recalibrated approach to collectivism' to achieve legislative and corporate reform. Jane (2016) raises a few issues with individualistic online shaming actions, arguing that there is the potential for

disproportionate punishment and misfired accusations, as well as the burden of responsibility being placed back onto the victim. Further, she raises the concern that policymakers, corporations and law enforcement may avoid responsibility by supporting DIY initiatives, continuing to situate gendered hostility and violence in the private sphere and categorising it as women's responsibility (Jane, 2016, p. 285). Moreover, Jane contends that individualistic approaches demonstrated in feminist digilantism are 'easily forgotten...if they receive attention at all', arguing that there needs to be a concerted, collective effort for feminist activism to move beyond consciousness raising and to achieve corporate and institutional change. This argument is, again, reminiscent of Freeman's (1972) criticisms of the feminist movement's awareness raising efforts and her contention that feminist actions require a more formalised and collectivist approach to change.

However, Zizi Papacharissi's (2015) research provides another framework for understanding the power of individualistic and personalised participation and how they can develop what she describes as 'affective publics'. Papacharissi's work reconceptualises discursive engagement as political and discusses how 'affective attunements', or personalised expressions, can be performed by liking, sharing and commenting on posts and how it can contribute to a civic intensity, influencing the public framing of political issues. Activity on social networking sites can activate and re-energise the public and assist in the formation of networked publics, whether they are actual or imagined. Networked publics, as defined by boyd (2010, p. 39), are publics that are developed and structured by networked technologies and are the imagined collective that emerges from the 'intersection of people, technology, and practices'.

Papacharissi refocuses the significance of more personalised and informal forms of political engagement and her analysis adds to Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) conceptualisation of connective actions. Papacharissi supports Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) analysis describing how self-motivated actors share personalised content across social networks and then interconnected actors 'view, rebroadcast, and further remix' these (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 71). She believes that connective actions develop from personalised responses to political issues and that the personalised action frames present do not require a 'collective negotiation' of their meaning, consequences and how they align with a broader ideology (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 71). Further, Papacharissi argues

that movements emerging from a connective action logic may appear leaderless because they have been ‘assembled through imbricated individualised calls to action’ (2015, p. 71). However, she recognises that leading figures and core actors can emerge from these types of actions affecting the framing of the action. Papacharissi attributes the connective structure observed in movements such as Occupy to the combination of the affordances of digital platforms and how individuals activate their network.

In response to the accusations of clicktivism and slacktivism that digital actions repeatedly endure, Papacharissi argues for the power of affective publics describing how they can be inspired by solitary acts of heroes and then intensify as a chorus erupts around them. In contrast to Jane’s (2016) dismissal of individualised actions that can be forgotten, Papacharissi (2015, p. 68) suggests that these actions can generate power through repetition and cumulative intensity, becoming ‘deadening, powerful, and disruptive’. Ultimately, Papacharissi (2015, p. 119) argues that these types of online actions are disruptions that can destabilise powerful hierarchies, energise disorganised crowds and form networked communities that are activated and sustained by feelings of belonging and solidarity.

Digital feminist activist literature has also focused on the more general issue of women’s online political engagement, indicating that digital technologies have provided women and marginalised groups alternative and unconventional avenues for political expression and spaces for community building (Harris, 2008; Keller, 2012; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007). As previous scholars have argued, women have often been unwelcome in the formal political arena and have historically turned to alternative sites for political engagement (Harris, 2004, 2008). Traditional definitions of politics that revolve around voting and political party membership struggle to capture the array of actions and political involvement that occurs in digital spaces (Guntarik & Trott, 2016). The role of online spaces for the fostering of women’s and feminist communities has been researched by a variety of scholars.

In her paper, ‘Feminist cyberactivism: Violence against women, internet politics, and Spanish feminist praxis online’, Sonia Puente (2011) examines specific case studies of feminist activism online in Spain. Puente provides an overview of women’s collectives that use the internet in different ways to participate in the fight to stop violence against women. She argues that cyberactivism both strengthens offline political action and

conceptualises independent feminist positions online (Puente, 2011, p. 333). Despite her cyberactivist framework, which was considered earlier in the chapter as being outdated, Puente maintains a balanced stance in her research as she illustrates how the internet is a tool that offers possibilities for change while also being a socially constructed space that is not entirely liberated from systemic inequalities.

Puente's investigation of Spanish feminist praxis illustrates the value of online tools for feminism, as she documents how they influenced the implementation of the law and worked as valuable resources for recovering survivors of gender-based violence (2011, p. 334). Emphasising the roles that offline and online feminist organisations hold in relation to the Spanish government, Puente illustrates how they can lead to real legislative changes in government policies. Puente discovered two styles of activism incorporating online media. First, she found that offline feminist organisations decided to develop online portals to provide new tools for activist efforts, build a solid online collective and to overall strengthen networking activists (Puente, 2011, p. 334). The second type of approach to online activism was a reaction to the success of the portals that were developed by the offline feminist organisations. These reactions were generally webpages that located themselves among pre-existing sites and online communities dedicated to feminist praxis (Puente, 2011, p. 336). Puente identifies the combination of these styles of activism as Scott and Street's (2001) concept of 'mesomobilisation': the 'strategic alliance of online and offline networks to increase lobbying power in causes that interest a range of activists' (as cited in Puente, 2011, p. 336). This idea of mesomobilisation that Puente raises is illustrative of the messiness of activism in the digitised landscape that Chadwick's (2007) theory of organisational hybridity brings to attention, as observed in the previous chapter. Puente's findings that online activism is not isolated in the virtual realm but that it can be used in combination with offline efforts is further indicative of the need for social movement theories that can capture this offline/online negotiation.

Puente (2011) raises an interesting concept of the internet as a place for self-critiquing through the examination of a Spanish feminist website. She analyses how the website incorporates a feedback process between the formal articles written and published by experts and the space for discussion in the comments below the article (Puente, 2011, p. 342). A direct relationship between the website administrators and the interacting users is not just established, but encouraged. Reflexivity is a common practice in feminism and

the architecture of these websites support the process of self-critiquing. Puente regards technologies as effective tools for providing a guiding principle for feminist collectives. Her article ultimately attempts to shift the focus from the simple instrumentalisation of cyberspace to reflect ‘a grounded and politically-oriented use’ of digital technologies in relation to both online and offline feminist practices (Puente, 2011, p. 343).

Similar to Puente, Anna Piela (2015) provides an analysis of how women’s online engagement has material effects. Piela’s (2015) research examines how Muslim women are engaging in online debates about politics and religion, without fear of the men who have historically silenced them. Although Piela is researching online collectives, she clarifies that online spaces are interconnected with the material world because the meaning making that occurs in virtual spaces is attached to relations outside the digital. She documents how Muslim women went online to create alternative and gender-specific readings of Islamic scriptures that challenge the validity of the traditional patriarchal interpretations (Piela, 2015, p. 273). Piela views the internet as a facilitator and these activities as extensions of grassroots, face-to-face mosque study circles. However, the internet has enabled the collaboration of women from a range of geographical locations, which Piela argues will have a significant effect on the scriptural readings and will enable these interpretations to be much more inclusive. While this type of activism has often been underappreciated in Western research, the production of new knowledge goes beyond the simple awareness raising that is often a criticism of discursive activism.

Touria Khannous (2011) also examines how Arab Muslim women utilise social networking tools to converse online and to initiate social change. Khannous emphasises the importance of online feminist discourse for the Arab world because it illustrates the large support behind a reconstruction of religion, community and society (2011, p. 363). Digital platforms provide them an avenue that bypasses state-controlled media and enables them to produce their own information and interpretations and, ultimately, to take control of their religion (Khannous, 2011, p. 363). Khannous pinpoints the lack of education for women, which has kept them under male guardianship, and argues that the internet provides access to information and the development of networks that can help release Muslim women. This type and structure of activism is crucial, especially for women who are in no position to take physical action without exposing themselves to real, physical repercussions. A link can be drawn here to Cathy Levine’s critique of

Freeman's theory of structurelessness. Levine argues that Freeman too quickly dismissed the importance of consciousness raising as a means of culture building and does not acknowledge its continued and sustained role in a movement. It is evident from both Piela's and Khannouss' analyses of Muslim people's use of social and digital technology for activism that culture building is an essential part of a movement, as it enables women to define themselves apart from patriarchal interpretations. On the other hand, several scholars have drawn attention to the ways in which digital technology can further oppress women and create a divide between women who have access to digital spaces and those that do not.

Several scholars have problematized the use of online spaces for feminist actions, drawing attention to the digital divide—which can cause some women to be excluded due to a lack of digital literacy—and poor accessibility and resources (Fotopoulous, 2016; Schuster, 2013). Julia Schuster (2013) argues that a generational divide existed in regard to how women are participating in feminist actions in New Zealand. Schuster (2013) contends that young women's political participation is largely occurring online, rendering it 'invisible' to the wider public and the older generation of feminist activists. Similarly, Aristeia Fotopoulou (2016) warns against the 'digital by default' approach that is being assumed by public services in the UK. Fotopoulous (2016, p. 989) illustrates a 'social imaginary of networked feminism' that echoes the sentiment from the previous cyberfeminist scholarship outlined earlier in this chapter, depicting a vision of web 2.0 that promises an 'open' and 'shared' space with increased connectivity in which a 'digital sisterhood' can arise. Problematizing this, Fotopoulous (2016) argues that feminists experience new forms of exclusion that stem from media, digital and technological literacies; access to recognition and publicity; and limited resources for establishing digital infrastructure and training in a continually evolving landscape. Fotopoulous (2016, p. 996) also underlines a generational divide between older and younger feminist activists, describing how older feminists reported feeling isolated, forgotten and historically erased. Overall, Fotopoulous advocates for a rethinking of the communication practices in feminist and women's organisations, as they are situated in the material restraints of funding and resources and are shaped by 'embodied experiences of ageing' (2016, p. 1002).

While Fotopoulous's analysis focuses on established women's organisations and groups, her concerns for the exclusive practices of online feminist practices arise throughout each of the case studies examined in this thesis. However, the generational divide Fotopoulous and Schuster both highlight is not an issue that arises in this thesis; rather, the divide revolves around the effect of urban and rural locales on digital participation, the tendency to rely on informal practices that makes it difficult to trace organisers, and the exclusivity of friendship networks and cliques that are reinscribed into the digital sphere. Moreover, despite these concerns of the digital divide, recent large-scale feminist hashtag protests have punctured global civic discourse and have captured corporate media attention.

3.3.3 Large-Scale Feminist Actions and Affective Labour

The 2014 #YesAllWomen, the 2017 women's marches and, later, the 2017 #MeToo movement have garnered widespread media attention for their large-scale participation and international transmission. Consequently, there has also been an increase in digital feminist activist scholarship in the last several years (Baer, 2016; Dixon, 2014; Megarry, 2014; Rentschler, 2015; Thrift, 2014; Williams, 2015).

In their forthcoming book, *Digital Feminist Activism*, Mendes, Ringrose and Keller (2019) examine the current issues and debates surrounding contemporary feminist actions. Their book outlines the plague of gendered harassment and misogyny that trouble digital spaces, the experiences of feminist organisers in activism, the development of feminist counter-publics on Twitter, hashtag feminism and how teens are engaging in feminist digital activism. Many of these themes arise throughout this thesis; however, the research presented in this thesis specifically addresses the organisational structures and practices in feminist actions that will provide complementary insights into the analyses of digital feminist activism. Mendes et al. (2019) provide a nuanced account of digital feminist activism that captures how digital technologies provide women and girls a multitude of methods in which to participate politically, while also showcasing the barriers of entry that women and girls encounter.

In another article that specifically focuses on the #MeToo movement and an earlier similar hashtag campaign, #BeenRapedNeverReported, Mendes et al. (2018) outline the 'promise and pitfalls of changing rape culture through digital feminist activism'. They highlight that technological engagement to widespread hashtag campaigns can be

technologically easy, yet for feminist protests, there can be ‘emotional, mental and practical barriers’ that limit engagement (Mendes et al., 2018, p. 287). This analysis indicates a preliminary complication of Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) conceptualisation of connective action. Bennett and Segerberg (2013), as explored in the previous chapter, emphasise low-cost personalised engagement at the centre of connective action, arguing that it lowers the barrier of entry for a broader and more inclusive participatory public. However, as Mendes et al. (2018) demonstrate, there are specific barriers that feminist activists encounter that add a deeper layer of meaning and a higher cost of participation for feminist actions. This is explored further throughout the research chapters in this thesis.

Mendes et al.’s (2019) work also underlines the importance of solidarity in feminist digital activism. Although they examine protests that involve personalised forms of engagement—such as the posting of one’s personal experiences in the form of a public testimonial or reflection—solidarity arose as a key feature in these actions that affected and motivated the activists involved. Numerous scholars have conceptualised the importance of solidarity in online actions. Hemmings’s (2012) affective solidarity, Papacharissi’s (2015) affective publics, Hillis, Paasonen and Petit’s (2015) networked affect and Khoja-Moolji’s (2015) intimate publics contribute to an understanding of the importance of solidarity frameworks for feminist digital activism. Mendes et al. (2018, p. 238) argue that the solidarity networks developed from feminist protests can transform into a feminist consciousness that allows individuals to conceptualise feminist issues, particularly sexual violence, as structural rather than personal. They argue for the value of digitally-mediated consciousness raising, stating that: ‘These shifts in consciousness may go undetected at first, but over time, this “mainstreaming” of feminist activism is laying the foundation for a collective shift towards a more just society’ (Mendes et al., 2018, p. 239). The role and central positioning of solidarity action frames arises throughout each of the case studies examined in this thesis and provides an additional extension and complication of the personalised action frames central to Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) connective action.

The emotional and mental work that occurred behind the scenes of women and girls’ participation in feminist hashtag campaigns, as identified by Mendes et al. (2018), also alludes to the underappreciated and unrecognised labour conducted by feminist activists.

Previous scholars have conceptualised the exploitative labour occurring online (Andrejevic et al., 2014; Terranova, 2000), providing ways of understanding digital labour as ‘immaterial’ (Lazzarato, 1996), and ‘co-creative’ (Banks & Deuze, 2009), and how digital and social media work is being feminised and undervalued (Jarrett, 2015, 2018). Tiziana Terranova (2000, p. 33) argues that the exploitation of online work, with its ‘punishing work rhythms, and its ruthless casualization’ was resulting in ‘NetSlaves’ who used to ‘work long hours and love it’, but are now feeling ‘the pain of being burned by digital media’. Angela McRobbie (2011) critiques this early literature, discussing the concerns of immaterial and affective labour and accuses scholars of failing to foreground gender in regard to digital labour. Kylie Jarrett (2015), building on Terranova’s and McRobbie’s analyses, highlights how this labour has been feminised and posits the notion of the ‘digital housewife’, outlining a collapse between work and leisure and drawing a link between the work that women do online and the unpaid sphere of social reproduction.

Extending this research, Jessamy Gleeson (2016) documents the consequences of digital labour in feminist activism and the resulting burnout reported by many of the activists she interviewed. Gleeson (2016) emphasises the online moderation work demanded by feminist activists that occurs behind the scenes and often goes unnoticed. She identifies the labour that feminist activists have to perform simply to maintain digital feminist spaces from ‘troll attacks’ and harassment campaigns targeted at feminist activists (Gleeson, 2016, p. 79). Gleeson’s (2016) analysis of the often-free labour demanded of activists provides an additional depth to Fotopoulos’s (2016) argument identifying the work processes required of women to establish digital infrastructure and the difficulty of remaining technologically up-to-date. Gleeson’s (2016, p. 81) research describes the mundane day-to-day work required in the systematic deletion of abusive comments and the banning of users across several media channels, identifying how some activists established daily rosters for moderation work. However, the informal nature of such work in the online sphere signified that the activists Gleeson interviewed received little to no financial compensation for their labour, and there was an absence of any formalised support system or strategies to provide activists help or enable them to take a break (Gleeson, 2016, p. 83). All these issues combined led to a high rate of reported activist burnout (Gleeson, 2016). These experiences affect the organisational structures and practices of feminist activists and are concerns that arise throughout the research chapters in this thesis. All the activist organisers in each of the case studies examined document

practices and strategies that they have adopted in an attempt to contend with feelings of burnout. These strategies and how they affect organisational practices are examined in the proceeding chapters.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature examining the organisational and structural issues of the feminist movement. It has also documented the ways in which scholars have conceptualised the effect and potentialities of digital technology for women and feminist activism and the explosion of research that surrounds recent digital feminist activism that has captured international media attention. The chapter introduced and provided an extensive critique of Freeman's (1972) analysis of structurelessness and how it affects the feminist movement. Freeman (1972) argues emphatically that structurelessness is an impossibility and that all feminist groups and protests have some form of structure, whether formal or informal. Freeman's (1972) analysis highlights how aspirations of structurelessness and an avoidance of hierarchy formalised structure, and how leadership has masked informal structures such as friendship groups and activist elites, enabling these informal networks to operate unchecked. Further, Freeman (1972) warns about the issues that can result from a lack of formalised structure, such as the appointment of activist 'stars' when there is no official leader of a protest and the exclusivity of groups that operate informally and are inaccessible to other individuals who may want to join the movement. She also contends that formalised structure is required for a movement to progress beyond consciousness raising efforts. Freeman (1972) asserts that feminist activists should not entirely shy away from hierarchical structures and the election of leaders because they have been historically abused in the past. In response to this, Levine (1975) and Leach (2013) argue that feminist activists should not entirely disregard the potential for alternative structures to hierarchies. This thesis renews Freeman's (1972) analysis and her warnings surrounding ideas of structurelessness in the contemporary era.

The chapter also contextualised analyses of contemporary digital feminist actions with a history of cyberfeminist and technofeminist discourse. It outlined influential cyberfeminist research that contributed to a utopian cyber-libertarian vision, which framed digital technologies as providing women with the possibility of developing open, shared and inclusive spaces in a unified and connected feminist public (Haraway, 1987; Luckman, 1999; Plant, 1997). In response to these utopian visions, other scholars have

argued that digital technologies provide another means for the oppression of women and minorities and they describe how traditional patriarchal structures are reproduced on digital platforms (Kendall, 2002; Wilding, 1998). The review established a technofeminist (Wajcman, 2004) framework, arguing that digital tools are part of a broader network of social, political, economic and other variables that mutually shape and influence each other, which is an approach that will be applied to the analysis in this thesis.

The second half of the chapter reviewed the extensive literature surrounding different types of feminist activism and the recent development of research surrounding large-scale feminist protests. It highlighted how early literature of digital feminist activism focused on the role of digital platforms in the facilitation of physical mass mobilisations (Boler & Nitsou, 2014; Harlow & Guo, 2014; Mendes, 2015; Newsrom & Lengel, 2012) and the development of a feminist blogosphere (Harris, 2008; Keller, 2012; Shaw, 2012). The analysis of feminist blogging also documented how recent expressions of this culture have been demonstrated in a DIY 'feminist digilantism' (Jane, 2016), in which feminists are responding to the gendered online abuse that proliferates the online sphere (Citron, 2014; Jane, 2014a, 2014b). This literature also highlights the need for a collective approach to online activism compared to individualistic responses (Jane, 2016). However, other scholarship emphasises the importance of these individualistic responses and how their cumulative effect can contribute to the development of an affective public that can energise an array of other feminist actions and trigger a shift in societal consciousness (Papacharissi, 2015). Further, a range of literature emphasises the significance of online spaces for subversive feminist discourse, adding greater meaning to the online participation of women from non-Western countries (Khannous, 2011; Piela, 2015; Puente, 2011).

The review has captured the debate surrounding women's online participation and although scholars have found that digital platforms provide alternative avenues for women to engage in politics and activism, they have also raised concerns surrounding a digital divide that excludes some women and feminists from participating in civic discourse and actions (Fotopoulous, 2016; Schuster, 2013). In particular, digital media literacy, restraints limiting funding and resources, and an embodied experience of ageing are contributing to a generational divide between feminist activists (Fotopoulous, 2016).

However, despite these concerns, recent digital feminist actions have achieved new levels of public recognition due to the large-scale access and penetration of social and digital technologies; resulting in an influx of research studying contemporary feminist actions (Baer, 2016; Megarry, 2014; Mendes et al., 2019; Rentschler, 2015; Thrift, 2014). This research evaluates the effect and significance of these international protests and identifies some of the issues surrounding free digital labour that feminist activists are negotiating (Gleeson, 2016; Jarrett, 2015; McRobbie, 2011). The chapter finished by recognising the affective and mental labour that is demanded from feminist activists in their political engagement, which has resulted in a high reportage of burnout (Gleeson, 2016).

The reviews in this chapter and the previous chapter reveal two major gaps in the existing literature on contemporary activism. First, this chapter has highlighted that while there has been much research into digital feminist activism and theoretical work conceptualising the liberating and oppressive potential of digital technology for women, few recent studies have examined the organisational structures of contemporary feminist activism. Second, the previous chapter documented how new forms of activism have been conceptualised and new theories such as connective action and organisational hybridity have been developed to help understand changing organisational practices within contentious politics. However, this organisational research has not considered feminist actions specifically or the unique gendered issues feminist activists encounter that shape their organisational practices. This leads this thesis to the two primary research questions: (i) what are the organisational structures and practices of contemporary feminist actions, and (ii) how useful is Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action for assessing these feminist actions. To answer these research questions, this thesis also updates Freeman's (1972) analysis of the feminist movement to further understand and contextualise the structural issues that may be present within contemporary feminist groups. The next chapter will explore the methodological approach to answering these research questions.

Chapter 4: **Methodology**

This chapter addresses the research methods employed to answer the two research questions this thesis explores. It commences by establishing a feminist epistemological framework that underpins the research methods and then outlines each of the specific methods that were applied, concluding with a consideration of the limitations encountered. This research adopts a social media ethnographic approach and incorporates case studies and in-depth semi-structured interviews to answer the two central research questions: (i) what are the organisational structures and practices of contemporary feminist actions, and (ii) how useful is Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action for assessing feminist actions.

4.1 Method and Methodology

There is a distinction between method and methodology, although this is not always made clear in the literature. This thesis adopts Harding's (1987) definition of each, in which they state that method refers to the procedure and techniques of collecting evidence, whereas methodology is the theory that shapes how analysis and research should be conducted. Due to these definitions, this thesis begins by outlining the methodological approach that was adopted, which is that of a feminist epistemology, before addressing each of the specific methods employed.

Briefly, the primary methodological approach to this thesis is the adoption of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action. The conceptual framework for this research was theorised in chapters two and three, including a detailed analysis of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) three-part typology. As such, this thesis will not outline their logic of connective action again here; instead, it will just state that it assesses the findings from the case studies with Bennett and Segerberg's model to understand how the organisational structures and practices in contemporary feminist actions can be conceptualised. As a result, this thesis assesses how useful their (2013) connective action model is for understanding the organisational practices and structures of feminist actions.

4.2 The Methodological Approach

A feminist epistemology is a framework for how to understand the nature of reality and often requires women to be the central focus of the research (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 188). In this way, a feminist epistemology is used as a development of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) methodology as it orients the focus onto feminist protests and women's actions. The foundations of this research are built on the feminist epistemology and research methods conceptualised by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Lina Leavy in their 2007 book, *Feminist Research Practice*. Feminist epistemology is commonly concerned with privileging the lived experiences of women, unearthing women's knowledge and challenging basic assumptions of structures and ideologies that contribute to the oppression of women (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Feminist research is a 'holistic endeavour' that incorporates a range of methods to assist in developing an understanding of women's experiences, without reducing all women into one homogeneous group (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Hesse-Biber and Leavy discuss in detail what feminist research entails, how feminist scholars have approached researching women's issues and how this type of research can be considered activism in its own right. They argue that feminist research 'fosters empowerment and emancipation' for women and that this type of research and the awareness it raises helps to promote social change for women (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Women's experiences and voices have traditionally been omitted and excluded in academia. Feminist consciousness raising, giving women a voice in academia and representing women and their experiences are the primary focuses of feminist research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). To acknowledge women's experiences and their voices, particular methods, such as interviews, are employed in research practices to allow for them to be heard.

Liz Stanley and Sui Wise, in *Breaking Out* (1993), interrogate the process of methodologies and research in academia from a feminist perspective. They argue that feminist research should concern itself with developing new ideas and criteria for what constitutes 'knowledge', as opposed to simply adding women into existing knowledge and research (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p.41). By this, they mean a feminist epistemology must seek to understand and discover new ways of thinking and construing social reality that focuses on women. This type of approach differs from superficially including women into pre-existing research that continues to orientate itself around a male model. A

feminist ontology, or theory of reality, concerns itself with deconstructing binaries and Cartesian dualism and, instead, recognises and appreciates differentiation (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 194). This kind of feminist ontology is not interested in affirming and investigating the feminine in a Cartesian ontology; it is concerned with disputing and rejecting the dualistic system of thought and instead understanding binaries as relational systems (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 195). Following this, a feminist approach to research also includes an awareness of the role and relationship between the researcher and the researched.

A key area of the research process that is often overlooked is the relationship and power dynamic between the researcher and the researched. A feminist epistemology acknowledges that the researcher is not a detached, omnipotent individual that can objectively observe reality. Instead, a feminist standpoint regards the researcher as an active agent. The researcher constructs their own version of their perceived reality—a small slice of reality situated in an epistemological framework and confronted by competing knowledges (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p. 4). A research process that acknowledges the power and authority that the researcher traditionally holds and attempts to equalise the status of the subject is valuable in its ability to allow the subject to provide their own insights and knowledge and to reveal important factors of the research that may not have been apparent to the researcher.

In feminist research, women's experiences become the foundation from which to build knowledge. Beginning with women's actual experiences is important, considering the historical omission and misrepresentation of women's lives, and it acts as a step to repair their institutionalised exclusion. Feminist epistemology asserts that it is only by centralising women's lived experiences that one can construct knowledge and research that more accurately represents and reflects women's lives. Women experience work as the 'point of entry' for this type of research and have the potential to reveal new knowledge contained and hidden in women's lives and activities (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Feminist epistemology also challenges people to 'critically examine society through women's eyes' (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007).

Some feminist epistemology scholars have argued that women have the unique ability, as an oppressed group, to cultivate a 'double consciousness' (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007; Stanley & Wise, 1993). By this, they mean that women have a heightened awareness of

their own personal lives and the experiences of the dominant group, in this case men. Women are in a position in which the dominant worldview and male-centric narrative is imposed on them, while simultaneously being aware that their own lived experiences contradict this worldview. However, this feminist consciousness is not a monolithic perspective of the world; it is an expression of women's 'unique view of social reality' and provides insight into the ways that women can observe and experience different elements of conventional reality (Sanley & Wise, 1993, p. 120). With this in mind, academic research would benefit from providing a space for women's perspectives and expressions to develop an alternative understanding of the world that acknowledges women's activities and experiences.

While it cannot be said that a distinct feminist methodology exists, whether quantitatively or qualitatively, from the above discussion we can determine that there are definite feminist methodological concerns that must be regarded to develop feminist research. With these in mind, the following methods have been chosen for this research. Acknowledging that women's voices have traditionally been ignored, this thesis provides a space that investigates women's activities, concerns and experiences with contemporary connective actions. Rather than simply adding women to the debates about contemporary activism, this thesis seeks to test current theories to understand how well they account for women's practices and feminist activism. It provides an expansion and partial contestation of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action and supplements previous organisational research by focusing on feminist actions. To do this, it employs case studies to examine a range of different examples of feminist actions, as well as interviews to provide feminist activists a space to voice their own experiences.

This thesis's research also arises from a methodological critique of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) conceptualisation of connective action. Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 75) question the limitations of their own analysis, raising concerns of whether personalised communication may undermine the organisational network strength they determined. They measured network strength based on the hyperlink patterns among organisational websites and campaigns (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 75). Due to their process, they were unable to assess network relationships in a 'fine-grained ethnographic sense' (Bennet and Segerberg, 2013, p. 75). While their methodology was evidently useful in capturing the extent of the networked coalitions in relation to their

environmental and economic case studies, social network analysis fails to capture less formal and less visible protest networks.

Given the ways in which informal organising disguised as structurelessness affected the feminist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as described by Freeman (1972), it was logical to hypothesise that informal organising practices may continue to be rampant in contemporary feminist activism. Thus, an alternative method to computational social network analysis was needed to help identify and analyse the structures of feminist activism in the connective era. It is in this way that combining case studies and in-depth interviews provides insight into the behind the scenes organisational and communication practices. They provide a method of capturing the everyday practices, nuances and relationships between each of the actors involved in the actions, as well as help map the post-digital nature of organising in the connective era.

4.3 Method

The overarching method to this research was a social media ethnographic approach from which two primary methods are employed for this research: the use of case studies and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The chapter outlines the ways in which the data were analysed using a thematic analysis. In addition, the chapter briefly highlights the analysis included in Chapter Seven, in which big data was used and a thematic analysis was conducted on a large sample of tweets from the #MeToo movement. Each of these methods is discussed in their respective order, along with any limitations that arose.

4.3.1 Social Media Ethnography

Feminist methodological researchers have long argued over the value of ethnography to shed insight into the lived experiences of women (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007); indeed, it is considered essential to feminist methodologies, especially when combined with a mixed methods approach (Harrison, 2007, p. x). Harrison (2007, p. x) emphasises how the ‘experience-near stories and counter-stories’ collected by feminist ethnographers can operate as ‘powerful complements’ to aggregate data, providing further insights that conventional graphs and tables cannot capture. Ethnography is intended to complement rather than replace quantitative methods and this thesis does not support one approach

over the other. In this case, it simply adopts the methods required to access the data being investigated.

The ethnographic approach adopted in this research was largely influenced by the methodological practices of John Postill and Sarah Pink (2012) and, in particular, their arguments surrounding the ‘messy web’ that digital researchers find themselves in and how people can understand the internet and social media sites as ethnographic sites. Postill and Pink’s methodological considerations and conceptualisation of social media ethnography stem from their own research into activist practices in Barcelona. They argue that the shift to Web 2.0 has prompted new sites for ethnographic fieldwork and fostered new types of ethnographic practice (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 124). They argue that social media and digital ethnography can help us understand the practices and places that ‘traverse online/offline contexts and are collaborative, participatory, open and public’ (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 124). In addition, this thesis considers the important role private avenues of communication play and how these intersect with collaborative processes.

Postill and Pink argue that social media ethnographic practices can enable researchers to reconfigure social media platforms as fieldwork sites that are ‘social, experiential and mobile’ (2012, p. 125). They raise concerns around terminology like ‘internet ethnography’, as it implies that the practices are exclusively online when, in fact, they traverse both online and offline realms, hence their preference for the use of ‘social media ethnography’. They argue that the online sphere is a ‘messy fieldwork environment that crosses online and offline worlds, and is connected and constituted through the ethnographer’s narrative’ (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 126). Thus, they contend for social media ethnographic practice to analyse ‘digital socialities’ rather than online communities (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 127).

Postill and Pink (2012, p. 129) argue for practicing ‘media-switching and media-mixing to create and maintain social relationships with research participants across space and time’. Their conceptualisation of the practices required for digital ethnographers reflects the research that describes the hybrid repertoire switching and boundless practices of contemporary activists (Bimber et al., 2005; Chadwick, 2007). It follows, then, that the social media ethnographer must perform similar practices as those of their subject.

This research adopts the social media ethnographic practices as outlined by Postill and Pink (2012) to fully capture the vast repertoire of activist practices that are demonstrated in the case studies examined. It foregrounds the ‘polymedia’ sociality embodied by the activists to understand the multitude of ways in which they relate to each other in a cross-platform and cross-sphere nature (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 131). As Postill and Pink (2012, p. 131) describe, ‘the movement of the digital ethnographer involves traversing interrelated digital and copresent contexts—for example, sharing a bus ride with activists, a Facebook collaboration, or a smartphone image over coffee.’ These situations are a deeply layered hybrid forms of sociality through which a ‘mediated sense of contextual fellowship’ is developed between activists and the researcher as well (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 131).

In a similar fashion, Jennifer Terrell (2014, p. 75) argues for the need to understand the ‘sociotechnical ecology in which the combination of social dynamics and affordances and limitations of digital media work together to reproduce culture and construct the identities of the movement, and therein shape the kind of social action possible’. Further still, some scholars (Earl et al., 2010) have argued that the very approach towards analysing contemporary social movements has significantly biased the results. Previous research fell into the trap of analysing internet actions in isolation of the broader social ecology and it consequently failed to fully realise the genuine force of digital technology in changing collective action theory (Earl et al., 2010).

The ethnographic process for this thesis involved immersing myself as a researcher and a feminist into the community of feminist activists that were involved in the case studies examined. To do this, I became a member of several online private feminist Facebook groups in which the local feminist community discussed issues and shared actions. These groups were not specific to the case studies but some of the activists involved in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc and #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaigns were members of these groups and used these groups as places to rally participation for the actions. Being a member of these groups allowed me to observe the dynamics and relationships that existed between activists. I was able to observe several structural dynamics within these online activist communities. First, I observed the vanguards and particular friendship networks of activists that developed and how they repeatedly volunteered to help organise similar protests over the course of 2015-2018. Second, I was able to observe activists’

attitudes to other organisations and established groups, documenting a shift away from established group affiliations. Finally, I was able to witness the internal fighting and issues that arose within each group as they struggled to define their boundaries and how individuals positioned themselves as leaders by moderating these groups.

Between 2014 and 2017 I also attended several feminist protests, in which the activists interviewed were participating. Specifically, I attended one of the protests related to the second wave of #TakeDownJulienBlanc in 2016, from which I was able to observe the participation of Mad Fucking Witches and the dynamic between the activists involved and the broader participants. I also attended several other protests such as SlutWalk, embedding myself within the community. Further, I attended two organisational meetings with the group behind SlutWalk Melbourne, some of who were also involved in #TakeDownJulienBlanc and #EndViolenceAgainstWomen. At this meeting I was able to observe who was in charge, a process of mentoring between the activists, and how activists were given different responsibilities and jobs based on their own specific skillsets. Last, I attended an organisational meeting by one of the Hollaback! chapters. This meeting was one of this chapter's first organisational meetings as they were in the early stages of establishing their chapter and I was able to observe these early organisational processes and how decisions were made within their developing collective.

Overall, this ethnographic process and the ways in which I was able to embed myself into the community allowed me access to the activists involved with each of the case studies. It placed me in the position of being seen as a trusted feminist researcher and granted me access to observe the granular and nuanced relationship dynamics that existed within these feminist communities, ultimately contributing to a rich and textured analysis of organisational practices.

4.3.2 Case Studies

Feminist and social movement scholars often use case studies as a method for identifying an unstudied group and a particular intersection to discover the differences and complexities of experiences that the group embodies (McCall, 2005). Case studies are in-depth studies of a group or culture and have been distinguished for their ability to reveal the complexities of social life; they often illustrate 'diversity, variation, and

heterogeneity’, compared to quantitative methods that illustrate ‘singularity, sameness, and homogeneity’ (McCall, 2005, p.1782).

Relationships between activists are dynamic and so can only be understood in the context of specific campaign organisation networks. This thesis’s research focuses on three primary case studies of feminist protests. A multiple–case study design was chosen because evidence of multiple case studies is considered more compelling and offers the potential for comparison that may provide greater insight into general patterns that exist in organisational networks (Yin, 2009). The case studies were a purposive sample chosen as examples of different types of contemporary feminist protests. There are always limitations in regard to the sampling method used for social movement protests. For example, there is no population or organisation list of online protest content or groups making representative sampling a challenge. Earl (2013) documents how social movement scholars have struggled to find solid methods for identifying case studies of internet activism, but she argues that purposive sampling can be a useful method for analysis. Purposive sampling, as described by Earl (2013), is built by aggregating case studies known to the researcher and it requires detailed knowledge of the movement prior to the research.

The first case study selected for this research is the original Hollaback! campaign that developed in 2005 and is examined in Chapter Five. Hollaback! is hosted on a photoblog on which citizens submit their stories of street harassment. These stories are converted into pins on the Hollaback! map, effectively visualising the incidences and experiences of street harassment in cities across the globe. The Hollaback! campaign was selected as a case study because of its international success in adapting to numerous local communities and the role it plays in recruiting and educating new feminist activists. The Hollaback! campaign and the organisation that has developed to support the campaign often operate as the first point of contact for young feminists. The organisation provides training for young people wanting to get involved, thus it is an important case study to examine as it is contributing to the development of a contemporary feminist activist repertoire.

The second case study is the series of protests that operated under the hashtag #TakeDownJulienBlanc from 2014-2016. The #TakeDownJulienBlanc case study examined in Chapter Six was chosen due to its international success and because digital

platforms played an essential role to the organising of the protest, rendering it a product of the contemporary era. Moreover, the digital tactics employed in the protest were combined with more conventional activist tactics such as cold calling and protesting hotel venues. Together, the digital and analogue tactics and strategies employed make the #TakeDownJulienBlanc case study an example of a post-digital protest, positioning it as a useful example to analyse in relation to contemporary organisational practices. The post-digital nature of the protest enables the analysis to move beyond examining contemporary protests as a separate digital phenomenon and allows the research to consider the organisational practices that are emerging now that digital technologies are no longer considered disruptive and have become embedded in daily life (Berry & Dieter, 2015; Cramer, 2015). In addition, there was an absence of any formal advocacy groups driving the protest yet its reactivation for the second wave of protests in 2016 (after the initial protest occurred in 2014) indicated the existence of a strong communication and protest network, making the #TakeDownJulienBlanc case study an interesting example to analyse.

The last case study examined is the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, from 2015, along with a discussion of the #MeToo movement in Chapter Seven. Both of these feminist campaigns are used as examples of feminist solidarity and online shaming actions, which have become increasingly prevalent forms of activism in the contemporary feminist movement. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign provided a local knowledge case study as the activists involved with the organisation were accessible to the researcher. A discussion of the #MeToo movement was also important to include given the significance and momentum of #MeToo worldwide. The #MeToo movement was triggered in October 2017, which was too late for it to be used as a primary case study for this research. Both campaigns combined enable an analysis of the organisational practices of online feminist hashtag campaigns. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign provides an understanding of these campaigns at a smaller, local level, whereas #MeToo sheds light on the practices and issues of a global movement. These case studies also provide useful examples for examining the distinctly feminist and gendered issues that affect the organisational practices of feminist activists at a local and international level.

The case studies are examined in chronological order. This allows the analysis to document, contextualise and consider the technological changes that have occurred over the past decade and how these changes have shaped the structure of the three case studies. The Hollaback! campaign developed in 2005 before the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. As a result, the technological infrastructure and the organisational structure and practices of activists in 2005 differ from the actions observed in 2014 and 2015 when the #TakeDownJulienBlanc and #EndViolenceAgainstWomen protests occurred. Further, structuring the case studies chronologically allows for a comparison of the changing relationships between activists and formal organisations that Bennett and Segerberg (2013) indicate, and allows the analyse to compare how feminist activists are negotiating the evolving technologized landscape.

Ultimately, the point of the case studies is to help answer the key research questions to determine what organisational structures and practices exist in different types of contemporary feminist actions. There are some minor limitations in using case studies, such as the issues in regard to generalising the results to wider populations. However, the case studies are intended to provide diversity to the plurality of issues and approaches adopted by feminist activists; they are not intended to be a representative sample. They provide just a snapshot of the types and combinations of organisational and communication practices that are possible in the contemporary landscape.

The other limitation of the case studies is that they predominantly focus on issues affecting white, middle-class, cis-gendered, heterosexual and able bodied women. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen case study in particular focuses on white women's experiences working within the media industry. In this way, the issues affecting women of colour who work within the media industry and their unique, intersectional positions are overlooked. This is a notable limitation because in 2017 Sudanese-Australian Muslim writer Yassmin Abdel-Magied was heavily abused online and trolled in relation to comments she posted on her Facebook page critiquing ANZAC day and drawing attention to the issues experienced by refugees and Australia's immigration policies. The level of abuse Abdel-Magied was subjected to directly related to her identity as a Muslim woman and provides an addition perspective surrounding the online harassment of women in the media that was not considered within the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign. However, the specific incident surrounding ANZAC day occurred one and a half years

later in April 2017. Future research should focus more specifically and inclusively on the activism surrounding marginalised voices and consider less high-profile campaigns that draw attention to Indigenous and migrant women's experiences and issues.

4.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

This thesis uses in-depth semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. Interviews were deemed to be the most suitable method because they provide one of the only ways to capture the fine-grained detail of the structure and relationships within the case studies. In this way, interviews help to answer the research questions, particularly in terms of discovering the organisational structures and practices of feminist actions. Moreover, interviews enable a way of answering the second research question that looks at the usefulness of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action for assessing feminist actions. Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) research relies on large-scale network analysis but this methodology struggles to capture less transparent structures and practices prevalent within feminist protests and interviews are one of the only means at collecting this type of relational data. Using interviews to collect this data will allow this research to compare whether the organisational structures within feminist actions are consistent with Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) typology. The elimination of other research methods, such as social network analysis or surveys, was primarily based on the fact that the actions of the protests occurred on too many platforms to be able to computationally capture and oscillate between public and private and digital and physical spheres. The dynamic of the relationships and communication practices in the case studies was too complex to be captured by any other means. Thus, interviews were used as a way of overcoming this boundary crossing that scholars such as Bimber et al. (2005) have identified as characteristic of contemporary activism.

The inclusion of interviews is also an attempt to privilege the lived experience of women and feminists. This is a common practice in feminist scholarship (Basarudin, 2010; Keller, 2012; McCall, 2005; Rich, Taket, Graham & Shelley, 2011). Leslie McCall (2005), in 'The complexity of intersectionality', documents the development of a feminist critique of the scientific methodology and the pervasiveness of male bias, which led to the realisation that women were not adequately included in the research process. She declares that the development of gender as an analytical category, feminism as a theoretical perspective and the acknowledgement of male dominance as a social

institution helps counter the neglect and misrepresentation of women and their lived experiences. Privileging the voices and lived experiences of women through interviews is a way to free them from a hegemonic category and enable a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of politics. Rich et al. (2011) use in-depth interviews to help privilege the experiences of childless women in contemporary Australia. Their approach reveals significant misconceptions and stereotypes about childlessness that continue to be pervasive in society. The interviews helped them uncover the challenges and difficulties that childless women face in their everyday experiences. Keller (2012), in 'Virtual feminisms', also elevates the voices of the girls she interviews in her examination of girls' blogging culture and how they are reshaping participatory politics. Allowing the girls' voices to be clearly heard through her research is particularly significant because girls' voices are traditionally underrepresented in formal political discussions.

Hesse-Biber (2007, pp. 5–6) identifies a few different types of interviews: the informal interview, with little structure, used to build a relationship with the respondent; the unstructured interview in which there is a basic plan but minimum control; the semi-structured interview in which the researcher has a specific interview guide of questions that need to be covered; the structured interview, in which the researcher has total control. For this research, this thesis adopted a semi-structured approach to the in-depth interviews because the research questions shaped the agenda in specifically investigating the organisational practices and structures of each feminist protest. Due to this purpose, it follows that the interviews conducted were with the activists who were involved in the organisational side of the protests. Interviewing the organisers helps illuminate their own practices and the broader structure of an action.

Overall, 24 interviews were conducted: six site leaders and one leader from the headquarters were interviewed for the Hollaback! case study; 11 activists were interviewed for the #TakeDownJulienBlanc case study; and six activists for the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign. Three of the interviewees were male while 21 were female, and the age of the interviewees ranged between 25-60 years old. The #TakeDownJulienBlanc campaign was the most structurally complex of the case studies hence interviews with a higher number of activists were required to gain a more complete view of the organisational processes. In addition, the lack of formalised structure meant it was necessary to interview a range of activists involved in the campaign because they

all had different perspectives and experiences with the informal structures and dynamics that shaped the protest. The Hollaback! interviewees were mostly from the UK (4) and the US (2), with one from Australia. All but one of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc interviewees were Australian, with the one exception located in the US. All of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen interviewees were from Australia and predominantly located in Sydney and Melbourne. The interviews for all case studies were mostly conducted in 2016, with one being completed at the beginning of 2017, and a last interview at the beginning of 2018. The interviews themselves lasted between 30 to 90 minutes.

The potential concerns surrounding anonymity and confidentiality are addressed in this research. Each participant was asked if they were happy to remain identifiable, or if they would prefer their identity be protected through the use of a pseudonym in this thesis and resulting publications. As public figures, some of the interviewees consented to the use of their names, however where requested, some interviewees are referred to by pseudonyms or are entirely anonymised. A few of the participants wished to be anonymised and chose their own pseudonym. Considering the risks of online harassment, I decided to anonymise the majority of participants' names, except for those who were public figures. Where required, participants are referred to with a pseudonym.

The interviewees were recruited initially through digital networks, by either call-out posts on feminist community Facebook pages or through the contact page of the organisation's website. After these initial call-outs, a process of snowball sampling was incorporated. For this research, snowball sampling was crucial because many of the activists involved in the organisational side were not public about their participation, so there were limited alternative methods of finding the subjects. It was also a very successful recruitment process for this research, as it continued the vetting process of the researcher by the community. In addition, it also provided insight into some of the informal communication networks that existed surrounding the protests as the researcher navigated them in the process of recruiting and organising the interviews. This research was able to observe which of the organisers had relationships and where they were positioned within the activist and protest network based on who they were able to refer me to.

The interviews were one-on-one in nature and offered a space for the subject to develop a voice of their own and reflect on their experiences. The incorporation of reflective

questions and discussion in the interviews offers significant opportunities for participant self-reflection. Reflexivity is a common practice in feminist epistemology (Kinser, 2004; Pink, 2007). Amber Kinser (2004) claims that personal narratives are a way of enabling the ‘multi-voiced intonations’ of feminism (p. 137). She also illustrates that one of the most important contributions made by third-wave feminism is embracing narrative as a method of exploring and illustrating ‘how it feels to live a feminist life, how feminism informs and complicates one’s sense of identity, and how one stabilises that identity’ in the face of opposing political forces (Kinser, 2004, p. 137). The interviewees were also asked to reflect on how and if they related to the terms ‘feminist’ and ‘activist’, how they more broadly engage politically and if they maintain any group or party affiliations.

Participants were encouraged to look back and critically evaluate their own pasts, to consider the extent to which digital platforms and technology helped to shape their identities and their understanding of feminism and activism. The participants were also asked to describe their use of media technologies in the lead-up, during and after their involvement with the feminist protest, event and/or their involvement with the protest network. This reflection on their use of technology and the contextualisation of their engagement will highlight a narrative account of their experience with the feminist action. While this research is not a longitudinal study, with its focus centred specifically on the more recent past and current events, the intention of these one-on-one interviews is to allow participants from a variety of contexts to deeply reflect on their activism and speak for themselves. Interviews provide a better space for understanding the personalisation of political engagement, allowing individuals to reflect on their own personalised engagement and motivations. The semi-structured interviews allow the individuals to draw attention to the issues that they feel were relevant to their own engagement compared to a survey, which limits the answers to preconceived ideas of the shape of participation.

In addition, participants were specifically asked about the structure and the organisational practices of the protests. They were asked questions in relation to their role in the protest, such as if there was a clear leader, who else was involved and how decisions were made. Many of these questions were phrased in an open-ended manner to prompt the participants to reflect on their own engagement and practices with a protest as well as their wider experiences in the activist community. Consistent with Hesse-Biber’s (2007,

p. 5) definition, the researcher had an agenda, but the interview was not tightly controlled and there was time and space for spontaneity. However, the researcher also spent time developing trust with the interviewees and allowed them to raise topics that were of interest to them, with the intention that they would open up and speak about what they felt was important and their own personal experiences and feelings in regard to their involvement with the organising of protests. In this way, my interview process borrowed some elements from what Hesse-Biber (2007, p. 5) defined as an “informal interview”.

In feminist research, it is standard practice to reflect on the researcher’s position in the research and especially in relation to the subjects interviewed to understand the power dynamics of research/subject. Developing trust with each of the interviewees was important because some of them were concerned about privacy and exposure risks, while others were also wary of ‘outsiders’ and were initially hesitant in terms of speaking about the internal issues that their group may have experienced. However, the role of researcher and interviewer for this thesis was to listen to the interviewee’s story and to probe about their experiences in a neutral way to develop more understanding. This is again consistent with the feminist approach described by Hesse-Biber (2007). She argues for the importance of reflexivity in interviewing and how the researcher needs to be engaged with the respondent by showing that they are listening and being sensitive to the ‘important “situational” dynamics that exist’ (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 18). Ultimately, Hesse-Biber (2007, p. 21) describes the process of in-depth interviewing as one that is more of a ‘conversation between co-participants’. In the process of conducting my research, I provided space for the interviewees to contact me at any time with follow-up questions, details, reflections or concerns that they may have.

The interviews took place in a variety of locations usually chosen by the participant to ensure it was somewhere they were comfortable. These included the participant’s home, workplace, cafes, electronically via Skype or simply over the phone. Informed consent was obtained from each participant. When interviewed face to face, a hard copy of the consent form was provided along with the plain language statement (see Appendices 3 and 4). The participants were asked to read and sign the consent form. When participants were interviewed electronically or over the phone, a copy of the consent form and the plain language statement were emailed to them. In these cases, the participants then verbally provided their consent prior to the commencement of the interview. The

interviews were all recorded using an H4N zoom device with the consent of the participants and then transcribed before being thematically analysed.

Women's concrete experiences can provide a starting point to access and build knowledge from their traditionally silenced perspectives (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). Semi-structured interviews that enable interaction with the participant help achieve a representation and reflection of women's experiences through women's own critical capacity to understand and describe their own activities. Feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins (1990, p. 209) also emphasises that women's actual experiences are the ultimate 'criterion for credibility' for research and knowledge about women. Women's concrete experiences provide the basis for knowledge and interviews provide a space for authentic expressions from women. The interviews that this research incorporates offer insights into how contemporary women 'live feminism'; how they integrate feminism into their daily lives, community activism and political participation. The interviews in this thesis provide a starting point from which a thematic analysis of the organisational structures of each protest could be conducted and, ultimately, the conceptualising of these structures as feminist connective actions.

4.3.4 Data Analysis

The transcription of the interview data was conducted concurrently with the interviews themselves and took place from December 2016 until January 2018. The researcher transcribed all the interviews using standard word processing software. In analysing this data, a thematic analysis was conducted to describe and interpret the subject matter of the interviews. The process of the analysis needs to be transparent for the researcher's understandings, interpretations and analysis to remain true to the underlying feminist epistemological approach discussed earlier in this chapter.

In the first round of analysis, the researcher coded the data during the transcription process to flag any emergent themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The second round of analysis involved examining more closely for patterns and trends relating to the underlying mechanisms of organising, which is the central research interest of this thesis. Keeping in line with Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 56) influential book on qualitative data analysis, I developed codes that work to assign meanings to the 'descriptive or inferential information compiled'. The codes were informed by the research questions

and were developed to capture specific aspects of organising as well as the activists' experiences and personal involvement in the protests.

The codes employed for the analysis of the interview data were focused on a few themes. These included:

- identity
- relationships with activists and organisations
- communication practices
- protest and organisational structure
- tensions in each protest and between organisers
- perceptions of the protest and its operation
- activist tactics
- experience with digital platforms and technologies
- experience before, during and after the protest
- wider group affiliation or party involvement.

Data were drawn from each of these categories to help form the structure for each of the chapters and to effectively address the research questions. For example, a theme that emerged from the interviews that became a crucial part of this thesis can be observed in relation to the activists' affiliations with other groups or parties unrelated to the protests that were the subject of the case studies. Initial interviews with the activists yielded a number of discussions in which they reflected on their past, current or future group memberships. Further analysis of the interview data undertaken while coding confirmed a trend in these discussions. The thematic analysis revealed that many entered into activism via established organisations, then shifted away from membership, and would reconsider returning in the future.

Another component of the data analysis in this research was in regards to the investigation into the #MeToo movement. The researcher was granted access to the first three days of tweets from 15-17 October 2017 on Stuart Shulman's data analytics platform DiscoverText. Using the Twitter API, Shulman collected 241,361 of the first tweets using the hashtag #MeToo and granted researchers access to analyse these tweets for their own research. For this thesis, the researcher generated a smaller random sample of 10,000 tweets on which to conduct a thematic analysis to develop an understanding of the

different narratives and themes that emerged from the tweets. A social network analysis conducted by Twitter that visualises the first few days of tweets is also incorporated into the research because it complements the narratives examined in the analysis.

The thematic analysis was shaped and informed by the research questions. As the researcher could not gain access to the activists involved in the organisation of the #MeToo movement, the researcher decided to analyse the discourse and narratives around participation within the movement to help answer the first research question. The first research question is concerned with examining the organisational structures and practices of feminist actions and with this research objective in mind, the thematic analysis focused on activists' experience with participating in the hashtag to determine if there were any concerns or issues that impacted activists' involvement in the feminist action. From the analysis emerged a theme of absence and struggle in relation to participation in the movement. The results of this analysis are further explored in Chapter Seven.

4.4 Limitations

This research was affected by several limitations, some of which have been mentioned throughout the chapter. One of the limitations was related to the purposive sampling for both the case studies and the interviewees. As a purposive sample, the results from the case studies cannot necessarily be generalised to a wider population. However, the purpose of the sample was in part to highlight the plurality of organisational styles to begin with, so it is not a major limitation of this research.

The purposive and snowball recruitment method for the interviewees also had limitations. The activists involved in the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen and #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests are well represented in the sample, with 6 and 11 activists interviewed for each respectively. The difference in sample size for each is relative to the size of the protests. However, the sample size for the international organisation Hollaback! was 7 and this was due to accessibility issues. Each of the site leaders interviewed for Hollaback! represented different chapters and one was a spokesperson from the New York headquarters. However, all the chapters that were represented in the interviews were from Western countries (US, UK and Australia). This is a limitation because there are many chapters of Hollaback! that are currently operational in non-Western countries and it

would have been insightful to have been able to analyse the organisational practices of non-Western chapters. Unfortunately, no other site leaders responded when contacted.

Another limitation is that the protests chosen for the case studies might be atypical and there might be examples of feminist protests that better fit with Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) three-part typology. Due to the nature of purposive sampling and the case study approach, the results cannot be generalised to a wider range of actions. Overall, however, this limitation is not detrimental to the study, as the primary aim was to discover what organisational and communication practices existed in contemporary protests. Regardless of whether there are protests that better align with Bennett and Segerberg's typology, the case studies chosen in this thesis bring light to the plurality and multiplicity in organising feminist activism.

4.5 Conclusion

This qualitative research adopts a feminist epistemological stance and incorporates a social media ethnographic approach to analyse multiple case studies of feminist protests. Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the primary method for data collection and a thematic analysis is employed to interpret the data and draw out key elements of the organisational structures of feminist actions. The purpose of this research is to understand and analyse the organisational and communication practices and structures in contemporary feminist protest actions.

The methodological approach deemed to meet the demands of this research is one that provides space for women to speak for themselves and be heard in regard to their experiences and activities. This is considered an important element in feminist research, as highlighted by a feminist epistemology and standpoint. Semi-structured interviews and the use of the case studies enables this research to address these significant methodological factors while also effectively addressing the original research question.

Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) three-part typology of connective action is also used to compare with the case studies as this research seeks to understand how useful their theory is for assessing these feminist actions. Subsequently, the following chapters (five, six and seven) provide a comprehensive examination of each of the case studies, mapping out its organisational structure and drawing out each of the influential factors that shaped the

development of the protest. Chapter Eight draws all chapters together comparing the structural differences between the case studies and highlighting key organisational themes that emerged from the analysis. Further, the comparison considers the identity of the activists, how they became activists and how they engage with activism to map out activists' relationships with organisations and protests. This provides further contextual insight and a deeper layer of understanding into why each activist operates the way that they do—independently, from within organisations or in another hybrid capacity. Chapter Eight also concludes the research by summarising the findings and answering the research questions; it highlights the key organisational structures and practices of the feminist actions, emphasises the hybrid model of organising present within each action, and determines how useful the theory of connective action is for understanding contemporary feminist actions.

Chapter 5: The Case Study of Hollaback!: Franchising Feminist Activism

5.1 Introduction

In 2005, a woman named Thao Nguyen used her mobile phone to photograph a man masturbating in front of her on the New York City subway. The police did nothing when she brought the photo to them, so she posted the picture online, in several forums, and the photo went viral. From that point, it caught the attention of mainstream media outlets and *The New York Post* published it as their front-page story, which led to the man's arrest. In this way, Nguyen used digital technology as a mode of resistance against sexual harassment in public spaces.

Inspired by Nguyen's actions and the shared experiences of street harassment, a group of friends decided to create a blog they called Hollaback!—with the term 'hollaback!' meaning a 'response'. The action hosted by the blog was primarily focused on empowering women to use mobile technology to challenge street harassment; 'if you can't slam em, snap em' was the original tagline. The camera phone in this case was used to reverse the male gaze and help the victim of harassment reclaim power. While this provided women with an immediate response to street harassment, Hollaback! took the action further and encouraged participants to reflect and submit their story of harassment to the blog, along with the location of the incident. This report would then take the form of a pin on a map to highlight the extensiveness of street harassment. The map was not designed to highlight unsafe spaces, but to illustrate the scale of street harassment.

Hollaback! received an explosion of submissions not just locally from within New York, but nationally and then internationally. Co-founder, Emily May, reflected on how surprising it was to receive so many submissions from women everywhere:

When we founded Hollaback, we didn't know if street harassment happened to anybody else ... we didn't know if it was us, if it was a New York City thing, if it was a young woman thing; we had no idea. But we have found, through telling our stories, that this is an international epidemic (Krieg, 2011).

What began as a collective of friends behind the original Hollaback! blog has since developed into an international organisation with chapters in 79 cities and 26 countries.

The original New York group is now referred to as the headquarters or the ‘mothership’, which oversees and supports all other chapters around the world. In addition, the organisation officially became a non-for-profit in 2010, with May becoming the organisation’s first full-time executive director and the establishment of a board of directors. The organisation is now involved in a range of different actions and campaigns, with its primary goal set to ending street harassment.

This chapter examines the original Hollaback! campaign, in which participants were encouraged to submit their stories of street harassment, with or without a photo, onto the Hollaback! map. It primarily answers the first research question by examining the organisational structures and practices of Hollaback! and answers the second research question by comparing the findings with Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) logic of connective action to determine how useful it is for assessing feminist actions.

To address these research questions, the chapter deconstructs the organisational and communication processes that occurred behind the face of the Hollaback! campaign. In doing this, the chapter examines the organisational structure of the Hollaback! organisation to understand how the campaign became an international movement and how the campaign was adapted to different locations by Hollaback!’s local chapters. The chapter proposes conceptualising the Hollaback! organisation as a franchise because it provides a way of understanding how the Hollaback! campaign was transmitted globally and adapted by each of the different Hollaback! chapters. It also explains why there were changes behind the structure of the organisation, how this affected the specific campaign and why some chapters disaffiliated—meaning that the campaign and the site maps were closed in particular locations. In addition, the chapter considers what this conception of franchise activism means for Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) connective action model.

The analysis is informed by Bradach’s (1997, 1998) influential theory of franchise organisations. Although Bradach’s analysis focuses on restaurant chains, it is useful to apply to the activist sphere and it provides the discourse and language to help understand the structural changes and strategies that are occurring in Hollaback!. In an environment in which multiple organisational logics are present, Bradach’s theory can help explain some of the structural decisions that Hollaback! organisers made, alongside some of the issues that have arisen in the organisation. The idea of a feminist advocacy group franchising their activism provides another method of thinking about the global spread

and replication of activism. Previous literature has not considered the ways in which contemporary feminist activism might be franchised but, as this chapter will highlight, the struggles and organisational concerns that are typical of franchises can be observed in advocacy groups such as Hollaback!.

Bradach (1997, 1998) sets out a clear distinction between what he calls ‘chains’ and ‘franchised units’ and this is crucial to understanding how Hollaback! can be conceptualised as a franchise. Bradach (1997, p. 284) contrasts the differences in structures when he describes franchises as ‘a federation of semi-autonomous small hierarchies’, compared to the chain/company organisational structure as ‘a large monolithic hierarchy’. Bradach (1997, p. 276) demonstrates the ways in which organisations ‘maintain uniformity and achieve system wide adaptation to changing markets’. Bradach (1997, 1998) identifies key characteristics and concerns that accompany franchise organisations and these provide a useful framework for understanding how Hollaback! are franchising activism, the structure behind their campaign and understanding the issues that the organisation has encountered. These elements and concerns revolve around branding and membership, partially decentralising units, replication, adaptation to local communities, financial resources, uniformity and autonomy. Each of these elements affect the way in which the Hollaback! campaign with the map is sustained and replicated across the globe.

Conceptualising feminist actions like Hollaback! as franchises provides a way of understanding the structural and communication practices that affect its transmission, adoption and adaption in various other locales around the world. This phenomenon can also be observed in the ways in which other feminist actions, such as the mass mobilisations of Slutwalk and Reclaim/Take Back the Night, were imitated and replicated in cities across the world. Analysing Hollaback! from a franchise perspective also accounts for the internal struggles in the organisation that resulted in structural changes of the campaign at multiple points of time.

To address the second research question, the findings are compared with Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) three-part typology. The analysis demonstrates how Hollaback!’s structure evolved and how it was initially positioned more closely with a crowd-enabled or self organising model but over time strengthened and formalised its network, positioning the campaign between Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) organisationally

enabled and organisationally brokered categories. Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 13) describe organisationally brokered actions as containing ‘formalised (leadership-based, professionally organised) relations with followers, with the aim of cultivating commonly defined emotional commitments to the cause’. Further, they argue that digital media in these cases do not fundamentally change the logic of participation or organisation of the action; rather, they are used to reduce communication and coordination costs (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 13). Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 13) argue that these types of actions are often characterised by coalitions of heavily brokered relations among organisations seeking a common goal.

Elements of this structure can be observed in the Hollaback! case study, particularly in relation to the formalised structure with clear leaders running the blog and moderating the content—along with the ways in which the organisation uses the results from the campaign to form coalitions with other institutes for further action. However, Hollaback! arose due to digital technology; specifically, it arose due to mobile devices empowering women with a new ability to challenge the male gaze. Combined with the establishment of a feminist blogosphere, these technologies assisted the explosion of the campaign and what it meant to ‘hollaback’. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) recognise that there can be hybrid models of activism, which they allude to throughout their research and which are represented by the arrows between each of the categories illustrated by their model. However, their analysis does not detail the nature of this hybridity and how it might be demonstrated in organisational practices. Thus, the analysis of Hollaback! is used to test how useful Bennett and Segerberg’s model is for assessing the organisational structures of contemporary feminist actions and whether a more hybrid conceptualisation of organisation is needed.

To develop the analysis, the chapter draws on interviews with seven site leaders from Hollaback! chapters in the US, the UK and Australia. Site leaders are the activists in charge of each chapter and are the administrators or moderators of each of the blogs/websites that host the Hollaback! campaign, collect the submissions and visualise the map pinpointing incidences of street harassment. The chapter also includes an interview with one of the leaders from the ‘mothership’ (also known as the headquarters—the original Hollaback! group located in New York City, which established the first blog). The organisers interviewed were at different stages of their

involvement with Hollaback!. Some of them had been involved for years, almost from the beginning of the organisation. Others had just begun their training as site leaders and were in the middle of establishing their local group. Further still, a couple of former site leaders were also interviewed to provide insight into the experience of transitioning away from Hollaback!. Interviewing people at different stages of their involvement with the organisation helped provide a broader understanding of how the organisation's and campaign's structure was perceived and the challenges that individuals encountered across their involvement. The interviewees, along with the local chapters that they were a part of, are predominately anonymised for this research so they could speak freely about the issues that they encountered while maintaining their privacy.

The findings are structured around three periods of time during the Hollaback! campaign: the beginning and the development of a collective response; the localisation of the campaign by establishing chapters; and the eventual chapter disaffiliation. Each of these key themes identifies specific areas of structural change in the organisation, which affects the campaign and how it is supported and spread across the globe. Before delving into the analysis, a brief overview of Hollaback! is provided to help contextualise and orient the findings. The two main levels of structure in the organisation are:

- the original New York group, also known as the headquarters or mothership
- 50 + chapters all over the world.

The original home website, ihollaback.org, no longer features a global map of harassment at its centre. Now, the homepage works as a launching pad for the rest of the organisation to connect people to their local chapters and to share the stories and experiences of people from more localised communities. Each chapter has its own website that is linked to the central headquarters site and its own sites host a map of its local area, with the stories submitted to their chapter. The original Hollaback! campaign is kept alive by the chapters sharing and updating their local maps. However, each chapter is also independently involved in several other actions, as part of the global organisation or in coalitions with other local institutes and organisations.

5.2 The Beginning—Developing a Collective

Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 12) argue that organisationally brokered collective action contains a strong collective focus, with the aim of cultivating a commonly defined ‘commitment’ to a cause. The name Hollaback! draws this into question because it means a response and represents a way of communicating and fighting back. In this way, the campaign and the organisation are framed around an action rather than a group. The organisation’s name does not allude to a group of people, but rather it emphasises an action and the group arose from this collective response. This ensures that the framing of the collective is broad and inclusive, allowing anyone to identify as part of the movement if they too wish to ‘hollaback’. It can also be an attempt to mask the organisation or to create a sense of distance from the idea of being a member of a group; instead, it could attempt to draw a collective together, based on a social objective and an action.

This branding privileges the personalisation of actions and can be observed in other global movements, such as Occupy and Slutwalk, both of which operate under a name that represents an action rather than a specific group. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue that political participation is shifting away from group affiliation and this is perhaps why contemporary groups like Hollaback! are shifting away from a name that symbolises a shared identity and, instead, frame their action around a shared experience and a mode of resistance.

This also alludes to how an organisation can utilise personalised action frames that Bennett and Segerberg (2012, 2013) describe as core tenets of connective action. Hollaback! facilitated participation through the development of its digitised map and the establishment of a blog on which individuals could submit their stories and join the chorus of people ‘hollering back’. The group established a personalised action frame that individuals could relate to and participate in without having to align themselves with the organisation. This leads to another aspect that Hollaback! complicates: membership.

No formal membership is required for individuals to participate in Hollaback! actions. The organisation arose from people submitting their stories to the map, which provided Hollaback! with the data to support their contention and further actions. The organisation later expanded and began working on other actions and collaborations with external organisations. The only real members of the organisation would be the site leaders. The

organisation does not need to have a membership base to advocate for, rather the points on the maps and the stories curated provide the foundation for the organisation's purpose.

Gaffney's (1980) research into non-profits provides some insights into the dynamics of memberships. He contends that the procedures often remain unclear, as are the procedures for terminating one's membership status. He went on to argue that 'many persons become unwitting members' just through subscribing or making donations (Gaffney, 1980, p. 24). The same could be said for Hollaback!. It remains unclear if submitting a story formally makes an individual a member of the organisation. However, the organisation aims to serve those who have experienced street harassment and advocates on behalf of those who have submitted stories.

The additional modes in which digital media allow individuals to engage, even unwittingly, in an organisation's action complicates the notion of membership. The primary administrator behind one of the online groups that is discussed in the next chapter, Mad Fucking Witches, spoke about the group's membership in terms of the page's followers. When asked further about the actual membership base of the MFW group, the administrator stated that it was actually strategic to keep the membership vague and obscured. It enabled the organisation to appear larger and more powerful than it might in fact be. The benefits of this meant that the group had more perceived leverage and power for potential physical rallies and larger support for future collaborations. Further research is needed to conceptualise more fully what membership means in the digital environment.

Bennett and Segerberg (2012, 2013) argue that the introduction of digital media did not change the core dynamics of actions for organisationally brokered collective action. They contend that formal organisations predominately use digital technology to reduce the cost of public outreach and coordination and that these tools do not alter the fundamental principles of organising for these groups (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 748). However, if it was not for the large-scale personal access to digital technology, then the Hollaback! campaign would not have been internationally successful. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) describe how conventional organisations were using digital platforms as extensions of their previous tactics, such as using Facebook pages or websites to disseminate and broadcast information in a 1-many format. This structure of communication is conventional and does not change the structure of a campaign from collective to

connective. However, in the case of Hollaback!, the digital platform was at the centre of the action and it was designed to be interactive: to seek the contributions of the public. Many activists acknowledged the central role that digital platforms played in Hollaback! activism:

It's a project that's sort of digital in its very essence. It's ultimately app based in terms of reporting the stories or sharing on the site and that's often the first way that people will hear about it. It really wouldn't be anything without digital tools (Interviewee A, Interview, 15 December 2016).

This interaction was not completely loose; there was a process of moderation by the group behind the blog in addition to the parameters laid out on the submissions page of the blog, which contributed to the shaping and limitations of the personalised expressions and contributions. In this way, the Hollaback! campaign borrowed elements from Bennett and Segeberg's (2013) organisationally enabled connective action: facilitating and moderating large-scale personalised expressions that are shared on digital platforms. The action frame that Hollaback! established was broad and inclusive enough that, in a few months of the blog launching, they had received thousands of submissions. This led to the virality of Hollaback!, as it was broad enough and shareable enough for people all over the world to relate to the experience of street harassment.

The organisers also attributed digital technology with allowing the movement to achieve such scalability and in a very quick time frame:

...The speed in which the issue has been catapulted to mainstream conversations...the issue of street harassment could not have happened any other way besides online, complemented by on the ground organising. I'm a firm believer in grassroots community-based organising as well. But the online component really sped up the process for people to understand that street harassment is a form of gender-based violence, that street harassment is a form of abuse and that it's something that shouldn't be normalised or minimised (Interviewee B, Interview, 29 November 2016).

The quotation highlights how inextricably linked conventional and contemporary activist logics are in Hollaback! activism. Digital tools enabled rapid scalability and the personalised action frames enabled shareable stories that were then easily adaptable and consumable by mainstream media outlets. All these characteristics are described by Bennett and Segerberg (2012, 2013) in their outline of connective actions. The personalised engagement on the Hollaback! blog seemed to bypass entry-level demands

for membership and broader ideological commitments—a pattern that Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 11) identify as reflective of organisationally enabled connective action. Yet, issues surrounding organisation affiliation arose later for Hollaback!, which created internal struggles and led to some local chapters disaffiliating (which will be discussed later in the chapter). Chadwick's (2007) conceptualisation of organisational hybridity provides another way of understanding the combination of conventional and contemporary organisational logics present within Hollaback!. Chadwick (2007, p. 291) argues that contemporary traditional groups are changing their internal organisational processes to build loose networks within previously 'untapped reservoirs of citizen support'. He further emphasises the importance of blogs for creating the impression of a 'genuine grassroots campaign' that differed from established political parties and advocacy groups (Chadwick, 2007, p. 291). In this way, Hollaback! utilised the blog to provide an alternative mode of engagement for citizens who desired more personalised forms of engagement and who were moving away from official organisational affiliations while maintaining a more traditional organisational collective behind the scenes of the campaign.

In addition to the personalised action frames, the organisers interviewed also identified solidarity as a characteristic of the action. One of the site leaders spoke about the digital network that had developed and recognised the value of having a digital community for solidarity. They further reflected on how building such a community is difficult without the help of digital platforms:

I have been working in the field of gender-based violence for 15 years. Prior to this, I was working in domestic violence advocacy and I was interested in how Hollaback! was working at the intersection of technology and social justice, which was a change from pretty much everything else that I had done. Prior with the advocacy work, there was a lot of having to deal with and navigate institutions like the court system, the health care system—for people to access their basic needs as survivors. The fact that Hollaback! was putting a sort of positive spin on fighting back and speaking back and responding in some way—not necessarily in the moment, but online—was really appealing to me because with all the other forms of violence I've worked on, a lot of people are facing isolation; they are sort of walking around with the impacts of abuse and trauma and the violence and I feel like Hollaback! was mobilising people to take space for themselves and to sort of broadcast what they were experiencing in a way that created a community online (Interviewee B, interview, 29 November 2016).

Solidarity action frames is a characteristic that arises across all of the case studies examined in this thesis. The nature of feminist activism often revolves around enlightening society about the injustices and inequalities that women have experienced, with solidarity playing a crucial role in providing women the support to take action and to know they are not alone. A site leader reflected that the large-scale expression of solidarity would not have been possible without networked technology:

The aspect of connecting people globally on the issue wouldn't have happened without the technology and the platforms that we have. And, so, seeing how this issue impacts people across the world in very similar ways, I feel like that was something else that could only have happened through the platforms we have (Interviewee B, Interview, 29 November 2016).

After a few months, the blog and the movement garnered enough attention that they began receiving submissions from outside the US. The original group realised that they wanted to move the action beyond the awareness raising stage and develop further action from the reported stories. However, they realised they only had the capacity to instigate further action at their local level. Thus, they decided to allow activists from other cities and countries to develop their own Hollaback! blogs that might be able to more specifically address the issues occurring in the other locations.

5.3 Localising the Campaign

Not only were the digital personalised action frames useful in generating engagement and contributions to the blog, but they also worked as a way of inspiring new chapters and recruiting site leaders. Broad, inclusive and personalised action frames were crucial for the engagement of chapters in other communities and countries. The initial momentum of the movement led to the launch of 20 different Hollaback! blogs and chapters. However, according to Dimond's (2012) research, only three out of these original 20 remained active by 2010. This was in part due to the lack of connection and support from the headquarters. Many satellite groups struggled to sustain themselves with a lack of resources and many new site leaders had no previous activist experience and were unprepared for the amount of work required to sustain the webpage and chapter.

The initial Hollaback! chapters created their own blogs and websites on a range of different platforms, collected personalised submissions using different parameters and used their own designs and branding style to identify as Hollaback!. The organiser from

the headquarters reflected on the early days of the organisation and how the other Hollaback! chapters were barely recognisable as part of the same collective. After most of these early chapters had dissolved, May decided to devote more of her time to make Hollaback! an international movement and transitioned to a full-time role with the organisation. To help sustain the movement across different chapters, the original founders decided to organise Hollaback! as a federation of sites coordinated by the New York City chapter, which became known as the mothership. There was a collective decision to assist the creation of new Hollaback! chapters beyond organic replications and to ensure that there was more consistency to help the newer chapters and ensure the Hollaback! campaign was recognisable across the chapters (Interviewee B, Interview, 29 November 2016).

Bradach's (1998) contention that the 'cloning of a common set of practices in geographically dispersed units ... has gone largely unnoticed' describes the kinds of global protest trends that are being observed, not just from organisations, but also in less formally organised forms of protests. This cloning of activism can be observed across the globalisation of movements such as Slutwalk, Reclaim the Night/Take Back the Night, Occupy and Hollaback!. Decentralised groups are learning from each other's practices and are replicating the activist tactics and practices while operating under the branding of an internationally recognised hashtag. In terms of Occupy and Slutwalk, newer groups replicated the practices and repertoire that were successfully employed by the original groups, despite not being formally organised.

In Chadwick's (2007) analysis of contemporary actions, he identifies sedimentary networks as one of the defining characteristics of contemporary organisation. He (2007, p. 294) argues that digital infrastructure enabled the development of these networks, which made it more likely for older organisations to be revived or reconfigured. This phenomenon is also found in Chapter Six in relation to the second wave of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc campaign and it also partially explains the development of localised Hollaback! chapters over time. Chadwick (2007, p. 294) argues that sedimentary networks are characterised by 'an absence of centralised control and relatively autonomous but highly connected subunits'. In this way, the hybridity afforded by digital infrastructure opened up the Hollaback! organisation allowing for the expansion and adaptation of further chapters by sedimentary networks. However, the

Hollaback! organisation also provided another layer of support to these networks in an attempt to help sustain them in the long term. The organisation deliberately established ‘start-up packages’ that provided newer activists seeking to join the skills to contribute.

The mothership began to provide a website and social media templates for new chapters to enable consistency in the replication and branding of new chapters. Some activists reflected on the resources that the mothership provided them, such as the branding information that they were given at induction:

They give you a branding guide and access to all their information, like educational tools and things (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

We used Wordpress as a website. They would give you the bare bones of it and you’d just have to fill it out so people would share their stories on the website and you’d have to include the location of where the street harassment incident was, and it would pin it to the map. So, you could see densely populated areas; it was really handy. It was an interactive website (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

In addition to this change, Hollaback! became a non-profit organisation. As a consequence of having non-profit status, the organisation had to create a board to provide accountability for the organisation. One of the activists at the mothership described their model: ‘We have a board of directors, we have an advisory board and then we have our site leaders around the world. And we have a staff of five people in New York’. Currently, there are three paid staff members at Hollaback! headquarters, including co-founder and Executive Director May.

The organisational structure of the mothership, as well as the structure of some of the local chapters, is hierarchical. However, they aspire to be a decentralised global organisation, as a member of the New York City group reflected:

With such a small staff ... that’s why we really rely on a decentralised model where we have committees that manage tech concerns. We have a committee of site leaders that manage issues around diversity and inclusion, a committee that deals with research, a committee that deals with ongoing training. We have an internal system in place so that the work is really led by the site leaders (Interviewee B, Interview, 29 November 2016).

Site leaders are expected to contribute back to the overall organisation by volunteering for internal committees, sharing their own resources and answering the concerns of newer

leaders in the organisation. The idea of this structure is to ensure the organisation remains up to date regarding the actions and concerns that each group is addressing and to provide some kind of accountability in terms of the local chapters participating in the campaigns that the ‘mothership’ sets. Some chapter organisers reported a range of activities and initiatives that were established to encourage chapters to share what they were doing:

There’s a private Facebook group for all the site leaders from each different place and that’s used quite a lot to share problems and stuff that’s happening. Every week, there’s a ‘week in our shoes’ thing they post on their website so they ask people to write what they’re doing that week (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

I know the New York group often propagates hashtags if they’re doing a specific thing, and you’re supposed to get on board and participate in that. It was always the New York office that would start those (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

In addition to the six-month induction and training, there are also regular workshops and gatherings between site leaders, both virtual and physical, that work to establish an interconnectedness between the chapters. These workshops, conferences and sometimes camps enable the organisation to provide other chapters with more resources and implement any major changes in terms of structure, as well as goals for the broader organisation. One of the organisers from the mothership stated:

We train leaders around the world to address the issue on the ground so when we launch sites every year, each site gets a platform, they get their own website where they can collect stories and all of that training happens online. So we rely on a system of webinars to connect our site leaders around the world and to give them the resources that they need to start a site. This includes a series of, well it used to be five webinars but now it’s more like vlog recordings that they have to watch. We talk about street harassment 101, how to respond to press, talking points around street harassment, how to talk about the issue. We teach them how to build their site and how to collect their stories and we teach them how to organise on the ground so that they can get stories and all of that (Interviewee B, Interview, 29 November 2016).

These training processes are indicative of the franchising of the Hollaback! campaign. The organisational structure mirrors that of a fast-food franchise organisation in which the headquarters appoints managers and provides them the resources to develop and run their own local units. The training described above also works as a means of socialising new members into the organisation, which Bradach argues ‘reduces the need for

hierarchical ... mechanisms of control' (1997, p. 292). The mothership also provides spaces in which to disseminate operational handbooks and guides that may describe new changes, policies and updated procedures. These spaces have shifted from email to Facebook groups and Google Hangouts. Some of the chapter site leaders stated:

They [the mothership] suggest to do workshops, to do safer spaces things and talk to venues, and chalk walks are always encouraged, movie nights... (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

If someone from Poland asked a question, I could answer that and say 'oh we did this in our city and it was successful'. Some of the things are universal, like doing chalk walks is really popular (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

The above quotations highlight the top-down strategies that are implemented by the mothership, in which they design actions and expect the local chapters to help implement them. While the other chapters provide online updates about what they are doing, they rarely, if at all, start a campaign that other chapters get involved with or who are promoted by the mothership. The types of actions that the mothership implements, as described earlier with the 'a week in our shoes' initiatives, serve as a type of check-in by the chapters to the headquarters. These top-down initiatives and workshops reveal the balance of power between the mothership and the chapters and serve as a mode of supervision to ensure that the chapters are abiding by the organisation's policies.

The last quotation also touches on the delegation of responsibility by the mothership to other trained site leaders. Once inducted and trained, site leaders are expected to give back to the organisation and provide support to other chapter leaders, which would further help sustain the broader organisation. The mothership has also developed some internal committees to provide further strategic connections between the chapters, which strengthen the ties between the chapters and the broader organisation. One of the interviewees reflected on these committees:

They say each Hollaback! branch should have someone within one of the committees so you'd kind of have city meetings with other people to discuss the specific aspects and make sure everyone is on the same page with certain issues (Interviewee D, Interview, 22 June 2016).

The establishment of committees and activities put forward by the mothership also creates a sense of interdependence between the different groups and ensures similar goals and strategies are being employed by the local chapters. Some of the organisers from local

chapters saw this responsibility as a burden, due to the amount of work they had to do in their own chapters and the feeling of disconnect from chapters in other countries. For most interviewees, this resistance was embedded in their tone and some of the language they used, such as ‘they say we should’ and ‘we are meant to’. One of the interviewees was more explicit about a wider resistance to the organisation and what they are expected to do:

I know they [the New York group] suggest things that we just didn’t do ... I think mainly because of capacity. It’s difficult. They have ideas of what they want from Hollaback!, but they’re also happy for us to do our own thing. And we definitely do our own thing (Interviewee E, Interview, 5 December 2016).

This interviewee also reflected on the activities and suggestions made by the mothership and the tensions with their own group:

I don’t necessarily find a lot of the stuff we get emailed from Hollaback! Global helpful. It’s nice to be part of this global movement, but Hollaback! feels very US based. It’s quite distant from the work that we do here (Interviewee E, Interview, 5 December 2016).

This type of resistance is described by Bradach (1998) in his account of franchise organisations. As Harrigan (1998, n.p.) draws out in her review of Bradach’s (1998) book:

The franchisees’ status as independent managers made them more skeptical about the viability of corporate policies, and they often resisted headquarters’ ideas. Consequentially, franchisees had to be persuaded rather than dictated to when corporate headquarters desired to make operating-policy changes.

This dynamic between franchisees and headquarters is reflected in the tension between the Hollaback! chapters, particularly those that operate outside the US. Although the chapter organisers were sometimes sceptical about the relevance of initiatives from the New York City–based mothership for their own locale, they all appreciated being part of a local community. One of the organisers valued the global Hollaback! network and appreciated the online Facebook group because it enabled them to connect and learn from the tactics that people in other countries were employing:

One of the really good things that I have enjoyed about doing this project is that we are all linked together on the Hollaback! internal global group on Facebook ... This is all stuff that you just wouldn’t be able to directly talk to the organisers unless you were involved with something like Hollaback! (Interviewee A, Interview, 15 December 2016).

Developing an avenue by which the different chapters and site leaders can communicate aligns with Bradach's description of franchise strategies. Bradach (1998) found that franchises benefited from this mutual learning process in which ideas could be 'generated, tested, selected, and implemented' (Bradach, as cited in Harrigan, 1998, n.p.).

One of the site leaders also spoke about the Hollaback! Global meet-ups that happen occasionally, in which regional groups come together:

Hollaback! Global organises these meet ups with other regional people. So I had a chat with a Hollaback! Oxford person. And that was really great. It's interesting to see what other Hollabacks are doing, especially other England-based ones, where we're dealing with the same austerity (Interviewee E, Interview, 5 December 2016).

Similarly, an activist from the headquarters recounted that:

We have held retreats. Three of them. Two in New York City and one in London, where we invite site leaders to come to our public event that we host called Holla-Revolution, which is followed by a two-and-a-half-day workshop and bonding time so we have met a lot of our site leaders (Interviewee B, Interview, 29 November 2016).

These efforts to develop face-to-face connections between the groups, especially when they are in similar regions, strengthened the connections between the chapters and the broader organisation. They were able to find mentors in other site leaders and learn from those more experienced, as well as develop a sense of solidarity. However, these meet-ups were only occasional events and the significance placed on them to update other nearby groups highlights how each group remained quite independent. These meet-ups are also in line with Bradach's (1997, p. 289) conceptualisation of franchises, as he stated that franchises often have annual or bi-annual meetings that allow the separate units to discuss business matters. Bradach (1998) repeatedly argues that headquarters maintain control through persuasion and one of the ways in which they can do that is by promoting the successes of other units that have followed their suggestions. In the case of Hollaback!, these meetings can operate as showcases of other chapters' achievements and can even contribute to the persuasion of chapters to engage in particular initiatives.

Further, the dynamic of organisational processes described above highlights how the Hollaback! organisation embodies the organisational hybridity that Chadwick (2007) predicted. Chadwick (2007, p. 297) proposes that 'organisations will become a more

complex combination of hierarchical and nonhierarchical, online and offline, forms of action', and this describes the combination of processes present within the Hollaback! organisation. The organisational processes described here position the Hollaback! campaign as overlapping Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) organisational categories. The analysis also indicates that the Hollaback! organisation simultaneously maintains plural organisational models, which are also in flux and have evolved over the history of the organisation.

Conceptualising Hollaback! as a franchise or franchise activism also enables a framework for understanding the distinctiveness of each of the Hollaback chapters, in regard to their own structure, organisational dynamics and how they adapted the main campaign to their specific community. There are a few levels of structure in the organisation. First, there is the macrostructure of the organisation, which defines how the mothership operates as the headquarters and coordinator and its relationship to all the local chapters. Second, there is the microstructure of how each individual chapter chooses to organise and operate itself.

Many of the interviewees spoke about ongoing debates that they had with other members in their local chapters about the structure their chapter should adopt. One of the interviewees reflected on how each chapter is different and the evolution of their own chapter's structure:

All the Hollabacks do it very differently. We do it as a collective, we are structured in a really specific way because we want to have all of the different aspects of us doing all of those different things and not necessarily having to be impacted by it. So, for example, in our collective, we have coordinators; who are just people who nominate themselves. We have about eight coordinators. Some will do the work on our social media, partnerships, workshops and outreach, and press and media. All of those interact and work very differently ... so I think everybody finds their own space, whether it's to be more formal, whether it's to be more typically activist, whether they want to work within or outside (Interviewee E, Interview, 5 December 2016).

The particular Hollaback! chapter described above is one of the longest standing and largest chapters to have developed as part of the organisation. The organisers described how the chapter was started by two friends who drove the chapter by themselves for many years. However, due to life changes and one of the original organisers moving away, they

dedicated a lot of work into restructuring the chapter as a collective and recruiting a range of new activists to ensure the group and the campaign would continue.

Similarly, another of the organisers from the same chapter recounted:

When we call ourselves co-directors, it was kind of on the suggestion of the New York HQ people, but we now have our chapter as a collective so now there are sort of coordinators and that work is done on a kind of rolling basis so the coordinator role might be swapped between people (Interviewee A, Interview, 15 December 2016).

This quotation reflects a tension between wanting to maintain the language that the mothership expects, with the beliefs and needs of the organisers at the local chapter. This is, again, consistent with Bradach's (1998) understanding of franchises and how franchisees would often cooperate among themselves, as they would develop and establish their own versions of the organisation.

In terms of the structural debates about the organisation at both a micro and macro level, one of the organisers expressed frustration in terms of how adaptable the organisation was at a local level:

A lot of the terminology has changed. Like, the headquarters is a non-profit in New York; but for a really long time, there was quite a weird power imbalance where they obviously were running an organisation. It's a small group of people, but they are getting paid. There is a board, but it's in New York and then you have 40 to 50 cities all around the world. People in really different circumstances are taking on this issue in their communities and exposing themselves to risks sometimes, who are not getting paid and there is obviously within that a power imbalance (Interviewee A, Interview, 15 December 2016).

Some of the issues in this quotation surrounding the power dynamic between paid and non-paid activists are explored later in this chapter, particularly in regard to how the work required for digital activism is conceptualised (Jarrett, 2015; Terranova, 2000) and often results in activist burnout (Gleeson, 2016).

The above quotation draws out another concern that Bradach (1998) identifies as core to franchises: the local adaptability of the franchise. This was similar to the sentiment made by another organiser who felt the organisation had a US bias. It also highlights how structural shifts at the macro level are felt throughout the rest of the organisation and how there are struggles with how the organisation and campaign can adapt to different

communities. Bradach, along with other organisational scholars, described the importance of franchises, allowing for the adaptation in local environments in their replication of units (Winter, Szulanski, Ringov & Jensen, 2012). The Hollaback! mothership recognised the need for adapting the campaign and providing other chapters, particularly in non-Western locations, with the resources to help them in this process. However, despite this awareness, the concern for adapting the campaign in a range of locations has led to various tensions and difficulties for the mothership and individual chapters.

One of the organisers from the mothership described the process of establishing local chapters:

The people we train is usually a team of two or more people. Pretty much, they just contact us and they say they want to start a site in their location and if there's no site there, then we sign them up for the training. If there is an existing site, then we connect them with whoever's already there. We have more city sites than country sites because ... we want the knowledge to be as localised as possible so that people can develop on the ground actions in a way that's responsive to the needs of the community (Interviewee B, Interview, 29 November 2016).

The activist emphasises the advantages of having a decentralised structure in relation to the local chapters and the importance of adapting to specific communities. This reflects Bradach's (1997, 1998) argument that local adaptation is crucial for the successful expansion of an organisation, and franchise structures allow an organisation to adapt to the local environment. Bradach's belief in the franchisee's 'intimate knowledge of local conditions' (1997, p. 283) is reflected across Hollaback! and influences why the organisation decided to develop smaller city-based chapters instead of much larger organisational outlets. The Hollaback! organisation felt that the campaign would operate better at a smaller, local level, and that the results pinpointed on the map could be used more effectively in smaller communities than with country-wide data sets.

Most of the Hollaback! chapters developed in urban spaces and in cities, as described above. However, some of the site leaders reflected on how the technocentric nature of Hollaback! created a digital divide in terms of the campaign and who was able to participate, failing to capture the rural demographics. One particular rural chapter that had been established ended up disaffiliating from Hollaback! because they felt that the needs of their community were not addressed by the organisation:

As a rural site, we wanted less focus on the latest technology. Any time we brought up the issue of excluding poor people who don't have the latest tech or internet access, our concerns were ignored (Interviewee F, Interview, 19 November 2016).

The quotation above highlights some issues surrounding the digital divide. Several researchers have flagged the potential divide they argue digital activism has created in activist communities. Julia Schuster (2013) raises concerns about the invisibility between feminist activists who use digital platforms and those who do not. Similarly, Anita Harris (2010) warns about a 'gap' between older feminist activists and the younger activists who operate predominantly online. Although neither specifically focus on the digital divide in terms of the location, they do problematize campaigns that require technological access and proficiency and how exclusion based on these requirements can be harmful to the movement.

Harris (2010) and Schuster (2013) both focus on a generational divide between young third-wave activists and older feminists who were involved in the activist scene before the rise of social media. However, the research in chapters five and six documents no generational divide between the activists involved. In fact, the interviews across all the case studies finds that within more informally structured campaigns, there is actually a dominance of *older* feminist activists leading and driving the actions, due to their experience, reputation and networks that were cultivated over a long history of engagement. Despite the lack of generational findings in this research, the digital divide in rural and urban actions is a legitimate point of concern. While a level of technological access enabled activists from across the world and even in some rural-based locations to participate in the actions, a bias was present in all the case studies towards action networks that were centralised around metropolitan and urban regions.

Further, there was a Western and English-speaking bias in Hollaback! that could be attributed to the design and structure of the campaign website. The activist from the mothership recognised this bias in the chapters that had developed and described how the local adaptation of the campaign was mostly left to the individual chapters:

Most people who sign up to start a site are usually English speakers, as well as their mother tongue, so most people are proficient in English. But, we do translations for sites, so they can function bilingually or even trilingual. We are able to accommodate that, but we do rely on the site leaders to do the translation

for their sites; we just provide the system for them to do it (Interviewee B, Interview, 29 November 2016).

A key point from this quotation is the fact that the mothership ‘provides the system’ for local chapters to adapt the campaign. The primary reason for this is stated by one of the activists from the headquarters: ‘With such a small staff, it’s not always easy to do and that’s why we really rely on a decentralised model where we have committees’. The minimal staff at the mothership means it is difficult for them to supervise and support the entire campaign across all of the chapters. This signifies that most of the burden of adaptation falls to the chapters, which has led to its own issues.

5.4 Disaffiliation and Structural Issues

Chadwick (2013, p. 12) identifies the construction of hybrid organisational processes as an often ‘heavily politicised and competitive process’ at historical junctures in which groups engage in a ‘struggle to assert their power and autonomy’. This description of the development of hybridity aligns with the evolution of the organisational structures of the Hollaback! organisation and also accounts for the struggles that led to the disaffiliation of various chapters. Some of the politicised struggles that Hollaback! encountered that affected the structure of the organisation and campaign were around issues of funding and intersectionality within the organisation.

A recurring issue that emerged in the interviews was the tension surrounding funding of the campaign at the chapter level. The non-profit status of the mothership, along with the establishment of paid staff, has contributed to financial concerns from the chapters, which also highlight a tension surrounding both the autonomy and unity of the chapters and organisation. As Hollaback! is not a for-profit company, the analysis differs here to Bradach’s (1998) analysis of franchises; however, there are common concerns reflected in both non-profit franchises, such as Hollaback! and Bradach’s (1998) restaurant franchises. The distribution of resources and the potential conflict between chapters and resources influences both types of franchises. As previously mentioned, there is an incentive in developing dispersed units to ensure that they do not draw on the same pool of resources available at a local level.

During the first five years of the organisation, several conflicts arose when multiple chapters, including the mothership, applied for the same sources of funding. Due to these

clashes, the organisation decided to write up guidelines that restricted chapters' fundraising and also established a stronger coordination role that required all chapters to consult the mothership before applying for any grants. Hollaback! has very little in terms of financial resources, but these guidelines help them to maintain control over local chapters' financial affairs. Despite these guidelines, the financial concern of franchise activism is not a primary focal point and is somewhat absent from the training involved for new Hollaback! site leaders. Dimond's (2012) dissertation outlines how Hollaback!'s fundraising model was confusing for site leaders and the interviews conducted for this chapter also described the confusion that continues to exist surrounding the organisation's fundraising structure.

Hollaback's initial fundraising model established that money raised by local chapters through the campaign was to be passed onto the mothership. This created tension between the mothership and local chapters, as the chapters generally felt that they operated autonomously and the other initiatives that the mothership worked on were not always relevant to the local chapters. The confusion surrounding why funds raised at the local level are passed on to the mothership in New York is also intertwined with how membership of the organisation is perceived. As previously mentioned, the concept of membership remains vague in the organisation. Site leaders feel as if they are members of the organisation that is coordinated by the mothership; however, the local communities, particularly outside the US do not always relate to the New York City mothership and it is not publicly known as the mothership of the organisation. Local participants in the campaign may not feel a connection with the international affiliation of the organisation. This tension is identified by Bennett and Segerberg (2013) in contemporary actions as well. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue that citizens are shifting away from identifying with formally established organisations in favour of more loosely associated personalised engagement. They contend that citizens prefer to join actions through trusted recommendations and social networks developed from their friendship circles (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p.24).

This contemporary preference of engagement makes it more difficult for organisations like Hollaback! to develop a unified, international collective. One of the interviewees also reflected on how this problematic structure is embedded in the Hollaback! platform: 'The "donate" button embedded on all sites goes to the "mothership" PayPal and not the local

chapter whose site you might be visiting'. This highlights how the affordances of the digital platform can contribute to the structure of an organisation and, in this case, contribute to the franchising of the organisation and the issues surrounding funding the local chapters. It also reveals the tension around Hollaback!'s hybrid organisational structure, particularly in terms of how they are positioned between Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) more traditional organisationally brokered collective action and their category of organisationally enabled connective action. The separate Hollaback! chapter sites suggest the organisation is sponsoring localised variations of the campaign and inviting citizens to participate by submitting their own personalised expressions of street harassment. This type of action appears to be aligned with Bennett and Segerberg's organisationally enabled model of organisation. However, the hierarchical direction in which donations and funding are structured reveals a more traditional organisational structure. In this way, Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) logic of connective action is useful for explaining the tension surrounding the organisational processes but none of their organisational categories fully account for the hybridised structure demonstrated by Hollaback!.

In addition to this tension, the fact that May and a couple of other staff at the mothership are paid left some site leaders frustrated in local chapters. Site leaders felt that they were not as privileged as some of the white American women leading the organisation and did not have the financial support to sustain their activism. Dimond (2012) highlights how people with different perspectives may not be able to participate or engage in activism if they have less access to resources. A site leader from one of the local chapters problematized the relationship between paid White-American staff and the large amount of unpaid women of colour who ran local chapters. They spoke about how Hollaback! prides itself on its diverse site leaders, with '75% under the age of 30; 41% LGBTQ; and 33% people of colour' (Hollaback, 2011). The site leader argued that the majority of these people are marginalised and that the work they are doing is unpaid labour, which becomes problematic when the money they fundraise goes to the mothership and the white leaders. She went on to argue that the organisation was essentially funded on the 'unpaid labour and exploitation of marginalised bodies'.

This frustration is reinforced by other research into the experiences of feminist activists (Gleeson, 2016), as well as research that has conceptualised online practices as a form of

exploitative labour (Jarrett, 2015; Terranova, 2000). Previous research has underlined how feminist activists have been increasingly using digital media platforms to organise both online and offline forms of activism (Gleeson, 2016; Khoja-Moolji, 2015; McLean & Maalsen, 2013). However, much of the work that is conducted in the digital sphere has been more broadly undervalued. Scholars have conceptualised the work happening online as ‘exploitative’ in nature, due to its perceived ‘immateriality’ and the blurring between work and leisure and production and consumption that has accompanied the digital economy (Terranova, 2000). Tiziana Terranova’s (2000) influential conception of the role of free labour in the digital economy draws attention to the masculine bias surrounding how one understands and values labour. Terranova (2000, p. 49) argues that the attention given to the open-source movement ‘betrays the persistence of an attachment to masculine understandings of labour within the digital economy: writing an operating system is still more worthy of attention than just chatting for free on AOL’. Media theorist Kylie Jarrett (2018) takes Terranova’s argument a step further, critiquing Terranova’s tendency to claim that the exploitation of immaterial digital labour is ‘new’ and underlining the history of feminising domestic and social work.

Jarrett (2015, p. 21) analyses the feminisation of social media work and conceptualises the ‘digital housewife’ as she describes the unpaid labour that women conduct in their writing, building and sustaining networks, and in communicating and coordinating activity with others online. Jarrett (2015, p. 1) identifies how, as users, people generate an ‘almost endless supply’ of data that can be ‘mined, re-purposed and sold to advertisers’ and provoked people to think about how people, as users, can be exploited by companies that host the digital platforms we frequent. Further still, Jarrett (2015, p. 1) highlights the relationship between the work women do online and the ‘unpaid sphere of social reproduction’, prompting a rethinking of how this work is valued.

The conception of the ‘digital housewife’ (Jarrett, 2015) and the feminisation of the precarious, immaterial and affective labour happening online provides a useful framework for understanding the role of feminist activists in the digital age, the struggles they face and the ways in which they are looking for compensation for their activism. Terranova and Jarrett both emphasise the blurring between the perception of leisure and work in the digital sphere. Terranova (2000, p. 33) describes much of the labour online as: ‘Simultaneously voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited’. While each

of the activists felt passionate about the campaign and the need for it, some of the site leaders struggled to find the support and compensation they required to sustain their local chapter.

Another factor that contributed to the issues surrounding the organisation's financial structure was the chapters' constant struggle and negotiation of autonomy while remaining a united global organisation. Further, Bradach (1997) argues that one of the reasons franchises want to maintain control of chapter finances is in part due to reputation management and to preserve their brand integrity. This negotiation of autonomy and the balance of power between the mothership and chapters plays into another component of the franchise structure; the branding of the organisation and the reputation that accompanies the name and affiliation.

Chadwick's (2013) analysis of hybrid media logics also provides a way of understanding this type of power struggle between the local Hollaback! chapters and the headquarters. Chadwick (2013, p. 17) describes hybrid media systems as based on 'competition, conflicts over resources, and desires for pre-eminence' yet he also recognises the weight of interdependence that exists between actors. He argues that even the most powerful actors within a network must cooperate with those who are less powerful in the pursuit of collective goals (Chadwick, 2013, p. 17). This kind of negotiation and hybrid structure is present within the Hollaback! case study and can also be understood when conceptualising the franchising of activism. Franchising a campaign creates a level of interdependence between the local chapters, the mothership and the campaign as a whole. On the one hand, newly formed Hollaback! chapters do not have to start from scratch when establishing the campaign at a local level because of the pre-existing chapters in the region or the recognition of the international campaign. However, conversely, each chapters' reputation and credibility remains dependent on the reputation of the broader organisation and the headquarters. At times, local chapters might find themselves in disagreement with the politics and decisions of the broader organisation and this may have ramifications for their own local version of the campaign.

One of the site leaders spoke about how easy it was to establish their own chapter and campaign when their community did not differ substantially from the New York City group:

What they were doing in New York was really easy to translate because the culture difference wasn't really too much. And they were very organised and had a tonne of learning materials and everything was kind of just handed to you. So, that made starting it really easy because you had this built-in website and mission all right there (Interviewee F, Interview, 19 November 2016).

This site leader recognised that the development of new chapters in similar areas was made easier when operating as a collective, compared to the work that would be required to establish an independent campaign. In fact, after a falling out with the organisation, this particular site leader did try to begin their own separate collective and campaign; however, the transition away from Hollaback! was not successful. This failure to launch the new site was in part due to the amount of labour required to rebrand and establish an entirely new organisation or campaign. Much of this labour is removed by the mothership by the templates they provide, as well as the establishment of their mission and cause.

Operating under a name that is globally recognised provides groups and activists power and recognition that might not be otherwise attributed to them. In a sense, the name gives them a legitimacy, even when the groups are considerably disconnected from the central organising unit. The mothership also gains legitimacy with the development of more chapters. Establishing a range of chapters at an international level provides Hollaback! with weight and power behind their name and signals the wide support that the organisation maintains. Further still, having chapters at a local level (city and community-based, rather than country-wide) in communities can highlight how deep support runs throughout a region. This can signal to other agencies and the government the level of representation that the group has in specific communities and that the group can earn them support and a voice for particular issues and policies.

Many of the organisers reflected on the collaborations and connections that they developed with other institutions—like a transport agency, city council and the police—and that they began to work as a type of consultant with these stakeholders to develop policies and projects that worked towards creating safer spaces and ending harassment. They recognised that these connections may not have been possible without the weight and leverage of an international brand like Hollaback! supporting them. A couple of activists spoke about these relationships in terms of how it affected their practices:

I realised that, actually, if a government body is coming to activists and saying ‘oh can you do this for us?’, it’s okay to ask them to get paid (Interviewee A, Interview, 15 December 2016).

We started getting quite high-level media requests (Interviewee A, Interview, 15 December 2016).

Initially, we talked about street harassment, but it kind of broadened out just because of the level of enquiries that we began getting ... I ended up doing quite a high level of consulting for things like the British transport police and the transport for London, the transport network and sexual offences on the underground and things like that (Interviewee A, Interview, 15 December 2016).

These quotations identify how the organisers were seen as legitimate advocacy organisations because of their affiliation with the internationally branded campaign. This kind of organisational dynamic is reflective of Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) organisationally brokered collective action in that the resources and formalised organisational processes was a crucial element of the Hollaback! campaign. For many site leaders, Hollaback! was their introduction to activism and many of them were also under the age of 30 without having established activist networks of their own. While some of the site leaders, such as those in the London and New York City chapters, had experience working in the non-profit sector, many younger activists did not have a developed activist profile of their own; they would thus never have independently been in a position to work as a consultant.

Around 75% of Hollaback!’s site leaders are under 30 years old without prior activism experience (Interviewee B, interview, 29 November 2016). The fact that many of the chapters took on consultative roles and worked on collaborative projects with formal agencies while the individual site leaders were young and had minimal experience underlines the importance of operating under an internationally recognised brand name. Unlike the following two case studies examined, because Hollaback! had a visible formalised structure, it operated as a first point of contact for many young activists. Some of the site leaders reflected on how Hollaback! was their first experience with activism and feminism more broadly:

Hollaback! was the first time. I had just sort of learned about feminism and it was the first time I’d started sharing stuff on my own social media and I’d never

done that before and that was a big deal (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

It introduced me to so much stuff I probably never would have heard about before. It sounds so basic, but sharing feminist stuff online was like the biggest deal for me. I would never have done that before unless I felt like I had this community. And when I was actually working with Hollaback!, it was really cool to be part of that worldwide thing, where everyone's like this is cool and we're all on the same side, it's not just you (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

I was looking for some kind of internship or part-time job and I was looking at feminist stuff and then I found Hollaback! generally and emailed them, and got forwarded onto my local one. And then I met the founder and we chatted and she said she has these roles they want filled, pick one (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

In this way, the Hollaback! organisation and campaign worked as a training ground for new activists as well as a place to recruit new people and induct them into the feminist movement. Importantly, this was not just a finding that emerged from analysing Hollaback!. Most activists interviewed across the other case studies who reported their experiences of learning activist tactics and strategies from particular established advocacy groups and unions:

I've been part of more organisationally initiated petitions. I'd been involved in youth climate activism stuff. I was part of the AYCC (Australian Youth Climate Coalition) and they did a lot of petitioning stuff and there was a log of going out on weekends and taking clipboards, getting people to sign a petition on the streets so I definitely have been involved in some other forms of petitioning and in online petition ... not exactly creating my own, but being part of an organisation that had one going and trying to push those out (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018).

In terms of being in the organisation side of things ... AYCC would probably have been the first involvement. They were really good at resourcing people. I did a few training weekends where we're all going to go and spend a weekend outside Melbourne and talk about campaigning. That definitely sparked something for me ... I've always been interested in social justice causes ... but growing up in a country town ... I want to fight oppression and they were like 'here's some tools to actually actively campaign on things' (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018).

Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue that, with the emergence of digital platforms, there has been a shift away from organisational affiliation. However, the role Hollaback! played in the training and recruitment of new activists, and the wider experiences of activists

reflecting similar training with formalised groups, highlights that organisational affiliation continues to play a role in the feminist movement. Further, some of the activists who had left Hollaback!, as well as some that were involved in the other two case studies examined in this research, were reflecting or considering returning to a formalised advocacy group.

Freeman (1972) suggests that frustrations with the informal structures of the feminist movement have led many women to turn to other political organisations that provide formalised structure. She argues that these organisations view the women's movement as a recruiting ground and address women's issues as one issue among many (Freeman, 1972, p. 160). A few of the interviewees expressed similar sentiments in their experience and how they were considering their future engagement with the movement:

I've just finished studying. I am in the process now of applying for roles at NGOs, not-for-profit and cause-based organisations. I don't know why that's not what I do for a living. Activism has always been a side thing. A core thing, but not necessarily a big part of my work and my employment, so why are those two things separate? That should change (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018).

The interviewee above gained their activism training through a youth advocacy organisation and then branched out into independent digital activism, which they engaged with on and off while studying and working part-time. However, from the quotation above, it is clear that they are considering returning to activism in an established organisation due to the support and resources it would provide them to sustain their engagement and make a living. More research is needed to investigate further if there are in fact any trends in terms of returning to organisations after a period of independent exploration. The interviewee above was not the only activist that reported this pattern of behaviour. One of the other activists that joined Hollaback! when they were quite young and maintained their local chapter for six years had moved away from the organisation due to other work and life commitments; however, they reflected on how the experience had shaped their career:

I was surprised that a lot of organisations in the women's sector see activist work as legitimate experience, so I think it's a really good thing. It probably comes out of the fact that both in the UK and Australia I know the history of those trauma and response services comes out of unfunded collective women's groups in the 70s, so I think that's pretty cool (Interviewee A, Interview, 15 December 2016).

The formality of Hollaback! helps the activism experience translate into work experience in an easier way than informal digital activism. This is particularly due to the collaborative nature and the cross-organisational relationships that Hollaback! activists developed from their actions. Many Hollaback! chapters worked with other organisations to help develop policies and set up larger campaigns, which are part of a traditional activist skillset. This is also reflected in the activists' recollection:

Hollaback! has been a constant in my life for the last six years. Initially we talked about street harassment but it kind of broadened out just because of the level of enquiries that we began getting. So, I always thought of it as an activist project, but it ended up kind of informing the choices that I made in my paid work career because I ended up doing quite a lot of consulting for links, like the British transport police and transport for London, the transport network around sexual offences on the underground and things like that (Interviewee I, Interview, 15 December 2016).

These organisational collaborations are also largely only possible if one has a role with a formally recognised organisation or group. The weight of an organisation provides individual activists the leverage, power and credibility that helps them develop consultative relationships with other institutions, especially when those activists are young and do not have an extensive work portfolio. One of the activists reflected on the power that the organisation gave them in helping establish consulting relationships:

I think Hollaback! is an example of one of the more successful apps and technology report this kind of violence. The thing about this app that is really useful is it was helpful for us when we were talking to politicians or local government. They really like that we have this visual 'look this is a thing that really happens all over the city'. And we could pull it right up and they believed it because there were numbers. I know that New York had that kind of same success too and they partnered with the local city council. It's really useful when talking to establishment people (Interviewee F, Interview, 19 November 2016).

Hollaback!'s technology, data collection and established branding provided a solid foundation for approaching and consulting government agencies and institutions. However, operating under the name of a large organisation can also create issues for both the local chapters and the mothership. Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) identification of a shift away from organisational affiliation, while not entirely true (as illustrated above), did capture one element of the story of contemporary engagement.

Bradach (1997) discusses the interdependence that accompanies a franchised structure. He points out the potential risks of franchisees damaging the integrity of the brand if they diverge from the organisation's goals or become involved with something unapproved. However, this risk exists both ways: local chapters are also at risk of damages that result from the actions of the mothership, regardless of individual chapters' involvement. This risk and cost has contributed to a shift away from organisational affiliation, as Bennett and Segerberg (2013) described.

At the end of 2014, Hollaback! experienced an internal breakdown, with nine chapters leaving the campaign as a result of a video released by the mothership. The video was released in October 2014 and depicted a woman being sexually harassed while walking the streets of New York City. Ten hours of footage were recorded on a hidden camera and was edited into a two-minute compilation showcasing street harassment. The video only included harassment by black and Latino men and a huge backlash erupted when it was discovered that the marketing firm hired for the project, Rob Bliss Creative, had in fact edited out all the encounters with white men. The backlash towards the video was experienced by all Hollaback! Chapters, despite it being an initiative of the mothership.

Some of the activists spoke about the frustrations of how the public do not realise how independent the local chapters and their campaign are from the mothership:

None of the other chapters knew. We knew that a video was being released, but we didn't know anything about it and we were basically told the morning on this date there's going to be a big launch and we're going to need you to send out all these tweets and push it out. And trusting the organisation, we did it. And then some of us started to watch the video and found it was highly problematic and what a lot of people outside the organisation don't understand is how it's run. They don't realise how independent the work each of the cities are doing is from what the mothership is doing (Interviewee F, Interview, 19 November 2016).

Some of the chapters suffered repercussions from their local communities based on these actions by the New York City mothership, which did not necessarily align with their own campaign:

We had just started partnering with Black Lives Matter and we immediately had the organisers contacting us being like what is this shit? This is not okay. We ended up having to release a statement on our own website saying that we had nothing to do with the video and that we don't condone the message in it (Interviewee F, Interview, 19 November 2016).

This highlights the added challenges that groups are faced with when operating under the brand name of an international organisation and campaign. The sharing of the name and the Hollaback! brand implies to outsiders that the group is speaking with a single voice, which can create tensions and disagreements internally. Some site leaders felt that they did not want to be associated with the organisation and were not willing to carry the organisation's reputation. As a result of the controversial video, some chapters decided to disaffiliate themselves from Hollaback! and launch their own independent campaign (Interviewee F, interview, 19 November 2016).

Another element that played into the above issue of operating under the brand name of the organisation was the confusion regarding who the leader was at localised events. Some chapter leaders expressed frustrations when leaders from the mothership spoke publicly at events in the location of a chapter instead of allowing the chapter leaders to take on a public leadership role:

If it was a high-profile kind of gig in a city where there was a Hollaback! chapter, instead of passing on the gig where we could make the grassroots connections and likely already had them, the mothership would insist on taking them, and sometimes without even telling us (Interviewee F, Interview, 19 November 2016).

One time they presented at a conference ... and didn't even tell us and people thought it was us. And we had no idea that Hollaback! were even in town (Interviewee F, Interview, 19 November 2016).

Emily went on TV here and didn't even let us know, and she didn't even mention there was a local chapter when she went on TV (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

Issues surrounding leadership within the feminist movement are also discussed in chapters six and seven. Freeman's (1972) analysis of feminist groups indicated the issue of activist 'stars' and how there was a backlash against the activists who are identified as a leader by the media as a result of informal organisational practices. Similar issues arose in the analysis of Hollaback! despite it being a formal organisation with an official leader. Site leaders felt May did not adequately represent their localised version of Hollaback! and as a result were unhappy when she positioned herself as spokesperson for the organisation in their specific communities.

Dimond (2012), in her thesis, attributes similar frustrations to ‘jealousy’ of the success of mothership leader, May. However, taking on a franchise perspective, it becomes apparent that there is a deeper layer of organisational tension that contributes to these frustrations. As already explored, the benefit of local chapters is that they have specific knowledge about the local communities they operate within, enabling an easier adaptation of the campaign. However, when the leader of the mothership took on a public spokesperson role in another community (especially in another country), this was seen as dismissing the expertise of the local chapters and ignoring the established position site leaders had built within their community. Without consulting the local chapters before speaking publicly in their community, the “mothership” risks compromising the relationships already built between the public and the local chapters by presenting an Americanised rather than localised version of the campaign.

Another factor that contributed to the fall out of chapters and the close of several local campaigns was a dissatisfaction surrounding the headquarters’ perceived lack of response and communication with the chapters. Some activists were frustrated with the ways in which the mothership handled their concerns surrounding the video. A few activists felt that there was a silencing of complaints internally and that their concerns were not being addressed by the mothership:

There have been little problems or incidents—one of the chapters had a big issue with the head group in New York and they wrote something on the private Facebook group and it got deleted quite quickly. Sometimes there was a bit of silencing of discussions or complaints weren’t received well (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

Bradach (1998) found that franchisees were likely to blow the whistle on poor products or procedures. This further explains the internal backlash that the mothership faced after the posting of the controversial video and it also helps us understand why it was other Hollaback! site leaders who were the most vocal in publicly problematizing the video and the organisation’s handling of the racial issue. Several site leaders of chapters that disaffiliated from Hollaback! after the release of the video made their criticisms of the organisation public on social media platforms and blogging sites.

The issues surrounding the video and broader problems of intersectionalism were not just felt by the headquarters, but they were also challenges that each of the local chapters encountered in their own actions. Bradach (1997, p. 283) contends that franchisees often

modelled the hierarchal structure and practices of the headquarters to manage their own unit. Some interviewees also reflected on the ways in which the practices of the mothership inevitably trickled down into their own organisational processes.

I would take the blame for that...we were kind of mimicking that kind of oppressive structure that we were dealing with on the larger scale. It kind of trickled down into our organisation and our branch for a little while (Interviewee F, Interview, 19 November 2016).

It would have been useful to have that intersectional analysis in the training materials from Hollaback!. But because the mothership wasn't demonstrating that same anti-oppressive practices they couldn't teach it to us. And I was still new to my activism and feminism when I started with Hollaback! and I didn't know what I didn't know. I didn't know in many ways that me talking over this woman of colour or telling her that she was wrong was oppressive even if I didn't think I was doing it because she was a woman of colour. It was being perceived that way. And I just didn't know that, and I think that's something that could have been incorporated into the training of anti-oppressive communication and organising. But it's a flaw that exists at the top so it's hard for them to teach us that when they're not really doing it themselves (Interviewee F, Interview, 19 November 2016).

The above recollections highlight how the issues the mothership experienced were also played out in local settings and many of the activists were not equipped to deal with these issues. Leaders from local chapters also reflected on their own intersectional challenges and how they had received criticism from their communities in terms of how they dealt with racial and queer inclusivity in their local campaign:

There was a lot of discussion around how to include women of colour without seeming tokenistic (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

We had this event, which was jungle themed and trying to please every single group in the feminist community was a nightmare. We got one complaint saying it was racist, even though every angle had been taken to not make it racist, which was hard (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

There was a thing where one of the girls had gone around on various queer Facebook groups and had sort of pre-empted an issue, and had sort of apologised for the main director's radical feminism—she's kind of transphobic and that kind of became an issue that way. A lot of people who were on our side were arguing with us on certain points. We were trying to be more inclusive and make sure the queer community was involved but it was hard when there was constant rebuttal to everything or any attempts. And everything seemed like tokenism (Interviewee C, Interview, 27 May 2016).

The quotations above are from a site leader who left Hollaback! after the controversial video. Despite being aware of the difficulties of dealing with intersectionalism and failing to handle the issues themselves, they had a higher expectation of the mothership in dealing with similar issues. Dimond (2012, p. 68) also highlights some organisational and intersectional issues that another of the Hollaback! chapters encountered. She discusses how most of the original members of the chapter had quit due to the organisation's 'inattention to how other oppressions (such as race) are intertwined' (Dimond, 2012, p. 68). Importantly, Dimond (2012, p. 68) identifies that while there was an anti-discrimination policy, there was not a clear collective understanding of what it entailed or the nuances of how the policy applies in practice. Dimond (2012, p. 70) describes how one of the site leaders stepped down from the organisation because 'she felt like she did not have a feminist background and this limited her capabilities in using terminology and language within different activist communities'. The fact that Hollaback! operated as many of the site leaders' introduction to feminist activism meant the organisation had a higher pressure for training and educating new leaders about intersectionalism and feminist terminology.

These accounts clearly illustrate how the structure and organisational practices of the headquarters are often replicated within local chapters regardless of their autonomy to establish their own structures. The issues that arose for the headquarters were continually replicated across many of the chapters creating reoccurring internal breakdowns in the organisation of the campaigns. These structural issues also highlight how understanding the organisation as a franchise is a useful way to conceptualise this model of activism: a franchising perspective clearly explains both the strengths and limitations Hollaback! has encountered as well as the structural developments as the campaign and organisation has evolved from a single blog to a global organisation with around 56 local chapters.

Understanding the replication of the Hollaback! campaign across the world as a franchise provides a way to account for the layers of structure present behind the campaign, in a way that Bennett and Segerberg's three-part typology does not clearly capture. On the external side, we can see that the campaign incorporates mediated personalised engagement by citizens hosted by a custom-built digital platform that cultivates and shares the stories. In this way, the structure is reflective of what Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 11) identify as organisationally enabled connective actions. However, behind

the scenes, the campaign is professionally developed with a clear leadership team that provides templates to chapters that wish to extend the campaign into their own local communities. There are clear guidelines each chapter must abide by and the chapters essentially form a coalition in which they may work together to spread the campaign globally. In addition, despite the individual level of engagement required of citizens in the submission of their personal reflections to the blog, the campaign as a whole maintains a collective identity and ideology that has created tension with other activists who may disagree with the actions or views expressed by others affiliated with the organisation. In this way, there are elements of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013, p. 13) organisationally-brokered action network that arise in the Hollaback! campaign.

However, all of these structural features (the levels of structure from the headquarters down to the chapters, and the issues faced as a collective) can be explained when conceptualising Hollaback! as a franchise. Adapting Bradach's (1998) model of franchise organisations to help understand the organising practices behind a feminist action facilitated by an advocacy group provides a conceptual framework for capturing the structural dynamics at play within each level of the organisation and the campaign. In addition, Chadwick's (2013, p. 8) notion of hybridity also supports this analysis by providing another way of understanding the 'flux, in-betweenness, the interstitial, and the liminal' of organisational dynamics demonstrated by contemporary feminist actions such as Hollaback!.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the organisational structure of the Hollaback! campaign and the organisation facilitating and supporting it. One of the key contributions of this chapter is the conceptualisation of the Hollaback! campaign as *franchised activism*. Borrowing Bradach's (1997, 1998) notion of franchise organisations, the analysis has shown some structural patterns that have impacted the Hollaback! campaign and enabled it to be replicated across the globe. The Hollaback! organisation maintains a hierarchical structure with the headquarters or mothership group overseeing and establishing a template for the campaign to be replicated by local chapters in other cities around the world. The mothership provides the resources and training, effectively socialising new activists into the broader organisation while also placing the burden of locally adapting the campaign mostly onto the individual chapters. The chapters are also connected in a

decentralised structure supported by digital media platforms, in which they can help each other when issues arise and learn from the practices of other chapters.

This kind of association described above in which a large range of chapters come together under the same Hollaback! protest banner is reflective of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) organisationally brokered collective action. The groups all engage in a common collective action frame in the campaign in which followers can be rallied and leveraged to broker relationships with other institutions and organisations. The campaign itself is formalised with clear leadership and professionally organised (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 13). Further, the Hollaback! chapters' social media accounts are also reflective of how Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 11) describe conventional organisations engage with digital platforms: Facebook groups are used as news sites 'for one-to-many postings from the organisations that offer little opportunity for interaction, or sending out action alerts on email lists or Twitter'.

However, the Hollaback! campaign further complicates Bennett and Segerberg's typology. While they use their social media accounts in a conventional manner, they use the Hollaback! blog in a much more creative and interactive way. The core of the Hollaback! campaign revolves around a blog that is interactive in nature, and which calls for participants to submit their personal reflections and submit their experience of street harassment. The submissions are then pinned individually on a virtual map, visualising the collective experiences of street harassment. This strategy aligns with Bennett and Segerberg's (2013, p. 11) organisationally enabled connective action, which describes how organisations can facilitate and invite citizens to personalise their engagement with issues, joining the action network, and sharing their engagement on digital platforms on their own terms.

The franchised organisational practices (Bradach, 1998) behind the campaign, along with large-scale personal access to technology (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 47) enabled the successful and sustained replication of campaigns across the globe but also have resulted in the closure of a number of local campaigns and chapters. The confusion around the financial guidelines and limitations at the local level and the power dynamic between the paid white activists at the headquarters and the unpaid women of colour within local chapters has led to tensions around supporting the campaign at different levels and activist frustrations and burnout. In addition, the intersectional issues that arose from the actions

of the mothership impacted the reputation of the campaign as a whole, contributing to activists involved with local chapters reconsidering their association with the organisation. Eventually, some of the activists decided they did not want to compromise their beliefs for an organisation and abandoned their affiliation.

This shift away from organisational affiliation is a trend Bennett and Segerberg (2013) noted in their analysis and while it explains some of the movement away from organisations it does not highlight the entire picture. This disaffiliation is interesting to note, as Bennett and Segerberg argue that issue-based actions sponsored by organisations, as characteristic of an organisationally enabled model of organising, can overcome the issue of membership and affiliation. However, in the case of Hollaback!, while organisational affiliation may not have as much of an impact on citizen participation in the campaign, it did impact whether or not the campaign was supported by activists within local communities and in turn the overall impact of the campaign.

This chapter has also demonstrated the role of conventional organisations within the contemporary feminist movement. It has highlighted that while there is a degree of resistance toward organisational affiliation, there is also support for organisations and a desire for membership. Organisations and campaigns with transparent and visible structure play an important role in the recruitment and training of new activists, introducing them to the feminist movement and developing the social movement repertoire of new activists. Further, activists who have left organisations demonstrated a reconsideration of organisational affiliation due to the financial and safety support provided by being a member of a unified collective.

Overall, the analysis has revealed that Hollaback! as a case study cannot be fully accounted for by either of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) categories of organisationally brokered collective action or organisationally enabled connective action. Rather, the Hollaback! campaign presents a hybrid model of organising demonstrating how a campaign can consist of multiple organisational logics, evolving organisational practices over the duration of a campaign. It has shown that operating as part of a recognisable collective under the same brand name has its own structural challenges and advantages compared to the previous case studies examined in this thesis. It also highlights how there are different actors at play within the organisation of the protest and how operating as part of an international and professionalised campaign subverts the need for highly

networked individuals to promote the action (as were present within the previous two case studies).

The analysis of Hollaback! also underlines how new models of organising with digital technology are being combined with very traditional forms of activism. By incorporating different types of models at different points of an action, organisations can make the most of the tools available and enhance their actions. In this case, Hollaback! initially benefited from personalised action frames and large-scale social technologies, enabling broad global participation in their campaign, as well as diverse interest from individuals interested in becoming site leaders. However, adopting a franchise organisational model as the group expanded enabled a sustained and united campaign across multiple locations and communities. In this way, new logics are not necessarily being created in digital environments; rather digital technology is enabling and opening up the potential to draw on multiple logics. Consequently, this suggests contemporary protests are likely to be more volatile, and simultaneously adopt different kinds of organising logics (Ganesh & Stohl, 2013).

Chapter 6: The Case Study of #TakeDownJulienBlanc: From Connective to Post-Digital Protests

6.1 Introduction

At the beginning of November 2014, the hashtag #TakeDownJulienBlanc started trending on social media in response to the ‘pickup artist’, Julien Blanc, hosting seminars on how to manipulate women around the world. Blanc is an instructor for the US-based group, Real Social Dynamics (RSD), which describes itself as a dating coaching company that teaches men how to seduce women with the goal of sleeping with them, as opposed to dating them. Blanc is known for promoting aggressive, abusive and derogatory tactics, such as choking women and forcing women’s heads into his crotch. His misogynistic and violent advice includes: ‘choke women and they will have sex with you’, as well as sharing a domestic violence chart accompanied by the comment ‘May as well be a checklist’.

One night, Chinese-American activist Jennifer Li saw a video about Blanc’s aggressive harassment of women in Japan and from her home in California, she became the initiator of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest. Li initially thought to report him to his employer but discovered that this was a ‘pickup’ company. She was then spurred into tweeting that she was going to ‘take him down’. She soon found out that Melbourne, Australia was Blanc’s next scheduled destination and that he was going to be hosting pickup artist seminars. These seminars were private classes in which predominantly young men could sign up and learn tactics from Blanc and other RSD pickup artists on how to make women sleep with them. The initial seminar required registration and was free, but to gain access to the more ‘practical’ content and have a more personal class, men could sign up for three hundred dollars and spend two hours at a bar with one of the pickup artists and gain live advice and coaching. As one of the interviewees stated, ‘it was a massive money-making scam essentially’.

Once Li was aware of Blanc’s next destination, she created a change.org petition to protest venues hosting RSD events, beginning with petitioning the Hotel Como in Melbourne. In addition to this petition, she created a YouTube video warning Australians about Blanc and that he was coming to Melbourne. Trending online as a hashtag

campaign, the protest grew to include physical protests, cold calling, protesting venues and online global petitions. This campaign resulted in Blanc's Australian visa being revoked and the denial of his visa in the UK, with several other nations stating that they will also deny his visa if he applies.

A second wave of protests developed a little over a year later in January 2016, when another RSD pickup artist, Jeff 'Jeffy' Allen, attempted to come to Australia to deliver seminars in secret. To avoid protestors finding the location of the seminars and shutting them down as they did in 2014, Allen and RSD took measures to protect the details of where they were hosting their seminars. Some of the activists recounted how RSD must have put an alert out asking attendees not to post any pictures or information on social media, and that there was a process in which credit card details had to be provided to register and then attendees would be texted the details of the event on the day. Despite these efforts, activists were still able to discover where the seminars were being held. The networks established during the first wave of protests against Blanc were reignited and the protesters were quick to identify venues, launch another petition and pool resources resulting in the cancellation of Allen's tour and visa.

Digital platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and change.org were crucial in the success of the campaigns, which initially began in California after being prompted by actions in Japan and climaxed in Melbourne, Australia before spreading to other countries. The success of the campaign and its global spread combined with the reactivation of the 2016 second wave makes it an interesting case study to use to help answer the research questions. The organisational complexity and longevity of #TakeDownJulienBlanc provokes a questioning of traditional understandings of collective action. This chapter addresses the two primary research questions by asking (i) what are the organisational structures and practices of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc case study, and (ii) how useful is Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action in assessing this feminist action.

This chapter begins the analysis of the two primary research questions by deconstructing the organisational structures of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests and contrasts this with Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) theory of connective action to understand how well their theory accounts for the changing practices in the feminist movement. To address these research questions, the chapter is structured around the key actors involved in the

protest that emerged from the investigation and analyses their roles and position in the protest network to uncover the organisational and communication model and structures. The key actors and organisational configurations that emerged from the analysis are as follows:

- activist ‘stars’: Jennifer Li and Kirsty Mac
- activist elite
- formal organisations
- post-digital vanguards
- post-digital entrepreneurs
- independent and peripheral actors.

The chapter is structured around these six influential organisational compositions that were present in the protest. Freeman’s (1972) theory of structurelessness was used to help inform the analysis of these organisational compositions. Freeman’s (1972) argument of the impossibility of structureless organising remains relevant in the contemporary activist era, as the analysis in this chapter reveals that informal practices are prevalent in new forms of feminist actions and this informality continues to disrupt targeted collective action by superseding it. Freeman (1972) outlines key attributes that are influential in the structure of feminist activism from her analysis of feminist groups. These include: the impossibility of structureless (that structure is inevitable regardless of intentions); the development of activist ‘stars’ to fulfil the media and public’s demand for a leader and the resulting backlash that these ‘stars’ experience; and, she conceptualises informal elites that develop in the absence of established structure who can perpetuate discrimination and exclusionary practices in organisational practices. These key elements identified by Freeman are used to help structure this chapter.

To address the second research question, the chapter compares the findings of the case study with Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) logic of connective action. For the #TakeDownJulienBlanc case study, the structure was closest to Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) organisationally enabled and crowd-enabled connective action categories. Bennett and Segerberg’s (2012, p. 202) organisationally enabled connective action is described as involving loose organisational coordination with organisations providing ‘social technology outlays’, generating inclusive action frames, and moderating personal expression. The immediate challenge in the analysis is that, in the case of

#TakeDownJulienBlanc, there is no official organisation driving the protest; there are, however, key individual activists and informal groups that loosely coordinate actions on digital platforms. As a result, Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) crowd-enabled connective action category is also considered in the analysis.

A crowd-enabled connective model is characterised by personalised action frames that are easily adaptable and individualised by a wide collective of participations. Crucially, participants can join and engage with a cause without prescribing exactly to the beliefs and ideological ideas of others in the movement (Bennett & Segerberg 2012, p. 744). Thus crowd-enabled action networks are predominantly made up of non-membership organisations and participants who are not aligned with, or have loose ties to, established groups. In this case, leadership is dispersed and there is a 'relative absence of purposeful association, boundedness, and core actors' (Bennett & Segerberg 2013, p. 89). The burden of organisation, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue, is shifted onto dense social and digital media platforms enabling an action to cross traditional network boundaries and remain fluid yet reach a high scale of participants.

Elements of this structure can be observed in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc campaign, as numerous individuals came together across geographical and formal borders, relying on various digital media platforms to join the protest, helping it spread and gain momentum. The ways key individuals operated in the informal organisation of the campaign on private digital avenues, and the particular position these individuals already occupied in a wider activist network also played a crucial role in the development and structure of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc campaign.

The concept of post-digital is also used in this chapter to provide another way of conceptualising the hybrid media logics present within this case study. The definition of post-digital used here is borrowed from the book *Postdigital Aesthetics* (Berry & Dieter, 2015). David Berry and Michael Dieter (2015) attempt to reconcile the numerous definitions that have been developed to describe a paradigmatic shift in the ways that computational systems have become embedded in our everyday lives. They describe a 'constellation' of sorts that is comprised of a 'complex repertoire' of logics that blur the distinctions between digital and non-digital (Berry & Dieter, 2015, p. 1). For Berry and Dieter (2015, p. 3), the post-digital is when 'Computation becomes experiential, spatial and materialised in its implementation, embedded within the environment and embodied,

part of the texture of life itself but also upon and even within the body'. Conceptualising the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests as post-digital allows the analysis to subvert and move beyond the dichotomies between digital and non-digital actions and between online and offline, as well as fully capture the messiness and complexity of the social movement repertoire at the core of this protest.

This chapter explores the complex relationship between the activists and groups involved in #TakeDownJulienBlanc; how particular individuals were key in building momentum; the significance of their personal networks; and the messiness of the informal organisation and communication networks and reveals that it all nonetheless came together to complete a series of cohesive, successful campaigns. This research also reveals the challenges and difficulties that arise from being an informal movement, including the lateral violence directed towards individuals who became unelected leaders of the protest and the tensions in the crowd that contributed to the development of an exclusive elite. In addition, the chapter examines how the meaning of the protest was negotiated and how the protest narrative evolved over time. In the messy protest network, different activists contributed to the public perception of the protest and its message via the creation of e-petitions and other digital paraphernalia.

6.2 Protest Timeline

The #TakeDownJulienBlanc series of protests occurred cross-continently and in bursts of intense activity from the beginning of November 2014 until the end of February 2016. While the last wave of protests examined in this thesis is identified as the #TakeDownJeffyAllen campaign in 2016, the activist network involved still exists, remaining dormant until a similar cause or issue stimulates its reactivation. Chadwick (2007, p. 293) also describes this phenomenon when he discussed how the internet was 'enabling the preservation of "sedimentary" traces of high-profile events'. Chadwick argued that these sedimentary mechanisms 'exist in the form of loose but integrated communication infrastructures and, despite the absence of obvious leadership, seem to persist over time' (2007, p. 293). Consequently, these sedimentary networks enable the revival of organisational structures that can be 'reconfigured on the fly, in response to new demands or perceived desire to shift focus to a new issue' (Chadwick, 2007, p. 294). This is observed over the course of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest network and how it was reactivated and reconfigured for the second wave.

Table 1 presents a timeline of key events that occurred in the progression of the campaign in an attempt to situate and contextualise the actions. However, it is worth noting that the dates in the timeline are presented from an Australian east coast perspective (AEDT), so they vary in time difference from what some of the international activists state in their interviews.

Table 1: Timeline of Key Events

Date (AEDT)	Update
<i>First Wave</i> November 2014	
2 November 2014	Li starts the hashtag #TakeDownJulienBlanc and e-petition on change.org for venues to cancel RSD events.
4 November 2014	Li posts a YouTube Video explaining why she started the hashtag.
4 November 2014	The Como Melbourne hotel cancels event.
6 November 2014	Protest in St Kilda and on the banks of the Yarra River in Melbourne.
6.30–7pm start	
7 th Nov 2014	Blanc’s visa is cancelled in Australia.
8 November 2014	Creation of UK e-petition on change.org
19 November 2014	Blanc is banned from Britain and the UK petition confirms victory.
29 November 2014	Li’s original e-petition confirms victory with 50,000+ signatures. Australia, South Korea, Brazil, UK and Singapore revoke/deny Blanc’s visa.
<i>Second Wave</i> January 2016	
14 January 2016	Australian-based e-petition to cancel Allen’s visa is created on change.org
18 January 2016	Peter Dutton cancels Allen’s visa and the e-petition confirms victory with 66,000+ signatures.
6 February 2016	RSD International meet up & counter protests.

The spontaneous nature of the rise of #TakeDownJulienBlanc and RSD protests and the lack of formalised structure is consistent with Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) crowd-enabled connective action. Diverse mobilisations of people who were mediated by digital technologies across the globe came together regardless of other ideological differences, sharing personalised content and utilising scalable digital media to initiate individual actions that combined to create a succession of protests. However, from the interviews conducted in this research and from the fact that the network was reactivated for a second series of protests, an underlining informal structure begins to emerge from behind the scenes. It is evident that the role that individual activists played in activating their networks, the informal relationships between activists, the adaptation and reframing of personalised action frames and the competing narratives at play are all crucial factors in the organisational structure of the movement and contributed to its development, spreadability (Jenkins, Ford & Green, 2018) and reception. The following analysis will address these key structural elements as it deconstructs the organisational practices behind the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests.

6.3 Findings

The findings outline the structural composition of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests and are based on identified actors and group compositions that were involved in the organisation. The findings analyse the role and influence of each of these actors in-depth. An outline of the organisational structure of the Australian component of #TakeDownJulienBlanc is as follows:

- Jennifer Li's Twitter network with 9,223 followers
- Kirsty Mac's extensive network of 3,000 feminists and her public Facebook profile
- a secret (closed membership and not visible in search engines) Facebook group of approximately 70 activists
- established groups such as Destroy the Joint, who were on the periphery
- a Facebook message chat of 10 activists
- digital vanguards of refigured smaller combinations of activists from each of these networks who took charge of specific tasks (setting up Facebook event pages, cold-calling hotels, or creating memes)

- individual activists, such as Matt Jowett, who were on the outskirts of the protests.

In this outline of the protest network's layers, it is essential to note that there is significant overlap between each layer. The 10 activists in the Facebook message chat were also part of the broader secret Facebook group and Mac's network. The findings will proceed to address each of these networks and actors.

6.3.1 Activist Stars

There were several activist 'stars' present within the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest network. Freeman (1972) argues that 'stars' emerge as leaders when there is no formalised structure or leadership because both the public and media demand a leader to help communicate the movement's message. These 'stars' are often identified by the media due to their existing public profile, regardless of how accurately they represent the movement (Freeman, 1972, p. 158). This can lead to a range of issues as the stars have not been elected by anyone within the movement. In the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest, there were two individuals who were publicly perceived as leaders or 'stars' of the protest: Jennifer Li and Kirsty Mac.

6.3.1.1 Jennifer Li

Chinese-American activist Jennifer Li was the instigator of the hashtag #TakeDownJulienBlanc after she became aware of Blanc and his misogynistic and racist attitudes towards women from a video she saw posted about him on microblogging site Tumblr. Li had a history of activism, having previously been involved with Black Lives Matter. This experience meant Li already had a prominent profile on Twitter, with a solid network of followers established from her work as an artist and her previous engagement with other racial and feminist campaigns. While Li did not label herself the leader of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc campaign, she considered herself the founder. Equipped with digital technology, she performed the crucial role of interweaving and connecting individuals from across the globe to fight against one particular group. In an interview conducted for this thesis, Li reflected on how the protests became much bigger than she expected and she was not prepared to take on a leadership role, worried about the risk of being doxxed (having your private information published online with malicious intent) by members or supporters of RSD. Li stated that 'it wasn't a well thought out process; it was just a spur of the moment hashtag' (Li, Interview, 21 September 2016). Li also

reminisced about how the person in the UK who started the UK version of the petition achieved 157,631 signatures—he or she had been smart because they had remained anonymous, avoiding the risks of being doxxed and trolled, which came with operating as a public feminist activist. While she was happy to be named in relation to the protest, she expressed wariness and exhaustion about the cost of being a public activist, a result that may affect her future organisational practices.

Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue that digital platforms take on the burden of organisation and they investigate how these platforms help structure crowd-enabled networks in the absence of recognised leaders. However, the way in which activists employ and utilise these platforms is valuable in shaping the development of a protest, even with no formally elected leader. While the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests had no officially recognised or formalised leadership structure, Li played a leadership role and worked as an organisational hub that connected individuals across the globe while deliberately and strategically utilising digital platforms.

In later research, Bennett, Segerberg and Walker (2014) maintain that this type of organisation is made possible by what they call stitching technologies, like Twitter. Stitching technologies help weave together and manage different networks and ultimately work as a key mechanism that helps produce order among a crowd (Bennett et al., 2014). Twitter undoubtedly played a stitching role in tying together international communities and enhancing the spreadability of the personalised action frames, specific content and information about the RSD events and their counter events.

In addition to the hashtag, Li created a YouTube video warning Australians about Blanc and his tour, as well as creating an e-petition on change.org protesting venues hosting the pickup artist seminars. The ways in which Li had previously cultivated her digital network and operated as a bridging agent crossing platforms highlights her crucial role in the protest network. Among her followers who saw her initial tweet with the hashtag were American journalist and Japanese correspondent Jake Adelstein, infamous hacktivist entity Anonymous and activists from Australia. Together with Bennett and Segerberg's original conception, the way individuals activate their networks by strategically utilising the organisational capabilities and networked potentialities of digital media platforms highlights some key elements of a feminist connective action. By strategically utilising

the organisational capabilities of digital platforms and exploiting her previously cultivated digital network, Li was able to trigger an international movement.

In an interview with the Online Identity Project, Li identified Twitter as her primary platform for the campaign and described the way it was utilised for organisational purposes:

I mainly focused on Twitter to get in contact with people who wanted to help with the campaign. Through Twitter, we would converse and jot down notes and strategies for the campaign on different platforms. I don't think I would have been able to pull off the campaign without Twitter; besides Change.org, that was the platform I relied on the most heavily. (Li, Interview with Online Identity Project, 25 August 2016).

When interviewed for this thesis, Li described her role as a collaboration with online people in which individuals and groups would send her information about Blanc, such as where he was going to be, and she would rapidly tweet it out to her followers (approximately 9,000 users). While her tweets about Blanc and RSD were public—which was a way of updating any of her followers or people interested in the campaign—she also received personal direct messages of people feeding her information, asking if they could help or get involved, or letting her know what actions they were taking. Li reflected on how she often worked as a facilitator; many people were directly messaging her or mentioning her in tweets, so she would connect individuals in similar areas: 'I tried to facilitate based on region or speciality, so if someone was, like, I'm really good at hacking and this person is also really good at computers, then okay, you guys talk to each other' (Li, Interview, 21 September 2016). However, she also mentioned that many people organised independently or with loose contact, such as the Australian activists.

6.3.1.2 *Kirsty Mac is Feminazi*

Freeman's (1972) analysis of activist 'stars' is consistent with the experience of Kirsty Mac. Mac's evolution into the face of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc Australian protests began at the conception of her identity as a stand-up comedian. Mac recounted her time selling tickets at a comedy club where one night a woman got up to do stand-up and before she had even spoken, one of the male comics yelled out, 'show us your cunt'. It was this moment that infuriated Mac and propelled the desire to get a microphone and give women a voice: 'I wanted to see a female comic so I started to do it'. As a result, she

created an act titled 'Feminazi'. However, she reflected there was not much thought put into the name and that while she considered herself to be a feminist, she was not actually waving a flag for it; she just liked the name.

Mac began building an extensive online network of feminists on a mission 'to get bums on seats' and began messaging and befriending every feminist she could find on Facebook. One morning when Mac woke up, she was alerted to the news that the Hotel Como had cancelled Blanc's seminars but the pickup artists were still going to meet and run their event. A recent experience with male violence motivated Mac to engage with feminist activism for the first time. Mac joined the campaign with vigour; cold-calling hotels and venues to find out where Blanc was hosting seminars and informing the venues about the physical and emotional abuse that he promotes in request that they do not host his events. However, she did not do this alone. She contacted the Australian group Destroy the Joint² to utilise their resources for the action. Once she had tracked down the new location, she logged onto Facebook and made a post to her network of around 3,000 feminist friends, who were all part of her network from when she was trying to get 'bums on seats' for her comedy shows. Her post declared that she found the venue and then it 'went gangbusters from there'.

Other known activists in the Melbourne feminist scene stepped up and created a Facebook page and event to help organise a protest. Mac described how she felt like a project manager: 'I was the central figure in this. I felt like a project manager because information was coming into me and I was connecting other people. Because I was so connected on Facebook, I knew everybody to reach out to' (Mac, Interview, 22 July 2016). She attributed this position to the pre-established network she had cultivated on Facebook. This pattern of behaviour and the positioning of Mac as a type of project manager is reminiscent of Li's position in the protest. However, the key difference is that Mac primarily exploited her pre-existing Facebook network that comprised of activists who were mostly physically localised in urban Melbourne and Sydney. The development of Mac's digital network originally had a stronger relationship with the offline world, as she had attempted to convert her online network to physical seats at her comedy shows. Thus,

²Destroy the Joint is a Facebook page run by a group of women with the purpose of raising awareness and discussing issues related to gender equality. They are particularly known for their campaign, Counting Dead Women, that tracks all deaths of women by violence.

her digitally enhanced network already had the capability of translating and materialising into a physical network.

One of the male activists who had contacted Mac to offer his assistance signed up to Blanc's seminar to glean where the event would be moved since the cancellation of the original venue. He found out it would be happening at 7pm near the pier in St Kilda, Melbourne. Mac had never organised or participated in a protest before, however she was offered support and direction by other seasoned activists. Two of the activists that had been part of organising mass mobilisations Reclaim the Night and March for Jill Meagher volunteered to help Mac organise the protest. Together they created a Facebook event with the information about the protest and shared it around their Facebook networks to rally support. A little before 7pm, about 100 people showed up for the protest and around 20 young men showed up for the seminar.

In her interview, Mac identified one particular man who joined the physical protest and who attempted to take over and direct the protest: 'this guy...he's like a professional protester; he took over the protest and went right what do we want to do? We had all this information but this guy just took over, which was also a bit ironic that a guy felt like this was his protest...'. (Mac, Interview, 22 July 2016). Mac spoke about the irony of how this one man had taken over the protest despite everyone attributing leadership to her. At 7pm, her contact who had registered for the RSD event was notified that the location had changed to South Bank, so she jumped into a car with another activist to head to the new location. However, the 'professional protester' had already split up the crowd in a bid to take control, resulting in some of the activists getting lost and confused and not making it to the second location. Once at the second location, the protestors physically shut down the pickup artist seminar with the assistance of police.

Mac reflected on the aftermath of the physical protest and the following events that led the protest and hashtag to be propelled further around the globe:

So, basically, I went home that night and wrote on my Facebook page [that] we won and everyone was going crazy. So, I wrote a blog post the next morning and as I was about to post it, it came up on Twitter that Julien Blanc had been escorted to the airport and had left the country... So, they went to the airport and then that night, a comedian, a jealous male comedian, reported my Facebook page for not being my real name because Kirsty Mac isn't my real name. And because of the way Facebook works, they shut down my page. They [Julien Blanc] left on the 4th and my Facebook page was closed down that night

... Facebook was my whole life; I was connected with all these feminists who were supporting me...I messaged Facebook with my ID, saying Kirsty Mac is my real and authentic name, that's what I'm known for. I got onto Twitter and I wrote that my Facebook page had been closed down, but Julien Blanc's was still up. And then a friend of mine contacted me to see what was going on and she retweeted me and passed it on to Destroy the Joint, to Clementine Ford, to every major feminist and then I was trending globally on Twitter. Somebody tried to silence me and what ended up happening was that the hashtag went global and that's how the whole world woke up the next morning going 'what's this #TakeDownJulienBlanc, and Australia removed his visa?'. And then the UK removed his visa and so did some other countries. I still get messages from people saying what you did inspired me (Mac, Interview, 22 July 2016).

Mac's profile as a stand-up comedian, together with her accumulated network of feminists, framed her as an accessible and easily identifiable candidate for the face of the protest by the media, the public and other activists. However, Mac reflected on her rapid elevation to a feminist 'star' and disclosed how a little while after the initial #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest, she was subjected to a backlash by those in the feminist community:

When I came to Melbourne, I was a lone ranger; I'm not affiliated with any feminist groups, but I ended up having the biggest voice for a certain period of time. It wasn't my intention. Around the Julien Blanc stuff, I was the first name people thought of around activism and feminism and that in itself created a bit of conflict because there were some people who felt that I hadn't paid my dues. I just sort of came in and rose to the top. About three weeks after the Julien Blanc stuff, I was invited to perform [at a feminist event] and I did an age joke and it wasn't well received. When I started doing feminist comedy, it wasn't for feminists; it's for the fuckwit at the back of the room. So, this was the first feminist gig I'd ever done and it was a room full of feminists, so of course they hear things differently.

I got hate mail after that. Now, because the truth is, the capacity people have to love you is the same capacity they have to hate you. Because I was elevated to such a position of love and adoration, after that I'd broken their idea of being a perfect feminist in a few people's minds, and I got hate mail and that has hurt me far more than any messy rape message I've ever gotten on Twitter or Facebook. Feminism has to be across everything you know and, so, when you get cut down by another feminist, it really hurts (Mac, Interview, 22 July 2016).

This resonates with Freeman's (1972) position that the elevation of someone as the leader or 'star' of the movement by the public and the media can create issues and tension in the movement when those involved feel the 'star' does not represent them adequately or has not earned their place. Freeman describes how women positioned as stars find themselves

‘viciously attacked by their sisters’, which is ‘painfully destructive’, not just to the individuals themselves, but also for the movement and the campaigns (1972, p. 158).

Freeman’s warning about the risk of ‘stars’ being appointed is even more pressing in a digitally connected era. With hashtag campaigns proliferating and activists having the ability to engage in a multitude of informal actions, the risk of being appointed the face of a movement or a post going viral beyond intention can expose activists to abuse from both within the movement and outside forces.

Mac’s depiction of events clearly illustrates the importance of the role of individual activists, especially well-connected, high profile activists who have already caught the public eye. Her retelling of the events identifies a few key points that are valuable for understanding the nature of feminist connective actions. First, her encounter with Facebook as both an empowering and oppressing tool emphasises the politics of the platforms themselves. Second, her experience demonstrates how and why leaders emerge in informally structured connective actions and the surrounding issue of unelected leaders. Third, her description of her network and the people she reached out to for assistance, including already established activist groups and other high-profile activists, highlights the complexity and plurality of the organisational structure of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc activist network.

6.3.2 Activist Elite

The development of the hashtag’s description and the physical protest in Melbourne illustrates the implicit hierarchies and power dynamics that often emerge in crowd-enabled networks when there is no formalised structure. Mac’s retelling of the protest characterises groups of people who were involved in the campaign. When she spoke about the ‘professional protester’, she made a distinction between him and the group of people she referred to as ‘we’, when she mentioned that he took charge even though ‘we had all the information’. Similar was the way in which activist James spoke about the man who created the petition calling on the Australian Government to revoke Allen’s visa. James complained that ‘they’ received a lot of criticism for weaponising immigration policy in response to the petition, which was frustrating because ‘we didn’t tell this guy to start the petition’.

The tension between particular activists and how some of them referred to a smaller informal collective as ‘we’, who characterise themselves as distinct from other activists, highlights the structure that exists below the surface of a seemingly structureless crowd-enabled network. Structurelessness, as Freeman described it, becomes a way of masking power and informal networks, as present in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests who generate their own exclusions, which in turn affects the effectiveness of participation and the direction of a movement.

There were a few other key players that were present in the organisation of #TakeDownBlanc. First, there were established groups that played a role. Second, there were particular clusters of activists who had worked together on previous campaigns and who developed smaller teams to operate from within. Last, there were individuals who had very loose associations with others in the network and were essentially peripheral and independent actors.

6.3.3 Formal Organisations

Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue that in crowd-enabled networks, the involvement of formal organisations is shunned. However, in the case of #TakeDownJulienBlanc, the involvement of a few organisations was invited yet they remained in the periphery of the action network, more akin to an organisationally-enabled connective action. Notably, at the beginning of the protests, both Li and Mac reached out to established feminist groups for assistance. One of Li’s original tweets was directed at the feminist group Hollaback!, examined in the previous chapter.



Figure 5.1 Tweets from Jennifer Li

However, Hollaback! remained on the periphery and never stepped into the organisational side of the network for the campaigns. Li's tweets to Hollaback! are nevertheless significantly revealing in terms of how the protest was framed and the different personal action frames that were employed to capture the public's attention across countries and cultures. Li felt the need to frame the issue as one that affects 'white women too' to motivate Hollaback! into action. The construction of personalised action frames and the competing narratives present in the protest are explored later in this chapter. In a similar vein, Mac reached out to Australian online feminist group Destroy the Joint, as previously mentioned in this chapter. Destroy the Joint acted as another node in the organisational network, operating from behind the scenes and utilising their resources to assist with the protest.

During the second wave of protests, a group called Mad Fucking Witches (MFW) became involved and collaborated with other activists in the Melbourne protests. MFW was developed in response to Peter Dutton, the Federal Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, calling journalist Samantha Maiden a 'mad fucking witch' in a text that was intended for former minister Jamie Briggs but that was mistakenly sent to Maiden. The instigator of the group, Melbourne activist Jane, decided to reclaim the derogatory and sexist slur to highlight and symbolise in a provocative manner the government's abuse of all women, particularly marginalised women, in a 'sarcastic, cynical, and swearsy kind of place', as stated on their Facebook page. The MFW Facebook page declares, 'Women are sick of being treated like delicate little flowers who could not find a coherent argument if it bit them in the arse...Welcome to the Madhouse!' (Mad Fucking Witches, 2018, 30 July).

The MFW group and Facebook page were initially started at the beginning of 2016, just before the second wave of shutting down RSD. On 8 January 2016, a series of physical protests occurred in cities around Australia in which women dressed up as witches, calling for Peter Dutton to resign with the hashtag #witchin. The protest garnered so much support that it trended on Twitter in Australia and the MFW Facebook page accumulated over 20,000 followers. On 14 January 2016, MFW made a call to action post on Facebook, alerting its supporters that 'Australia's most hated misogynist', Blanc, was sending his wingmen to Australia to run seminars for teaching men how to convince women to have sex with them. They also identified RSD leader Owen Cook, aka Tyler

Durden, and urgently requested everyone to bombard Peter Dutton by either emailing or calling his office and demanding he deport Owen/Tyler and the rest of the RSD group. In this way, MFW exploited the follower base that they had generated previously for the next wave of #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests. In turn, the movement's timing and their collaboration also added to the publicity of MFW, bolstering their support base and garnering more attention towards issues of sexism and misogyny.

The group MFW is very much a collaboration between feminist activists who are already connected and who unite for a defined purpose when called to action by the primary administrator (who would prefer to remain anonymous). While MFW and Destroy the Joint may not be as traditional or conventionally structured as formally established organisations such as Hollaback!, for the purpose of this research, they are considered formal organisations because they have a public collective identity, comprise a formalised (although not necessarily public) team of people behind the administration of the Facebook pages, operate under a set name and are contactable and publicly recognisable.

6.3.4 Post-digital Vanguard

In addition to formal organisations, there were also informal clusters of activists present in the action network. Levine (1975) defines these as 'small groups in voluntary association', while Gerbaudo (2017) provides a more recent conceptualisation of these in the era of social media as 'digital vanguards' to help understand the character of contemporary movements in the digital age. Gerbaudo's (2017) digital vanguards would include groups such as MFW and Destroy the Joint, as his investigation was focused on the teams of people behind social media accounts. For the purpose of this analysis, this thesis adapts Gerbaudo's notion of digital vanguards to 'post-digital vanguards' to instead describe less visible and less established teams of activists that are not necessarily grouped under the unity of any collective or singular social media page or account, but who work together and traverse a hybrid media landscape (Chadwick, 2013).

Gerbaudo argues that these social media teams, or digital vanguards, comprising no more than 20 people have played an important and often invisible role in contemporary activism (2017, p. 186). Gerbaudo's theory of digital vanguards is reminiscent of Freeman's analysis of informal elites, but it situates them in the digital context. Much like Freeman, Gerbaudo outlines the contradiction between digital vanguards and the values

of ‘openness, horizontality, and leaderlessness’ that activists maintain, as well as the consequential conflicts that can arise from this tension (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 185). Gerbaudo, like Freeman, calls for a more transparent recognition of the nature of leadership in digital movements and argues for a better conceptual framework to regulate and manage the assets on social media and digital platforms. Crucial elements of a post-digital vanguard are their informality and capacity to operate in flexible ways, their capability to fluidly traverse the online and offline realms, and their manifestation surrounding a specific actionable purpose rather than from a collective, shared identity. While post-digital vanguards are not united around a collective identity, they may develop and stem from the infrastructure of friendship networks, which are often shaped and influenced by a shared identity. In this way, the post-digital vanguards present within the #TakeDownJulienBlanc campaign differ from the formally defined teams that constitute chapters within the Hollaback! organisation described in the previous chapter.

A range of post-digital vanguards existed in the network that enabled the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest to occur on a global scale. In the context of the Melbourne and Australian protests, a few configurations emerged of post-digital vanguards that came together in a broader collective hosted on a secret Facebook group and in which Mac was the core bridging agent. Activist Erasmus mentioned how the secret Facebook group had been carefully vetted; it contained people who had previously been involved in similar activism and provided a space for them to share information confidentially with each other, especially when some activists had quite public profiles or concerns for their safety and wanted to help in a less risky way. Gerbaudo identifies some of the motivations behind the development of such closed and non-transparent activist teams. He argues that they often developed out of concern and fear of possible infiltrators or opportunists, as well as from a desire to maintain a level of control over the content production and the narrative of the protest (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 194).

The secret Facebook group contained approximately 70 activists. Both activists, Erasmus and James also described how a smaller group of 10 activists emerged from this broader collective and was connected through a Facebook messenger chat. This elite team of 10 activists took the lead on actions and broke into even smaller digital vanguards based on their activist skill sets to work on specific elements of the protest. Configurations of activists from this core 10 combined with activists from the broader Facebook group

collective developed and also worked with activists from other groups, such as Destroy the Joint and MFW.

One of the post-digital vanguards that developed consisted of two women who were part of the organisational team for the Reclaim the Night march in Melbourne in 2012 and the march for Jill Meagher in 2013. Sara Brocklesby and Natalie Pestana reapplied the skills they had developed and used them for Reclaim the Night to create a Facebook page and event page to organise the St Kilda protest, once Mac had discovered where the Melbourne seminar was going to be held. Much like what Freeman and Gerbaudo described as activist elites, Brocklesby and Pestana took on the largely invisible role of managing the social media page and event due to their previous expertise and social capital in the Melbourne feminist community (Gerbaudo, 2017, p. 191).

Another post-digital vanguard emerged around journalist and political commentator Van Badham, who is well known in the Australian activist scene. Despite her public profile, Badham chose to remain out of the public eye and operated privately with two other activists she has cultivated working relationships with, one of whom is formally positioned as Badham's manager. The dynamic between Badham and her manager highlights another key type of actor involved in the activist scene: post-digital activist entrepreneurs. Post-digital activist entrepreneurs are conceptualised as highly networked individuals who often operate independently and who have developed activism into part of their career and public identity. They are often highly sought after for their position of influence in the broader community and their reputation and experience organising actions. What defines them as 'post-digital' is the inherent and inextricably hybrid nature of their network as influenced and developed by online and offline relationships as well as actions that are both traditional in nature (occurring in conventional political spaces) and more innovative (cultivated via social media) avenues. Further, the digital and online components of their actions and career are not seen as disruptive but are viewed as a natural extension and necessary addition to their offline and conventional modes of operation. They do not view their online activities as separate, independent or replacing their offline work, they consider their position as one that results from a hybrid media landscape.

Maintaining such a high profile across platforms and realms has required activists like Badham to seek out managers to help facilitate and filter out their own engagements,

which prompted the ‘feminist manger’. In the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest, Badham and her manager, Jessamy Gleeson, worked together in an informal post-digital vanguard with another activist James.

In an interview with Badham, she spoke about the structural considerations that she reflected on when engaging in protests like #TakeDownJulienBlanc and the decision to operate behind the scenes in an informal digital vanguard. She spoke about the challenges of working in a movement that values transparency and horizontalism and that avoids leadership and hierarchical structures. However, Badham, like Freeman, identified that for a movement to progress and move beyond consciousness raising and endless discussion, other organisational structures inevitably arise:

In terms of transparent organising, it’s always a difficult call because a lot of the activist stuff I do, nobody’s electing me to do it. But, organisational structures exist in the doing. What’s frustrating...is when people who consider themselves feminist in activism in particular spaces obsess themselves with the protocols of internal conversation that derail mobilisation and movement building. What we had was the legitimacy of the skills that we all hold. There were media people, there were organisers, there were people who were internet detectives, basically who collaborated on a specific project to get stuff done (Badham, Interview, 27 January 2017).

Freeman argues that the structure of a group needs to change in accordance with the different tasks at hand and that while structure may vary, it is responsible for the distribution of ‘tasks, power and resources over the members of the group’ (1972, p. 152). The goal for the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests was specific: to shut down the seminars promoting violence towards women. Post-digital vanguards were, therefore, a useful structure for the operation and execution of the protests.

James recounted how he had been following the protest on Facebook via several key activists with whom he had connections from past political engagements. He reflected how he had a little experience with taking down pickup artists online, so he reached out to Mac and asked if there was anything he could do:

Kirsty Mac and I had never met in person, but we’d been communicating a lot on the internet and on the day of the actual demo, when the boat was about to cast off, she and I were both pulling on a mooring rope to bring the boat back into shore...I also reached out to Jennifer Li in America. She had a very detailed YouTube video that came out warning Australia about him [Julien Blanc] so I reached out to her [via Twitter] to say thanks very much for the heads up and

the advice and subsequently when we had to shut down RSD stuff, we brought her in on that as well (James, Interview, 30 May 2016).

James played a vital role in bridging the connection from the US to Australia, which helped add consistency to the narrative of the protest and cohesiveness for the movement as a whole. In the interview, James discussed how the core activists in the Facebook message chat did the social content, writing different updates for both Facebook and Twitter and some online detective work to determine where the seminars were being held. James and Badham had several working relationships in the activist realm that they drew on to support their involvement in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest.

6.3.5 Post-digital Activist Entrepreneurs and The Feminist Manager

With the proliferation of digital tools, there has been an increase in engagement with multiple causes by digitally-equipped activists (Walgrave et al., 2011). Emerging from the ‘modern sweatshop’ of the ‘digital economy’ (Terranova, 2000, p. 33), is what could be considered as ‘activist entrepreneurs’ who are attempting to commodify the exploitative nature of free digital labour, as conceptualised by Terranova (2000) and Jarrett (2015). In an interview with Badham, she recounted how she met some established feminists through Twitter and described those relationships as ‘very important in Australian discourse around building a sense of feminist community that’s visible in public life’ (Badham, Interview, 27 January 2017). She also acquired her position as writer at the *Guardian* due in part to the online presence and identity that she had already established online with the help of Twitter. However, it is also crucial to recognise how her activist practice exists in a more traditional model of institutional power. As the chair of a funded community organisation, an elected union official of Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) and as a long-time student politician, Badham operates on multiple levels of activism that have aided the development and maturation of extensive networks composed of both traditional and alternative power structures, further increasing the amplification of her voice. Her extensive network of feminist activists and mainstream media outlets, combined with her relationship with those in the representative office, makes Badham a valuable asset for activism due to her ability to connect other individuals and groups, as well as her capacity to work as a megaphone for key ideas and campaigns.

Badham's activist practices encompass a range of work, though she has a clear history of engagement and a public profile that earns her a recognised role in the activist community. In terms of operating as a post-digital activist entrepreneur, Badham stated that she is 'an activist all the time and that just requires a multilateral engagement' (Badham, Interview, 27 January 2017). This always-on status is reflective of how digital labour has been conceptualised by both Terranova (2000) and Jarrett (2016), particularly in terms of the demand and the blurring between work and leisure.

Along with the emergence of 'activist entrepreneurs' like Badham, is the development of a 'feminist manager'. The feminist manager is defined here as someone who acts as a broker and consultant to high-profile feminists in a formalised role. The one example in this research was activist Jessamy Gleeson, a feminist academic who has participated in various campaigns including the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests. After establishing herself in the Australian, Melbourne and Sydney feminist community for her organisational roles in feminist activism, including on the team for Slutwalk Melbourne, she started helping other feminist activists who were in leadership positions. Her involvement in Slutwalk Melbourne led to the development of a working relationship with Melbourne feminist, Karen Pickering. Gleeson soon began assisting Pickering as producer for her monthly feminist talk show, *Cherchez la Femme*. Soon, she realised there was a growing need for someone to help manage key individuals' activism and the multiple engagements that they would often be involved in.

Establishing herself as a type of broker, Gleeson formalised her role as a feminist manager and officialised her services. In 2017, she created the business 'Bossy Management' to officially and formally provide feminists management services, including assistance with community organisations, outreach, and social media management. Although Gleeson is the only person in the sample for this research currently fulfilling this role, the positive reactions in response to her role and the increase in her clients suggests a possible future trend towards these types of formalised relationships. Gleeson also hired another Melbourne based feminist, Lizzie Kennedy, to work for her organisation Bossy Management. This expansion highlights the demand for such work. The services listed on the business's website recognise the often invisible and undervalued labour intensive work required of feminist activists, particularly for the maintenance of cross-platform profiles.

Gleeson reflected on the nature of her and her clients' engagements:

You can choose which sort of [protests] you want to be involved in. I can duck in and out of these ones and tweet for a day or two and then focus on other things in the long term like Slutwalk (Gleeson, Interview, 19 July 2016).

This echoes Walgrave et al. (2011, p. 327), who describe how activists may decide to engage in an action but then revert to a more passive stand-by mode in which they simply monitor the networks until something sparks their engagement again. While the nature of this engagement that Walgrave et al. (2011) recount is not specific to feminism, the development of an activist manager in the feminist movement may in part be due to the level of online abuse or e-bile (Jane, 2014) that feminist activists are subjected to. In fact, under the services description of Gleeson's business's website, she explicitly recognises the demand for social media management assistance and she positions her role as one that can help feminists stay online while keeping them away from the online abuse that coincides with having an online and public facing feminist profile. The feminist manager, in the way, can operate as another barrier of protection for feminist activists operating in the public domain.

Gleeson's clients are established feminist activists in the Australian movement who require someone to help manage the multitude of engagements that come their way, including Badham. Gleeson's role could be considered as that of a gatekeeper, filtering access between other activist groups, the media, the public and Badham herself. In this way, Gleeson provides another level of support for Badham, preventing her from being misrepresented as a star of the movement, as Freeman warns. Gleeson's position and proximity to Badham makes her highly influential in the network, yet most of their relationship is enacted through private avenues. Thus, the formalisation of her position is an attempt to make visible a crucial relationship and connection that previously would have existed only informally.

The framing of this relationship alludes to the recognition of pre-existing power dynamics that Freeman (1972) identifies; that is, the position of particular individuals in wider society and institutions, access to resources, the skill set of the members and a fundamental understanding that structure is required to transcend consciousness raising. It is in this way that the feminist manager moves beyond Freeman's expectations and demonstrates how key partnerships and teams are being formed and utilise the different

abilities and talents of individuals to effectively execute connective actions. This type of formalisation provides an alternative method of conceptualising relationships in the community that can address the issues that Freeman raises with informal organisational networks. It paves the way for consciously recognising the organisational structures that exist informally, addressing the informal relationships that often constitute communication networks and, finally, prompting the feminist movement to move beyond problematic notions of structurelessness in connective action.

6.3.6 Peripheral and Independent Actors

Most activists involved in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests were ‘single issue activists’ and preferred the flexibility of being able to jump into an action with one strong purpose without compromising their values for a broader united group. However, this type of approach combined with an informal structure brings with it the potential for individuals and peripheral actors to take control of a protest’s message, as well as a crowd whose focus is so splintered on an issue that it may never achieve a necessary level of cohesion for a movement to develop. James recognised this potential and spoke about the importance of creating personalised action frames, or a narrative, to draw broader engagement: ‘convincing them [other individual activists and the public] very quickly of the validity of your argument’, as well as breaking down the barrier of entry for them. However, he recounted that most of the people he worked with were seasoned activists, although there were a few that were not as experienced and would do things that threatened to derail the whole action, which is something that requires navigation and diplomacy.

James noted the complexity of being a male in the feminist activist community and how he considered his position in a feminist space as one behind the scenes. He described the way in which the secret Facebook group of approximately 70 members developed and outlined some of the tensions that resulted from the group as comprising a diverse collective of people:

We had a situation where someone had gone ‘I’m going to build consensus by inviting all of these people’ and ended up adding some white feminist kind of non-intersectional, exclusive people into the space and it caused a lot of issues because there were all the die-hard activists who were really inclusive and really open and were just, like, what the fuck are they doing here (James, Interview, 30 May 2016).

The tensions that arose in that group from clashes in ideology motivated the development of the smaller Facebook message thread of 10 activists, which was mentioned earlier in the chapter. However, despite the efforts to contain the organisation of the protest in this smaller collective or elite group, James conveyed the challenge of encountering and addressing perceived lone wolves and individual activists who operated outside the established post-digital vanguards and broader Facebook group:

Anyone can come and be part of the demonstration, or be part of the effort to shut these people down. In particular, what made it really difficult was the guy, the well-intentioned guy, who had a change.org petition calling on Peter Dutton to deport or cancel the visas of the RSD guys. A lot of the criticisms that were levelled against us was like ‘why are you supporting this petition; why are you weaponising immigration policy?’. And it was, like, we didn’t tell this guy to start the petition. This white guy had already started the petition and he had 70,000 signatures, so you can either choose to build a relationship with that—to leverage that connection to those people—and organise an on-the-ground demonstration, or you can choose to ignore it and be really sectarian. And when push comes to shove, we said we’d just take the pragmatic approach (James, Interview, 30 May 2016).

Badham also recounted the frustration of internal criticisms that her post-digital vanguard and the core elite of 10 activists received in the broader Facebook group in response to the petition and its request to cancel Blanc and Allen’s visas:

There are a few of us who [try] to bring that awareness of how exclusionary and how hostile a lot of activist spaces can be, specifically to people who may not be enfranchised in the sophisticated language games that are obliged of them in those spaces. And specifically people who come from culturally and linguistic diverse backgrounds. There’s a lot of privileging that goes on. What the fuck would my mum understand about weaponising borders? I can’t actually think of a bigger toss off of a conversation. And I remember when it happened; James and Jessamy were upset. They were just really stunned. Like, why have we been accused of white feminism and I’m like this is the narrow universe of discourse; this is self-defeating, self-referential. This is a circle jerk among people who are not doing the work. Even listening to this critique is pointless; what were we doing? We were finding places, boycotting this guy, mobilising people, doing media liaison, building communities—we were doing all of the work that you do and where the fuck were these people? They weren’t anywhere! Sitting there pontificating (Badham, Interview, 27 January 2017).

The man who created both Australian petitions calling for the cancellation of Blanc’s Visa and later Allen’s was Matt Jowett. In an interview with Jowett for this thesis, he spoke about how he was aware of a piece of visa legislation that states that, under particular circumstances, a visa can be revoked or denied and how he had seen this

legislation used in a few cases. In addition, Jowett reflected on how domestic violence at the time had been a focus of the federal government, so he felt they needed to be prompted to take action rather than just ‘talk a big game’ about addressing domestic violence.

Jowett was not a completely independent actor operating in isolation of the rest of the activist community, despite what some of the other activists perceived. He was an experienced activist with much of his training and experience based in climate change and LGBTQI-related actions and organisations. Like many other activists, Jowett’s early activism and exposure to the organisational side of protests was shaped by the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC), who are recognised as a training ground for young activists. In addition to the conventional ties that Jowett established through these networks, he also maintained ties to feminist activists:

My previous housemate worked for Emily’s List. We had so many conversations over the years. So, I was like, yes, I am unapologetically going to apply the label of feminist to myself (Jowett, Interview, 8 January 2018).

Jowett reflected on when he first developed the change.org petition and he sought out advice from his immediate network of activists and feminists. Although he never encountered the ‘weaponising borders’ backlash and criticism that James and Badham described, he did voice his disappointment to some initial responses and criticisms that he received from people in his immediate network who he tried to consult:

I’d taken it to people who I would have expected to have been totally on board but were like ‘oh I feel that’s treading on freedom of speech’ and it really made me pause and think about it. It took me a while to go ‘no’. He’s seeking profit from this and he’s teaching classes. I’m not stopping him from going to his huge online platforms that he’s already got to express these views, but it was the profiting and the business venture side of things that made it something else. That was a bizarre pushback that I hadn’t really anticipated or thought of at the onset, but that I very quickly came across (Jowett, Interview, 8 January 2018).

Jowett described how he had seen Li’s petition targeting the Como Hotel and because it was doing well and he thought someone should try and take it a step further. Jowett stated that because he could not see a response happening, it made him feel that there was a need for one, so he decided to fill that perceived gap. It was not until after he had started the petition that he became aware of who was already doing what and that there were people infiltrating the RSD groups to gather information. With such informal organisational structures, it is difficult for individuals who operate outside the core elite

to first even be aware that there already exists an established effort or group addressing the cause. Second, there are very few, if any, avenues for individual activists to contact the informal group if they wish to join the cause or collaborate for an action. In spite of this, Jowett managed to get in contact with Li and political satirist Simon Hunt, known as Pauline Pantsdown, who was involved with creating and promoting the narrative of the protest online through memes and humorous posts.

The consultative relationships Jowett maintained with Li and Pauline Pantsdown, combined with a conscious effort to maintain some of the messaging from Li's Como Hotel petition in the development of his own, meant that Jowett did not act as a lone wolf. However, Jowett acknowledged that he has a habit of acting independently because he recognises the difficulty that informal groups face in organising and moving beyond consciousness raising efforts, particularly on issues around identity and gender. He reflected on previous activist experiences with safe schools and same-sex marriage and how action had been inhibited by internal, personal politics:

The safe schools thing started as a group of really committed community members making an organisation in response to this and there was a huge protest rally and it was all going really well at first and then, as that progressed, that group deteriorated and there was a lot of disagreement around what issues to work on and how to work on those different issues. I think in community organisations, or in less-established organisations, there's probably a bit more room for [personal politics]. A lot of bigger organisations have their mission statements and the things that shape how they respond to issues and which issues they respond to and just have that experience in campaigning and organisation where they say 'alright, if there is a bit of confusion about what we're responding to then let's do some kind of workshop activity to try and workout these things'. If you've got people who are responding to an issue out of a personal passion, which is great, but I think those people coming together can often stifle each other (Jowett, Interview, 8 January 2018).

Jowett expressed the frustration of how internal conflicts and disagreements can inhibit action, which is why he had chosen to start things on his own instead. However, he was reluctant to act as a lone wolf, so he deferred to similar past efforts and messaging to keep his action in line with the movement as best he can:

With the yes campaigning poster stuff that I did, I didn't want to be a lone wolf. And that particular issue has a decade of campaigning behind it, so its messaging is well developed and tested and the stuff that was more repeated is well known, so it was quite an easy thing to go, okay, the messaging needs to say things about equality and it's about the people...there was a whole positive campaign

message there and a narrative that was sown through that whole thing, so it was easier to be a lone wolf and still run with that narrative. On a lot of other issues, the issues themselves are dispersed, or diffused. There are a whole lot of different fronts from which you can fight those issues, so I guess things like the visa petition, there was a singular target that I could identify, that I could say alright as a lone actor, I feel like I can create something to go after this particular goal without claiming to be trying to tackle every episode and without hopefully stepping on toes (Jowett, Interview, 8 January 2018).

However, Jowett recognised why there might be a need at times for secrecy in organising. He also stated that operating informally and in fewer transparent ways can create difficulty for the branding of a cause and the development of a unified message:

You can't have everyone on message all the time; that's not going to happen. But, I do feel like that the lack of a central organising, not even central, but united or collaborative response meant that there was a bit of confusion about what was on message and what wasn't...It definitely made it hard to have that unified approach, like, already, what are our objectives? What are our tactics for getting there? That didn't exist to a large degree (Jowett, Interview, 8 January 2018).

Even after the creation of the petition, Jowett was not aware of who the rest of the activists involved in the organisation of the protests were and he never met anyone else that was involved:

In terms of how public my involvement was, I didn't try to hide my involvement at all in the petitioning. My name was attached to it, but I also felt like it was a broader thing owned by a lot more people. I created it and started putting it out in a few specific places and really tried to get that traction, but the numbers it got were not because of that. That initial layout then put it in the hands of other people who were working on it and who may have been more private about it. People sharing it publicly, people were sharing it through private channels. It's kind of hard to track, outside of social media. It's hard to track how it was shared through messages (Jowett, Interview, 8 January 2018).

While Jowett was only distantly connected to the core organisational group in the protest network, he still operated in a conventionally established activist network with formal connections to activist groups like the AYCC. The complexity of the overarching action network, with numerous layers of organisation and communication networks, made it challenging for each of the activists involved to connect with one another. While Jowett was loosely connected to Pauline Pantsdown and Li, he did not establish a connection with James and his post-digital vanguard. This was primarily because after the publication of his e-petition, Jowett distanced himself from the protest due to other factors that were

occurring in his life and he failed to reply to James' attempt at contact. The informal structure of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests inhibited the visibility of the core elite involved and allowed independent or peripheral activists like Jowett to initiate action when no perceived collective response existed. In this case, independent or peripheral activists were those who were distanced and only loosely connected to the activists within the 'core elite' responsible for driving the protest. Their connection, such as Jowett's relationship with Pantsdown, may not be obvious or apparent by others within the core elite, and they may be perceived as a 'lone wolf' (as Jowett was described by one of the activists). In this case, a 'lone wolf' was considered to be someone who worked entirely independently or alone. Notably, there were no activists who worked entirely independently or in a rogue manner in any of the case studies examined.

Jowett's confusion regarding who else was organising around him and the informal structures of the activist elite are consistent with Freeman's (1972) analysis and the warning she made in relation to informally structured groups. Freeman explained that with informal groups, the rules of how decisions are made are only known to a few and those who do not know the rules are not chosen for 'initiation' and 'must remain in confusion, or suffer from paranoid delusions that something is happening of which they are not quite aware' (1972, p. 152). Freeman (1972, p. 153) concludes by arguing for the formalisation of decision-making processes to enable everyone the opportunity of being involved in an action. The power struggles surrounding the organisational group and who decided the agenda and messaging for the protest can also be demonstrated by the ways in which the protest action frames changed over the course of the protests.

6.4 Personalised Action Frames and Protest Meaning

The struggle for organisational power between all these influential actors—activist 'stars', the activist elite group, formal organisations, post-digital vanguards and entrepreneurs, and independent or peripheral actors—is also demonstrated in relation to how the protest's message and agenda developed. Core to Bennett and Segerberg's (2013, p. 2) categories of crowd-enabled and organisationally enabled connective action is the inclusion of personalised action frames that are shared and transmitted via large-scale digital networks. In regard to organisationally enabled connective networks, Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 47) state that personalised expression is moderated to an extent by

the organisational group, compared to crowd-enabled networks in which personal expression is highly adaptable and open.

In the case of #TakeDownJulienBlanc, multiple actors attempted to moderate and shape personal expression and participation with the protest and this resulted in a few different tactics that influenced the public perception of the protests. First, there was the development of multiple e-petitions on change.org that were created by a few different activists. Second, there was the creation of social media content, including memes, to build the narrative of the protest. And third, there was the use of secondary hashtags and protests to keep the broader public and community engaged.

6.4.1 E-Petitions

The narrative that initially provoked Li to create the first petition protesting venues for hosting Blanc's pickup artist seminars was an intersectional one. Li spoke about how the video from Japan depicted Blanc choking Asian women and how there was also other racism targeted towards Russian men and other people's nationalities, which Blanc would criticise by saying that certain types of men were less masculine. However, Li reflected how the protests were somewhat whitewashed and the racial elements were dropped: 'I'm grateful for the white feminists who helped out too, but I'd also hope that they were mindful that it was a dual thing; it wasn't just a sexist thing' (Li, Interview, 21 September 2016). She also considered how the whitewashing of the issue was partly how the protests and the narrative became mainstream: 'When race gets taken out of it, people are more likely to listen' (Li, Interview, 21 September 2016). This suggests that the personalised action frames, as well as the nature and dynamic of the crowd that rose up in this type of connective action, were driven by a predominantly white, Western crowd despite protests also occurring in Asia.

From Li's reflection on the protests, it becomes clear that a white narrative became globally dominant. Despite the protests beginning with an issue in Japan and that it was instigated by an Asian American activist, the generalised message of sexism, misogyny and male violence towards women was the narrative that circulated, caught mainstream media attention and was considered relatable to the vast majority of participants in the campaign.

To develop a stronger understanding of the ways in which the framing of the protests changed, this research incorporates a comparison of three of the most dominant petitions in the protest series. This secondary analysis is used to illuminate how the protest's narrative evolved, the effect of how the activists framed the action and how it was publicly received.

The first petition was created by Li and was framed to target venues and pressure them into banned or cancelled RSD events; this achieved 53,270 signatures. Li maintained the racial element by labelling Blanc and RSD sexist and racist pickup artists. She also included information about one of Blanc's videos titled 'White males fuck Asian women in Tokyo (and the beautiful methods to it)' and included the details that emphasised his position as a white male in Japan and how that context adds to his entitlement in violating women.

Li's development and continual use of the same petition throughout the entire campaign demonstrated a unique and trailblazing use of the platform change.org and e-petitions. The petition began by targeting specific hotels and venues to cancel their events with RSD. Li recounted how she would switch the target venue listed on the petition once the hotel had conceded and said they would not host the event anymore.

In addition to the targeting of physical venues, Li adapted her campaign and petition to target online platforms and demand that they also consider not hosting RSD content. After the successful shutdown of physical seminars, the RSD team went underground and started running their seminars online. Despite their physical limitations and the denial and cancellation of his visa, Blanc and his team could still reach an international audience on blogging sites and video streaming services. Further, the pickup artist group and their followers utilised digital platforms to harass and send abuse to activists and women. Consequently, Li updated her petition to target Rackspace, Eventbrite, AWeber and Liquid Web.

Li's original petition is the one that caught the attention of activists in Australia, as it was initially targeting Australian venues. The petition was also shared around by the broader feminist activist community and was developed into the secret Facebook group and the core elite on Facebook messenger. The narratives and agenda stated in the petition were

adopted by Mac and the digital vanguards as they started cold-calling and physically protesting sites to cancel the pickup artist seminars.

However, shortly after the initial circulation of Li's e-petition, Jowett created the first of the Australian-specific e-petitions calling for the cancellation of Blanc's visa. He created the petition at the same time Mac and the digital vanguards were protesting venues, which was before Mac's actions received legacy-media attention and after Blanc left the country. Due to the lack of publicity around their actions (cold-calling and physical rallies), Jowett did not realise other actions were happening. His first petition was titled 'Cancel Julien Blanc's Visa' and only generated 10,911 signatures, failing to achieve its goal.

In the information section of the petition, Jowett documented how some Australian venues had already cancelled the seminars and repeated the content that Li had included in her petition introducing Blanc and his violent methods. In the letter sent to MP Scott Morrison asking for Blanc's visa to be cancelled, Jowett recognised that Blanc had apparently left the country the night before and his concern was in relation to Blanc's return. Given Blanc's departure, there was less urgency in the petition to motivate signatures when the campaign and protest were already coming to a close. It was only after Blanc had already left Australia and the action had received mainstream media attention that MP Scott Morrison announced that his visa would be cancelled. In this first wave of #TakeDownJulienBlanc, Jowett's e-petition only affected the result after the actions had been successful.

At the beginning of 2016, there was a second wave of protests—this time targeted towards RSD instructor Allen, when he attempted to come to Australia to host seminars as Blanc had in 2014. Due to Allen's seminars coming to light, Jowett created a new petition calling for the deportation of Allen. This petition provided explicit links to the first wave, with the title 'Australia says no to Julien Blanc's team teaching domestic violence' and included an image at the beginning that read 'Meet Jeffy'. Jowett recalled that a woman from change.org contacted him when he first drafted this second petition and gave him feedback on how the petition could be tweaked to help it gain more traction.

There were things like putting Julien Blanc's name in there so that it was associated with that more notable figure and more people knew his name, whereas Jeffy Allen people were like who? (Jowett, Interview, 8 January 2018).

In addition, this second petition drew on the narrative of the first wave, highlighting its success and using inclusive language to provide its audience and the public the confidence that they can win again if they sign this new petition: ‘Fortunately, you all stood up and said “hell no”’. This second petition achieved victory with 66,293 signatures and it constructed a strong narrative that was specifically targeted to the Australian people. This second petition revealed just how far the discourse had diverged from any racial concerns and instead constructed a new action frame that placed the focus on the issue of domestic violence.

Rather than framing the protests with the racial intersection, the second Australian petition instead foregrounded the issue of domestic violence. The focus on domestic violence was strategic as it drew on similar narratives that were dominant in the public conversation and the Australian political climate. In 2014, Melbourne woman Rosie Batty garnered attention as a victim of domestic violence, which saw her 11-year-old son murdered by her partner, Greg Anderson. In response to this tragic experience, Batty began campaigning and advocating for domestic violence survivors and victims. In 2015, her campaigning increased and she established a foundation after her murdered son to provide a voice for the victims of domestic violence, with the intention of preventing men’s violence towards women and children. Batty was awarded the 2015 Australian of the Year award for her advocacy and, consequently, the issue of domestic violence was nationally recognised in Australia.

The second wave of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests and Jowett’s second petition occurred at the beginning of 2016, when public debate regarding male domestic violence was fresh in the minds of Australians. This was illustrated in the comments left as reasons for signing the petition, with 61 comments referencing domestic violence as a concern:

The message promoted by Rosie batty and our government in making her ‘Australian of the Year’ is that this attitude is totally unacceptable. To allow promoters of it into our country is wrong. Where are our government’s priorities? (Anonymous, 2016).

My kids still have nightmares about the domestic violence and abuse they witnessed. No-one should live in fear of being mistreated. If these pathetic excuses for males think this kind of behaviour is acceptable then maybe they need a taste of their own medicine (Anonymous, 2016).

As a father, husband and human being, there is NO place in Australia for this sort of disgusting men holding seminars to share knowledge of violence against women. The women of this country deserve to be protected from enablers of domestic abuse (Anonymous, 2016).

The three comments above capture the most common personalised action frames that appeared on the Australian petition. They reflect the continued conversation of domestic violence in the Australian political climate and the personalised experience of the issue at hand, whether from a female victim or as a male positioned in the role of protector.

None of the other petitions, including the first Australian petition, mentioned domestic violence. Comparatively, all other petitions included racism as a reason for a small number of supporters' participation, whereas racism was completely absent from Jowett's second petition. The second petition developed a new narrative that diverged from the original action frames present in the first protest wave: domestic violence. The title of the second petition directly taps into this theme by claiming that Blanc's team teaches domestic violence and initiates the framing of the issue in this light. In addition, Jowett framed himself as a male against domestic violence and against the RSD men by telling his story and revealing that he has 'witnessed many women in my life be mistreated by men who claim to care about them' (Jowett, Interview, 8 January 2018). This is a crucial component of the action frame, as it provides a relatable position to which other males can connect and onto which they can project themselves; it develops the narrative and a position for men to observe themselves in the story that is separate from the villainous male pickup artists

The development of a conventional form of activism (petitions) also underlines how participation was not necessarily in the form of open personalised expressions that Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) crowd-enabled connective action would imply. Rather, individual activists (Li and Jowett) employed digital platforms to manage and cultivate participation in a traditional manner, at least in regard to the creation of e-petitions. In addition to the creation of e-petitions, other activists as part of digital vanguards developed further modes of content to engage the broader public and help shape the message of the protests, in a moderated form of engagement that was more aligned with Bennett and Segerberg's organisationally enabled connective action.

6.4.2 Social Media Content

Some activists adopted memetic strategies, including both humour and personal resonance, in the creation of content on social media to frame the message and agenda of the protests. Shifman (2013) describes memetic texts as open for the audience to not just share, but to participate in the process of remixing, parodying, mashing up, altering and imitating in their experience of the text. Memetic responses can, as Gal, Shifman and Kampf (2016) argue, contribute to the development of a collective identity. Further, Kampf (2013) outlines the ways in which memes can be both meaning making and disciplining tools in the development of a collective and their shared norms.

Gal et al. (2016, p. 13) conceptualise memes as performative acts that were applied both for ‘persuasive purposes and for the construction of a collective identity and norm’, and this purpose is reflected in the use of memes by activists in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests. James reflected on the importance of how the protests were framed and attributed the protests’ success in part to its clear and relatable narrative. James, who prefers to remain behind the scenes, described how the protests promoted a narrative with very clear villains and conventional narrative tropes. These strong storytelling aspects provided social content and consisted of drawing much attention to the pickup artists as ‘villains’; they also made a clear statement that what they preach is not acceptable. In this way, memes were used to construct a collective identity in determining who was both included and excluded from the collective. Further still, they used memes as a disciplinary tool (Gal et al., 2016) by reinforcing and communicating the social norms in which the behaviours of the pickup artists were not accepted.

In the second wave of protests, some activists adapted the hashtag #ShutDownRSD to draw attention to the larger group supporting and funding Blanc and Allen. Further, the use of another hashtag was a strategic attempt at increasing the second wave of protests’ potential to go ‘viral’ by achieving the trending status on Twitter. According to the algorithmic structures behind the trending feature on Twitter, a hashtag can only be featured as trending once, hence there are strategic benefits to slightly altering the hashtag in subsequent renditions of a protest.



Figure 5.2 Tweet by Shut Down RSD on 19 January 2016



Figure 5.3 Tweet by Shut Down RSD on 19 January 2016

The use of the second hashtag in producing memes during the second wave of protests highlights how strategic the activists were, as they attempted to increase the spread and effect of the protest. This was also consistent with the motivations for creating humorous memetic content: James reiterated that, ‘Australians love a laugh; it resonates well with local people. So memes, the power of memes, the power of background research and then using digital tools’ (James, Interview, 30 May 2016) was an effective tactic for constructing and consolidating an affective and relatable narrative for the protests. James’s approach to social media content creation mirrors Tim Highfield’s (2015) analysis of the affective ways in which journalists were using Twitter to increase their visibility in the context of breaking news. Highfield (2015) argues that the humorous framing of breaking news and the creation and appropriation of irreverent content can increase attention, visibility and longevity.

Framing the action with humorous memes was also a subversive act. Kate Miltner (2014) describes how memes are often reflective of the sociodemographic background of those creating them. Miltner argues that meme creators were typically white, privileged young men—hence memes are often replicating well-entrenched hegemonic stereotypes. However, Miltner identifies some cases in which memes are employed for subversive purposes to create a ‘polyvocal’ discourse that enables the expression of other ideological perspectives and voices. In the case of #TakeDownJulienBlanc, memes were employed as a way of subverting and making fun of the conventional, yet toxic, masculine norms that the ‘pickup artists’ were attempting to propagate.

Humour is something that has often been utilised by the feminist movement for subversive purposes. In her book, *Laughing Feminism*, Audrey Bilger (2002) argued that comedy and humour can both be used for subversive ends, as well as for conservative ends to preserve the status quo. She contends that humour can be an excellent vehicle for delivering radical or alternative ideas in a more palatable manner to an audience that might otherwise be offended or disengaged. One of the other activists involved in the creation and dissemination of memetic content during the actions was Pauline Pantsdown,

Pantsdown was influential in shaping the narrative of the protests in Australia due to their highly networked and publicly visible profile. Pantsdown’s popularity and following (12.5 thousand followers on Twitter and just under 30,000 followers on Facebook) was a useful network to be exploited for the purposes of gaining support and increasing attention. Pantsdown, in this way, operated as a highly networked individual activist, much like Mac and Badham. However, Pantsdown operated as more of a support role and agenda setter, primarily sharing and contributing to the creation of memetic content on their own profile and social media accounts. This contributed to the scalability and visibility of the protest.



Figure 5.4 Tweet by Pauline Pantsdown on 18 January 2016



Figure 5.5 Tweet by Pauline Pantsdown on 19 January 2016

In addition to framing the protest, memetic content was also used as an act of solidarity for the broader protest community and the women affected by the pickup artists. Audrey Bilger (2002) describes how women can also employ humour as a psychological survival skill and as an emancipatory strategy (p. 10). She draws on Gloria Kaufman's argument that underlining feminist humour is an attitude that embodies a revolutionary; it is a way for women to ridicule the system, as well as a means to build a foundation for political solidarity among other women and allies (Bilger, 2002, p. 10). While the Shutdown RSD account circulated memes and narratives that challenged the gendered and racial violence promoted by the RSD pickup artists, it also operates as a 'knowing wink' and a way to connect and express solidarity with others in the feminist movement. In this way, similar to the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, a solidarity action frame was also present in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests.

The above analysis highlights the ways in which the agenda, message and meaning of a protest can be contested and adapted when there is no clear leader or structure and when there are multiple individual activists operating independently. The shifts in the framing of the e-petitions highlight the evolution of the protest and how the frame was adapted to appeal to a broader (albeit more White-Western) public. Further, in the development of the protest, digital vanguards contributed to shaping the narrative by creating and sharing memetic content, particularly during the second wave of the protests to remain relevant and to sustain public interest (Highfield, 2015).

Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 6) describe the personal engagement they noticed in connective actions as personal political stories that are shared via large-scale social networks and are mediated by digital technology. Personalised action frames, they argued, encourage individual acts by citizens that are often dismissed by observers as clicktivism or 'shallow' modes of participation. Notably, in #TakeDownJulienBlanc, the majority of this kind of personalised engagement by citizens was facilitated and cultivated by the e-petitions.

In addition to this personalised engagement was the collective and solidarity action frames that were shared and supported on social media platforms. The use of humorous and irreverent content by the activists contributed to the development of a collective (Gal et al., 2016), framing the pickup artists as 'other' (and villainous) and the activists and broader public as a community. Moreover, the memetic content established and

communicated the social norms accepted in this developed collective, further strengthening the community boundary and prescribing the behaviour promoted by the pickup artists as deviant and offensive. Last, the action frames, and particularly the humorous content, established by the activists had an underlying element of solidarity that resonated throughout the community, strengthening the bonds between members and encouraging them to continue in their actions. The underlying solidarity element present in the campaign reinforces the importance of solidarity action frames in feminist connective actions, as was also found in the examination of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen protest in the previous chapter.

6.5 Conclusion

The chapter has examined the organisational structure of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc post-digital protests to further contribute to an understanding of the organisational and communication practices being modelled in the contemporary feminist movement. It has also sought to answer how useful Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) model of connective action is for assessing the organisational structures of contemporary post-digital feminist actions.

A primary contribution of this chapter has been to deconstruct the organisational structures behind a seemingly structureless feminist action network and, in particular, an action that has predominantly been organised via informal and private networks. Bennett and Segerberg's methodology works well for large-scale public actions, but it cannot capture the organisational processes that occur behind the scenes in secret groups, private messages, or via informal friendship networks. Therefore, this chapter relied on interviews with the activists involved in the organisation to piece together the influential organisational compositions that drove the protest over 2014 and 2016.

The analysis of Mac and Li's interviews highlighted some elements that influenced the organisational structure of the movement. First, it emphasised the crucial role of high-profile and highly connected individuals who can exploit their networks in a way that increases the spread of personalisable action frames. Second, it illustrated how the burden of organisation in the digital era can be shifted onto a highly networked individual who is equipped with a palette of technology, as opposed to traditionally established groups or a particular platform. Third, it underlined Freeman's (1972) contention about 'stars'—

that in an informally structured movement, the public will appoint a spokesperson who has caught the public eye, despite no official leader being elected and regardless of the spokesperson's ability to represent the movement. These 'stars' are at risk of both attacks from outside the movement and lateral violence from within the movement by other activists who feel that these 'stars' are not qualified to represent the movement.

The other key actors and networks that emerged from this research were the core activist elite group comprising 10 activists and supported by a Facebook messenger chat; the broader activist collective of approximately 70 activists hosted on a Facebook secret group; established organisations such as Destroy the Joint, who remained on the periphery; post-digital vanguards of just a few activists drawn from the previous three pools of activists who were applied to specific projects; highly networked post-digital activist entrepreneurs and a feminist manager; and, last, peripheral actors who were tangentially connected to the activist community, but who were left on the outside of the activist elite.

In addition to the actors described above, the analysis highlighted the multilayered action frames present in the #TakeaDownJulienBlanc protests. Personalised action frames generated wide-scale engagement with the e-petitions, while the humorous and solidarity action frames established a collective and clear social norms; they also encouraged and sustained engagement throughout the second wave of the protests. Ultimately, the numerous types of groups and individuals involved in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest—combined with the lack of transparency, multilayered communication and organisational networks—demonstrate the difficulty, and perhaps impossibility, of categorising this type of action in a particular model.

Chapter 7: **The Case Study of #EndViolenceAgainstWomen and #MeToo: The Effects of Gendered Abuse on Organising Feminist Activism**

7.1 Introduction

In late November 2015, Australian feminist writer, Clementine Ford, reported a man named Michael Nolan for an abusive comment he made towards Ford that expressed a misogynistic and violent attitude. She reported his comment to the employer who was listed on the Facebook account he had used to make the comment. The employer elected to investigate the incident and ultimately decided to terminate Nolan's employment contract. On 30 November 2015, Ford made a post stating the update and outcome. Shortly after this post, Ford was subjected to a backlash of abusive messages, receiving hundreds of messages within 24 hours accusing her of ruining Nolan's life and depicting numerous violent threats towards Ford. Due to this torrent of abuse, on 1 December 2015, Ford made a blogpost that curated and published some of the worst and most offensive messages she had received from men online.

At 9.00am on Friday, 4 December 2015, seemingly decentralised individuals began tweeting and sharing screenshots of the abusive messages that Ford had posted onto her blog, alongside the hashtags #EndViolenceAgainstWomen and #IStandWithClem. The campaign occurred on Twitter and became the top trending hashtag in Australia in the first 15 minutes of activity. The instigator of the hashtag was Australian author and columnist, Kerri Sackville.

This chapter examines the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign and continues addressing the two primary research questions of this thesis: (i) what are the organisational structures and practices of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign and (ii) how useful is Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) logic of connective action for assessing feminist solidarity hashtag campaigns. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was an online action and was designed to be an expression of solidarity between women in the media industry. This differs to the post-digital nature of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc case study examined in the previous chapter, which incorporated

a wider range of online and offline tactics and was actively protesting and discrediting ‘pickup artists’. In addition, this chapter also considers the specifically gendered issues that affect the organisational practices of feminist activists.

The chapter also draws on a thematic analysis of the #MeToo movement. The #MeToo movement developed in late 2017, after the data collection phase of this research was completed, thus it is not used as a central case study in this thesis. However, it is useful to incorporate and use as a comparison for understanding the broader effects and trends of online shaming and solidarity hashtag campaigns. Feminist online shaming and solidarity hashtags have become increasingly prevalent in the contemporary contentious political arena. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign is used as a local knowledge case study as the activists were accessible to the researcher while the #MeToo case study works as an example of a global campaign and is one of the most disruptive feminist protests in the contemporary climate, rendering it an important case to study.

The phrase ‘me too’ can be traced back to 2006, when African-American activist, Tarana Burke, used the phrase as a private expression of solidarity between sexual assault survivors. It was used between survivors to let them know they were not alone. More than a decade later, in October 2017, the hashtag spread virally after American actor Alyssa Milano tweeted #MeToo, accusing film producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual misconduct. The results from the #MeToo analysis are used to provide additional depth to the discussion of how the personalised action frames that Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 47) identified as characteristic of connective action are complicated in the feminist movement. Combined with the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, both case studies draw attention to the distinctly feminist issues that affect the organisational practices of feminist activists. Understanding these issues helps the research provide further insight into both the primary research questions; it sheds light on why activists choose to organise in particular ways and how this affects the organisational structures of feminist actions. The consideration of these feminist issues provides a perspective that was not included in Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) logic of connective action.

To address the second research question, this chapter compares the findings of the case studies with Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) logic of connective action to determine how useful their theory is for assessing these types of online shaming and feminist solidarity campaigns. A preliminary analysis of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign

revealed that the case study incorporated elements that overlapped with all of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) organisational categories but skewed more closely to their two connective action networks.

In their three-part typology, Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 47) posit that crowd-enabled connective networks have 'little or no formal organisational coordination', while organisationally brokered networks at the other end of the spectrum maintain 'strong organisational coordination'. While they clarify that crowd-enabled actions may be less dependent on formal organisations but there may be plenty of organisers and organisations involved (Bennet & Segerberg, 2013, p. 12), it is unclear how the authors define 'formal' and even 'strong' organisational coordination. The case study of #EndViolenceAgainstWomen problematizes the definition of organisational coordination because, although there was no involvement from pre-existing organisations, there was a clear organisational team with a recognised leader that defined the parameters of the action. Additionally, participation in the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was heavily moderated and predetermined, so there was little personalised expression in the campaign. The analysis in the chapter will further discuss these points of contention.

7.2 Feminist Digilantism and the Need for a Collective Response

The analysis is informed by Jane's (2016) research into feminist digilantism. Jane's (2016) research examines feminist digilante responses to the online misogynistic abuse that women experience. Jane (2016) provides the context for these types of online shaming actions and highlights the serious issue that women face in regard to 'gendered e-bile' and its psychological, professional and financial effects. Jane describes a marked increase from 2011 in the public conversations (both self-reported and media-reported) about the online misogynistic abuse that women were receiving. Further, there is international research suggesting that women are disproportionately targeted by online harassment (McGarry, 2014; Ressa, Ghose & Storm, 2018).

Jane (2016, p. 287) identifies gendered cyber hate as a social phenomenon and illustrated how it is rooted in a history of misogynistic and sexist practices, despite being performed on a 'new' medium. She describes how the homogenous rhetoric found in gendered e-bile documents the view that women are inferior, objectified, that they base values on their sexual utility, that women do not belong in the public sphere and that they need to

be put 'back in their place or otherwise punished' (Jane, 2016, p. 287). Additionally, Jane demonstrates the parallel between how rape and domestic abuse survivors are silenced and their experiences minimised, and how women are instructed to deal with online abuse by removing themselves, logging off, ignoring, or not playing the victim. Combined with this social phenomenon, Jane (2016, p. 187) also underlines a lack of institutional solutions and support for women who become targets and posited that all this is driving feminist activists to engage in such DIY digilantism practices. This theoretical framework is important for analysing the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen case study, as the phenomenon of gendered e-bile that women and feminist activists experience affects the organisational practices of feminist activists, leading to more covert and private modes of operating that this analysis will highlight.

Feminist activists are responding in a variety of ways to online abuse, including publicly posting the private abuse they are sent, publicly shaming the men who are behind the messages and reporting the comments or messages to the perpetrators' mothers and family (Jane, 2016). In the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen case study, Ford's response to the online abuse she received was an individual act of resistance and would have been classified by Jane (2016) as part of this DIY feminist digilantism. Jane (2016, p. 288) argues that this type of approach can provide some benefits, such as a sense of empowerment, catharsis, solidarity and having one's suffering acknowledged. However, Jane (2016, p. 284) problematises this type of DIY digilantism and argues for a 'hybrid of feminist activist efforts', including a 'recalibrated approach to collectivism' in order to achieve legislative and corporate reform.

Some problems that Jane (2016, p. 289) identifies with the DIY digilante approach are that it reinscribes the belief that sexualised violence against women should be dealt with by the individual in a private manner and that it places the burden of the responsibility back onto the victim. Jane (2016, p. 289) fears that this may allow institutions, governments and enforcement bodies to avoid the responsibility of addressing e-bile as a social issue. In addition, many 'e-bilers' operate anonymously and harassment campaigns directed at targets can involve huge numbers of assailants, making it difficult and even impossible to uncover the identities of perpetrators. Last, Jane (2016, p. 290) considers the ethical issues that surround digilantism, including the potential for disproportionate punishment by those who may not be motivated by a genuine interest in civic good. Many

of the activists interviewed in regard to the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign reported the internal debates that they experienced regarding the ethics of online shaming. This was another aspect that influenced the structure and design of the protest and it is discussed in the findings.

This chapter provides an investigation into the organisational and structural elements of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign. It documents the key actors and how they operated covertly, primarily by organising through informal networks with trusted friends and vetted individuals. Further, the chapter highlights the challenges and considerations that feminist activists specifically face when engaging in protests, such as the threats of online abuse and e-bile, and how this affects their organisational and communication practices. Drawing on the #MeToo movement, the analysis provides insight into the role and efficacy of solidarity action frames and how the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign may have provided the type of hybrid collective response that Jane (2016) demanded. Last, the chapter identifies how the platforms on which the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was organised and performed became more than just sites for organising and communicating; it identifies how they became targets of the action and how the companies behind the platforms became active nodes in the protest network.

7.3 Findings

7.3.1 Key Actors and Ethical Debates

The findings from the analysis of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign reveal that several networks and layers of communication were present. Crucially, most of the campaign organisation happened via private avenues and was supported by friendship networks, highly connected individuals with public profiles in the media and large-scale access to digital technologies that enabled the sharing and scaling of content. One factor in particular emerged as key to organising the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, which was also somewhat present in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest: the role of covert organising. Covert, secret or private organising is a theme that runs throughout the entire analysis of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign; it also influenced the ways in which participants were recruited for the campaign and the organisational and communication processes behind the campaign. A brief rundown of the campaign's

development and structure is provided before an in-depth analysis examines the reasons why these decisions were made.

Sackville thought of the protest while having a cup of a tea with a friend. The idea developed from the frustration of being helpless in response to the abuse that women in the media receive online. From this, they began to add friends and colleagues to a private Facebook group who were also interested in participating in a solidarity campaign. Some of these individuals posted their own call-outs to other private feminist groups on Facebook and began adding other people they knew to the Facebook group until there were around 1,000 individuals in the group. Sackville established a Facebook messenger chat with a couple of her close friends and made them administrators of the Facebook group so she could have help moderating and maintaining control of the Facebook group. Sackville posted that the campaign was to have a specific purpose and she and some others developed a list with the 20 most abusive messages that Ford had received, creating templates with these messages for the rest of the group to share easily on Twitter and ensuring that the message was clearly maintained. At 9.00am on 4 December, the members of the Facebook group began sharing the posts on Twitter with the hashtag #EndViolenceAgainstWomen.

The campaign can be effectively summarised by the call-out that the researcher observed was shared among feminist groups on Facebook. One of the interviewees read out this post in their reflection of how they heard about the action:

Attention ____, there is a secret collective action in response to the abuse Clementine Ford has received this week about the man who was fired for his online behaviour. It's being organised by Kerri Sackville and I've just been added to the group by a friend. Please let me know if you'd like to join, I don't want to just start adding everyone without a heads up. If you want to join let me know and I'll add you. Here's the description of the group: 'We have started this campaign to support Clementine Ford and every other woman who has received online abuse. We plan to tweet out the names of those who have sent her violent and abusive messages online from 9am, Friday the 4th of December 2015 under the hashtag #EndViolenceAgainstWomen. Our standard response to the question is 'we wish to hold those who abuse women online accountable (or to that effect). List to follow (Interviewee H, Interview, 19 July 2016).

The nature of this protest's development partly reflects Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) description of a crowd-enabled network. The large-scale access to social technologies and digital platforms enabled the recruitment process to expand, the call-out to be shared in

other private feminist groups and a membership base to easily be cultivated. In addition, digital platforms enabled Sackville, who had no previous activist experience, to develop and lead a campaign. In an interview with Sackville for this research, she reflected on how she does not identify as an activist; she stated how she did not believe that leading one protest was enough to be labelled an activist. However, Sackville is a highly networked individual who has a public profile and who works in the media (she had over 10,000 followers on Twitter and over 8,000 on Facebook). For the campaign, Sackville became the leader and the public face, or what could be considered an ‘activist star’ (Freeman, 1972). Her experience and job as an online writer and media personality afforded her the technological skills and understanding of the contemporary media ecology to lead an online campaign.

However, a few issues arose during the development of the campaign that influenced the ways in which it was organised and demonstrate how the campaign’s organisation may fall into a more hybrid model of activism, including elements from Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) organisationally enabled connective action. One of these issues included the debates between Sackville and the other organisers regarding the best approach to dealing with online harassment.

The decision to employ online shaming as a tactic to fight back against the harassment and abuse that women receive online was not an easy choice for any of the activists. In the interviews conducted for this research, many activists involved with the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign reflected on the ethics of online shaming and publically calling out the men who messaged abuse. Clementine Ford, who was the inspiration for the campaign, has also expressed the difficulty of choosing to publish the abuse she was sent privately and the decision to report her abusers to their employer, school or family. In an article she wrote for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and in an interview on the television show, *The Project*, Ford emphasised that while people have the right to free speech, this does not give them the right to say things free from consequences.

In the campaign’s development, Sackville stated that they were considerate in their approach to online shaming and that they decided to only share the worst 20 messages that Ford had received. In addition to this, Sackville mentioned that they were careful to fact check the people who had sent the abuse for their profile and their real name, ensuring

that they did not put a target on the wrong person and that they were calling out the worst offenders. Some activists voiced their uneasiness about employing online shaming as a tactic. One of the original organisers, who prefers to remain anonymous and behind the scenes, reflected on the conflict she felt with the employment of online shaming:

I'm quite sensitive to the public shaming thing. When men or when anyone abuses someone and needs to be called out for it, I think you have to take consideration that you can't ruin a person on social media, or I don't think you should. We have no idea of anybody's backstory and, yes, you can send out a very angry tweet, but I don't know you should be maligned for it for the rest of your life...we've all said things we regret or whatever, but once you put it out there on social media, you can't take it back. And I think that's very dangerous because often we tweet or put something on Facebook without as much thought as we can. But it's human. We don't vet all our thoughts. (Interviewee J, Interview, 14 November 2016)

A couple activists reflected that they had tried all sorts of tactics, but they were still unsure about how they felt regarding online shaming and sending abusive comments to the offender's employer or posting the comments publicly:

I don't necessarily think it [public shaming] achieves anything in the end. I think it certainly creates a level of transparency and accountability to some degree and it shines a light on that particular behaviour because if everyone ignored it and it was just happening privately, people sending death threats, sending horribly abusive messages of violence, and it was all just being ignored, then that's obviously just going to run rampant. So, I feel there needs to be a response to that, but I'm not sure what the best tactics for that are. (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018)

I don't know if I agree with that tactic [online shaming] or not. You could say something in the heat of the moment that you don't necessarily mean to say. I'm sure there are things I have written on social media that I haven't gone back and deleted. But if somebody brought that to me now and laid that in front of me and said you made this post on social media five years ago, I would be like wow, I have totally different views on that now than I had five years ago ... Death threats ... there is an intent to intimidate and make the other person frightened. But also, how long does that hang over your head? Send it to your employer, but then how long does that continue? Can you send it to the next employer and the one after that? How long does that thing you wrote on Facebook live over you? (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018)

These interviewees contend with the struggle between wanting to call out abuse, yet also realising that there is no due process when it comes to online shaming. The extent of the ramifications of calling someone out online are unknown and they problematise the

prospect of online shaming ruining someone's life and haunting them for years to come. However, many activists shared the same sentiment that, regardless of the unknown prospects, ultimately something needed to be done to show that sending abuse is unacceptable and to hold the offenders accountable for their actions:

This blind troll bullying that people seem to think they can get away with because they're hiding behind a keyboard really bothers me. If you're going to be an asshole, at least be an honest asshole and face up to it. And I appreciated the action ... which was taking these people who thought they could be anonymous trolls and putting them front and centre in the real world and saying you can't get away with it. You can't just tell someone they deserve to be raped and not have that consequence. You have the right to free speech; you don't have the right to no consequences for your free speech (Interviewee K, Interview, 2 November 2016).

Thus, while fully aware of the ethical issues behind online shaming, the lack of support services for victims of online harassment and the history of silence behind women's experiences of abuse contributed to the campaign's development. The common experience of online gendered abuse was an underlining factor that motivated many activists to engage with the campaign despite ethical concerns. All the activists admitted to being victims of online abuse and many of them reflected on how this had influenced their online practices and the ways in which they felt comfortable when engaging in feminist actions.

The interviewees all reflected on their own experiences of online harassment and how this affected their organisational and communication practices. Ford, along with many of the other interviewees, recounted how online harassment has become a normalised experience. In their interviews, some women appeared to be desensitised to the levels of abuse they receive, often reporting and describing the abuse in a manner that minimized it. Yet, at other times, they made comments that suggested the online harassment was extensive and exhausting. For example, at the beginning of the interview, Sackville commented that she had 'dealt with a bit of abuse, but nothing like what she [Clementine Ford] does because I tend to fly under the radar a lot of the time' (Sackville, Interview, 22 September 2016). However, after the campaign, Sackville reflected that she 'got all sorts of shit' and that 'it's so horrific with rape threats and threats to kill your children and hunt you down and dismember you'.

Sackville also later mentioned in passing that ‘I’ve blocked a lot of people and reported a lot of people’. Similarly, the other interviewees made statements that highlighted how dealing with abuse or ‘trolls’ is just an everyday practice in the online sphere:

On Twitter, you don’t give them a second thought. You go ‘Block. Don’t want to hear from you!’ ... If somebody had something thoughtful to say, then, yes, I’d definitely engage with them, but I don’t think there were many like that (Interviewee J, Interview, 14 November 2016)

I was ignoring the people who were just being vulgar or attacking, or abusive (Interviewee K, Interview, 2 November 2016).

You know, on Facebook, there’s that ‘other messages’ folder, which is just hideous; you should never go into that folder (Interviewee L, Interview, 7 November 2016)

Someone would encounter some aggression or some troll behaviour online and then would come to the group and people would offer support and advice on how to deal with those (Interviewee K, Interview, 2 November 2016)

I wrote a lot online and we had this guy who would comment on our website. This was, like, years and years ago and he would troll me constantly. But, I guess in contrast to today’s trolls, he was quite harmless, I thought. He was never violent or threatening or anything like that (Interviewee L, Interview, 7 November 2016)

These often casually made statements suggested that the practice of dealing with online harassment has become part of everyday life in the online sphere. In fact, it was so normalised that many interviewees often stated that they had not really experienced that much harassment, yet later in the interview they would make a comment that suggested otherwise. However, despite these ongoing occurrences of dealing with harassment online, many interviewees could remember specific waves of increased harassment and attacks by trolls that they received due to having a visible online presence or being vocal online. These memories of particularly intense incidences reveal that although there is a level of online harassment that is dealt with on a daily basis, the extent of the abuse often escalates to large-scale attacks that leave individuals exhausted and traumatised:

I made a public message of support ... and even now, months later, I get people finding that comment and having a go at me and telling me I’m a moron or attacking Muslim people. And I will try and engage rationally; some people, it’s kind of not worth the time of day. They just go abusive or aggressive (Interviewee K, Interview, 2 November 2016).

This guy from the [United] States, he had written something horrible to me ... it was really personal and quite violent (Interviewee L, Interview, 7 November 2016)

Someone's ... found my Facebook profile, found my Twitter, screenshotted all my stuff, started posting photos of my about section of my Facebook page, posting photos of my Twitter onto their own Facebook page, saying 'Hey guys, go and give this person hell' (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018).

She [Clementine Ford] deals with it very differently and probably gets a lot more of it than I do because it's very constant. Mine lasted about three weeks and had about 5,000 messages of abuse. I assume she has much more than that (Interviewee M, Interview, 9 November 2016).

In this last tweet, it is evident that while traumatised from a particularly intense wave of harassment and abuse, some women often minimise their own experiences. Citron's (2009, 2014) research into gendered cyber harassment discusses the profound harm that online abuse causes women and highlights the ways in which it is framed and trivialised as a personal matter when, in reality, it is indicative of broader attitudes of misogyny. In fact, various scholars (Jane, 2014a, 2016; Jensen & de Castell, 2013) have highlighted the homogeneity of gendered e-bile, arguing that it should not be conceptualised as individual occurrences, but as a social phenomenon. However, these experiences and the fear of more abuse affected the ways that women and feminist activists operated in the online sphere.

Some activists reflected on the ways in which their experiences of online abuse had influenced their online participation:

I tweeted something heinous this one guy said, and he wrote back and said something like mind your own business, or keep out of it, something to the effect of this has nothing to do with you. And I thought it's so ironic that he thinks that's an appropriate tweet, because Clem's life has nothing to do with him and the stuff he was tweeting to her was so violent and abhorrent that he couldn't see the irony in what he was doing. I really wanted to engage in debate with him because it irked me so much but, instead, I just retweeted what he had said and left it at that (Interviewee L, Interview, 7 November 2016).

I don't like to talk about my daughter on Twitter. I just feel like if I ever do mention her, I say something like 'the three-year-old'. I never mention her by name. I don't really know why, I just feel like it's not the nicest place sometimes and it's...I suppose it's silly (Interviewee L, Interview, 7 November 2016).

There's a reason why my Facebook name is not my actual name anymore (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018).

The comments above reflect the ramifications that Jane (2016) believe women are experiencing from gendered e-bile. Jane (2016, p. 286) describes gendered e-bile as having a 'chilling effect' on women's voices online and she outlines how many women are reporting a change in their online practices, whether through self-censoring, writing anonymously, using a fake name or withdrawing completely from the online realm. All these practices were described by the interviewed activists and affected how they participated and engaged with feminist campaigns. Most interviewees, while remaining vocal in the online sphere and all involved in activism to varying degrees, highlighted the ways in which they regulate or are extremely aware of their own activity to minimise the risk of abuse—not necessarily out of fear, but more from a preference to avoid the exhaustion of enduring a wave of harassment.

Some activists reflected on how their experiences of abuse had influenced their choice of platforms for activism:

Twitter is the main platform I use, more out of a practical sense though. I can reach the most people. It's not necessarily my preferred platform. I would like to have other options mainly because Twitter doesn't protect me (Interviewee M, Interview, 9 November 2016).

There is a lot of initial fear that comes with the idea of getting sent thousands of messages of abuse and rape and death threats, but I don't care as much anymore, strangely (Interviewee M, Interview, 9 November 2016).

I definitely used to use Twitter a lot more, but I think it's just become a vehicle for anger. There's no accountability on Twitter; there's no conversation, really. Which is why I prefer Facebook. First of all, usually somebody's got a profile attached to their comment and you can actually engage in a discussion with them ... whereas Twitter has just become so angry and you have to condense what you say into 140 characters. There's no room for nuance (Interviewee J, Interview, 14 November 2016).

The threat of online abuse not only affects the ways in which women and activists operate online on an individual level, but it also affects the ways in which they choose to organise activism. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was organised through private channels, with the help of social networking platforms and digital technology. While the initial idea for the campaign originated from a discussion that Sackville had with a friend

over tea, the campaign's development took place on Facebook messenger and on a private Facebook group. The main platform was a Facebook group in which people who were interested in participating in the campaign were added and the information about what to post and when to post it was provided.

The Facebook group was set up as a private group in which one had to be added to the group by a friend, which meant random individuals were not able to join. This type of recruitment based on recommendations essentially worked as a filtering process that ensured the group would not be infiltrated by anti-feminists and that the members would not be put at risk of doxxing or further harassment in response to their participation. One activist involved recounted her experience with another feminist organisation, which employed a similar recruitment process:

People who asked to join, they would never let them join because you don't know if they're trying to infiltrate for bad reasons. There's a lot of really rotten stuff going on ... and at the start, there was a lot of terrible trolling and dox attacks on their website and it was really full on, so you had to be recommended, like, personally known by someone to get in (Interviewee N, Interview, 8 June 2016).

The above quotation reflected a major concern expressed by many of the interviewees, one that affected the ways in which they organised activism and why they often chose private avenues to communicate and organise. Some activists that were involved in the organisational side of the protest spoke about how they did not want to be public about their participation for a few reasons. Some of them stated they were simply shy and did not want any unwanted attention, or they did not want the public engagement due to work reasons, while others who already had public profiles stated that they did not want further harassment at the time, or the attention from broader society. Across the board, all activists thought carefully about how and when they were to be involved in a campaign due to the constant threat of harassment and abuse online.

This preference for covert and private organisational practices appears to be a continual theme in feminist activism, as it also arose in the previous case study (#TakeDownJulienBlanc). It also suggests that there is a more prominent element of moderation and organisational coordination in feminist actions than what Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) conceptualisation of connective action describes. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) only really discuss the strength of 'formal' organisational coordination

among different types of contemporary actions and, while there is an absence of established, pre-existing organisational involvement in the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, there was clearly a strong layer of organisation, moderation and coordination of the action by Sackville and her digital vanguard (Gerbaudo, 2017) that developed from her friendship network (Freeman, 1972). In fact, the call to action that was shared around clearly stated Sackville's role as leader and organiser of the protest and outlined the scope of the action. This formalised Sackville's role in the protest's network and in the feminist community, which, therefore, provided the campaign with clear leadership and formalised coordination, regardless of the fact there were no official organisations involved.

Organisational practices and structures that enable the protection of feminist activists—or, at least partial protection to those who do not want to be public—is also a distinctly feminist element in nature and strongly affects the processes surrounding contemporary feminist actions. The fear and awareness of the potential backlash of abuse that feminist activists encounter, combined with the uncertainty and ethical tensions of online shaming, contributed to a higher level of moderation by Sackville and her digital vanguard. This was further demonstrated by the way Sackville moderated and controlled the Facebook group, by firmly establishing the purpose and the scope of the protest and, ultimately, choosing to dismantle the action network that had developed.

Sackville believed the campaign was a success because it achieved what it set out to do; raise awareness of the gendered nature of online abuse and make a stand in solidarity for women in the media who have endured such harassment. She also believed it was successful because she had established a clear and specific purpose and time line for the campaign and worked hard to limit the group's focus on this specific action:

It was just a very defined campaign for a short period of time. And, from what I've seen from other campaigns, they can wax and wane and sort of fizzle out, so I wanted it to have a clearly defined beginning and end, and then disband it and move on (Sackville, Interview, 22 September 2016).

Sackville, along with other activists, discussed the different perspectives on what to do with the group after the campaign had finished. Sackville felt strongly that the Facebook group should be dismantled, as it was too large and splintered among many different networks of feminists. However, a few of the other activists reflected on the possibilities

that such a broad network of feminists could have been utilised for and how it might have been reactivated and employed for similar campaigns in the future. Chadwick (2007) recognises the potential for action networks to be reactivated and refigured for future campaigns, which was demonstrated in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest discussed in the previous chapter. However, Sackville felt that too much labour would have been required to sustain the network in a productive manner, particularly when she had already witnessed tensions within the Facebook group between activists from different feminist groups.

Sackville's decision and concerns regarding the future of such a group are mirrored in Freeman's (1972) warning about groups that cannot find a local project to devote themselves to. Freeman (1972, p. 159) argues that when groups remain together for the sole reason of staying together, they can often dissolve into 'infighting and personal power games'. When groups are involved in a specific task, Freeman (1972, p. 159) argues that people learn to get along and 'subsume personal dislike for the sake of the larger goal'. With similar concerns in mind, Sackville closed the Facebook group that was developed for the protest.

7.3.2 Personalised and Solidarity Action Frames

Another way in which the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign complicates Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) connective action model is the level of moderation and structure that framed the protest and participation. A factor that is characteristic of Bennett and Segerberg's connective action is personalised action frames that encourage individualised expressions to be shared over social networks and made possible by large-scale personal access to digital technologies. However, in the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, Sackville developed a solidarity action frame along with set templates for participants to engage with, limiting and moderating personalised engagement.

Fundamental to Bennett and Segerberg's conceptualisation of personalised action frames is that individuals are able to relate and engage with 'causes, ideas, and political organisations' in a more flexible manner (2013, p. 5). They argue that digital media make it easier to share and transmit personal political stories, which satisfies the mass media's desire for simple and marketable narratives. Further still, they assert that 'connective action assumes contribution: to contribute, the self-motivated sharing of already

internalised or personalised ideas, plans, images, actions, and resources with networks of others' and that this subverts the traditional collective action challenge of getting others to contribute (Bennet & Segerberg, 2013, p. 36). Essentially, Bennett and Segerberg argue that personalised communication and action frames allow individuals to easily shape and share messages, thus making them relatable to a broader audience (2012, p. 745).

The action frames present in the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign somewhat complicated the notion of personalised action frames, as the activists undertook a much stronger tone of solidarity despite each activist involved being able to personally relate to the cause and having their own examples of abusive messages. Sackville and the other organisers deliberately offered templates of the specific messages to share along with responses to common questions that participants might encounter, for participants to copy and paste. In addition, the participants who were drawn to the campaign shared a common identity—they were women working in the media or experienced online harassment. This type of structure positions this campaign in a much more traditional type of collective action, yet digital platforms and communication technology were central to the protest. Individuals were able to relate to the cause from a personal standpoint, which was often described as the motivation to their engagement, yet their participation, the action frames and the message of the campaign were all predesigned.

Bennett and Segerberg (2012) mention solidarity or affinity networks and, for the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen protest, these also existed. The main organisational Facebook group worked as a community of solidarity in which individuals would post their experience of encountering harassment online and would receive solace and help from the rest of the group. This type of group that surrounds the protest collective is much more aligned with what Bennett and Segerberg (2012) call solidarity networks, or broader affinity groups, but it should not be mistaken for the solidarity action frames that shaped the campaign itself.

These types of solidarity action frames also differ from the traditional conceptions of collective action frames, as they arose in a connective setting and do not retain the previous requirements of organisation or party membership, although these may be present. Similar to Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) personalised action frames, solidarity action frames are easily shareable and scalable and demand no broader ideological alignment or membership. These types of solidarity action frames can be observed in a

range of highly visible feminist protests and campaigns, alongside personalised action frames. The act of sharing a post without commenting, retweeting and applying Facebook filters in support of particular causes can be considered acts of solidarity, as they include no or optional personalisation by the individual.

One of the reasons that this type of solidarity action framework was chosen for the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen protest was to ensure that the activists were being responsible in their accusations and online shaming of the men who had sent abusive messages. However, there are some other reasons why this type of action frame may be central to feminist campaigns, and which a critique of the #MeToo movement makes more visible. Citron (2014, p. 18) warns about the potential danger of ‘cyber mobs’ and how, in their pursuit of justice, they can spiral out of control and even misfire. Aware of this risk, Sackville made sure that they researched and verified each user with the screenshot of their comment to ensure that there were no incorrect targets; they also consulted a ‘legal person’ to ensure that the sharing of these posts was not illegal. Further, by developing the templates and providing the screenshots, Sackville ensured that she curbed any irresponsible engagement with the protest that would lead to the calling out of unverified individuals. She established the solidarity framework instead of encouraging activists to contribute with their own personal experiences.

7.3.2.1 Complicating Personalised Action Frames—#MeToo

Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue that personalised action frames in connective action lower the barrier and cost of participation for citizens. This analysis of the #MeToo movement combined with the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign highlights another depth of cost for participants of contemporary feminist actions and also considers the issues and implications of the different action frames that were adopted in each protest. The findings in this analysis help address the second research question to determine the usefulness of Bennett and Segerberg’s connective action model for assessing contemporary feminist actions.

Movements like #MeToo represent a core aspiration of the feminist movement: valuing and believing the lived experiences and voices of women. Such scalable participation as seen in the #MeToo movement adds emphasis to the enormity and pervasiveness of sexual violence. Additionally, the testimonies delivered through online avenues

contribute to a sense of power, particularly when the stories are from survivors whose accounts are routinely minimised (Gilmore, 2017). However, there have been some activist critiques of the #MeToo movement, in which they argue that this type of activism demands that victims perform and relive their trauma, as well as existent critiques regarding the ways in which vivid, public descriptions of assault can reinscribe women as sexual objects (Zarkov & Davis, 2018). The fundamental difference between Tarana Burke's original conception of 'Me Too' and the more recent hashtag campaign prompted by actor Alyssa Milano is that the space in which survivors share their stories has altered from a safe, private, offline space established to support survivors, to a public space in which survivors are pressured to perform their trauma (Paloma, 2017). This type of participation comes with an affective cost and the affective labour required of participants to engage in connective actions, with feminist connective actions, in particular, not being examined in previous scholarship.

The tweets analysed from the #MeToo movement demonstrate that while it might be technologically easy for many activists to participate in these types of hashtag campaigns, many women recounted the hours that they spent writing, deleting and thinking about their story before making a personalised post and contributing to the movement. Mendes et al. (2018, p. 237) have begun to highlight the 'emotional, mental, or practical barriers which create different experiences, and legitimate some feminist voices, perspectives and experiences over others' in relation to digital feminist activism. They examine another feminist hashtag protest that contributes to a similar call-out culture as #MeToo and #EndViolenceAgainstWomen: #BeenRapedNeverReported. Importantly, they identify that the responses to #BeenRapedNeverReported were 'carefully produced testimonials that were scaffolded after sleepless nights' (Mendes et al., 2018, p. 237). Similar findings are present in the #MeToo movement.

Out of the 235,000 tweets collected by Shulman on the platform DiscoverText over the first three days of the movement (15–17 October 2017), 21,727 of the tweets were of just the hashtag #MeToo, without any additional personalisation. Even without the additional performance or retelling of one's trauma, participants recounted the struggle of even just tweeting the single hashtag. There were countless tweets over the course of the first three days that highlighted participants' difficulties with engaging:

Just agonised over whether to tweet #metoo. That should speak volumes about what we all go through & how scary it is to feel alone (Anonymous A, 16 October 2017)

Don't know why but I even feel awkward just admitting #MeToo (Anonymous B, 16 October 2017)

Examples is [sic] too triggering. This is enough #MeToo (Anonymous C, 16 October, 2017).

Still hate talking about it, but #MeToo (Anonymous D, 16 October, 2017).

I hesitated before participating in the #MeToo 'campaign'. Then I asked myself, why? I was embarrassed. That's the problem. No more. #MeToo (Anonymous E, 16 October, 2017).

The affective labour revealed by these reflections should not be minimised. Other researchers have attributed and recognised the value in this type of online labour and have documented that if left unrecognised, then it can lead to burnout (Gleeson, 2016; Jarrett, 2015; Terranova, 2000). However, together, these personalised, emotional expressions contribute to the development of what Zizi Papacharissi (2015) argues is an 'affective public'. Papacharissi (2015, p. 8–9) asserts that these types of online disruptions can work to destabilise powerful hierarchies, energise disorganised crowds and form networked communities that are activated and sustained by feelings of belonging and solidarity. Further, Papacharissi (2015, p. 26) argues that the power of affect should be recognised in politics and democracies, declaring that democracies are assumed to be rationally based when, in fact, they are 'messy affairs' that are influenced by a mix of 'emotion with fact-informed opinion'.

Papacharissi (2015) identifies how affective publics can be inspired by solitary acts of heroes and are intensified as a chorus erupts around them, with the crowd engaging and contributing to the affective expressions. This was observed in the #MeToo campaign, as it was initially triggered by Milano and was then followed by other high-profile individuals and tweets that received a lot of attention and inspired the crowd. This is depicted in Figure 6.1, which illustrates the effect of tweets over the course of the movement's initial days. Key tweets, such as the contribution by Lady Gaga, puncture the public and inspire further action and more voices. As Papacharissi (2015, p. 68)

describes, the crowd and the movement becomes ‘deadening, powerful, and disruptive’ through repetition and the cumulative intensity.

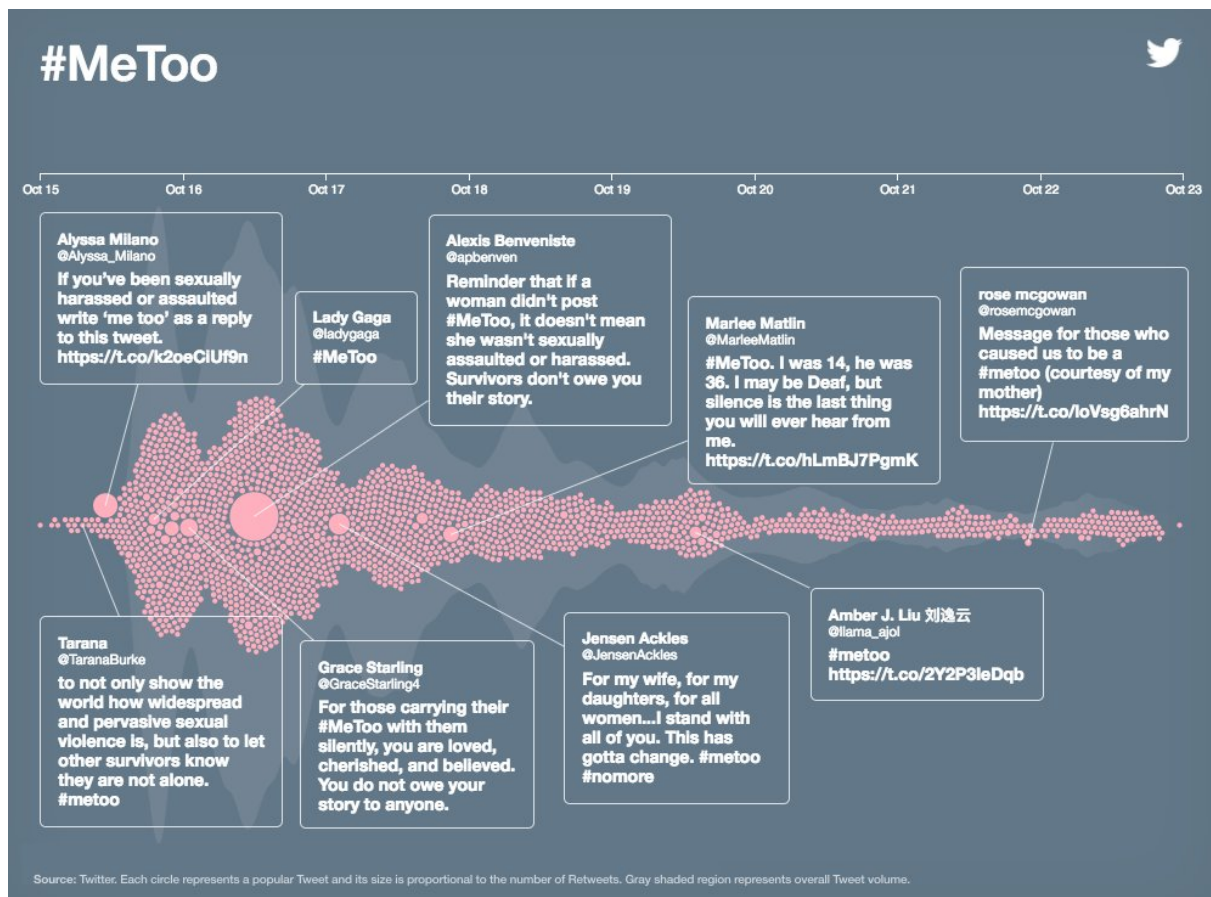


Figure 6.1 Visualisation of #MeToo. Source: @TwitterData (2017). Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/twitterdata/status/938535898530107392>

However, Papacharissi’s (2015) account of affective publics does not necessarily address the labour behind such affective expressions. The #MeToo movement provided little official support for the individuals who engaged with the campaign and the ramifications for participation were not something that was discussed until much later. In an article by Helen Razer, the long-term risks of participating were highlighted: ‘your username and your disclosure may be forever preserved by a news outlet’, and she then suggested that the hashtag coerces people into disclosing rather than empowering survivors to freely join (Razer, 2017, n.p.). In fact, the potential for triggering participants and the pain of disclosure has led to the development of the supportive hashtag, #HealMeToo, by Meghan Patenaude from the National Organisation of Women in New York. This supplementary hashtag was developed in response to the understanding that the trauma

of abuse does not just end with the story; the hashtag aims to provide survivors with resources that could help them recover and heal.

Further, Papacharissi identifies this type of networked behaviour and political reaction as characteristic of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) connective action. Connective action, she argues, develops out of personalised reactions to political issues that are then broadcast and shared via personal communication technologies (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 71). This is contrasted with the more traditional collective action frame that prefers group ties. Papacharissi (2015, p. 71) argues that the personalised action frames found in Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) connective action theory can be propagated without a 'collective negotiation' of their meaning, their consequences, or how they align with a particular ideology.

The distinction that Papacharissi (2015) describes is complicated by the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign. As can be observed, there was a collective negotiation surrounding the purpose of the campaign and the type of participation allowed, as well as the overall action frame. As previously discussed, Sackville and the other activists discussed the ethical issues regarding online shaming as a form of activism, which affected their approach to the campaign. Similarly, Sackville removed some of the affective labour of personalising one's engagement through the development of templates and set responses for participants to use in the campaign. In this way, engagement with the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was moderated and facilitated by Sackville, yet it resulted in a similar effect as the #MeToo campaign, in that the posts contributed to a repetition and cumulative intensity that punctured the media landscape and disrupted civic debate. Moreover, despite the absence of personalised content in the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, it was still able to provide solidarity and comfort to more than just Ford, as it extended a wider conversation about the prevalence of gendered online harassment and contributed to a collective awareness of how this type of abuse is structural rather than a personal issue.

An additional complication of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen movement was that the activists were using digital platforms to protest the online abuse they received on digital platforms. More specifically, the activists were using Twitter to illuminate the abuse that women received on platforms (among other digital avenues, such as email). Previous research has shown that while Twitter has been the most commonly used social media for

feminist debates, it is also reported to be the platform on which the most abuse is experienced (Lewis et al., 2016). There have been countless torrents of abuse aimed at female Twitter users and, in particular, at feminists (Jane 2014a, 2014b; Lewis, Rowe & Wiper, 2016; Matias et al., 2015; Ronson, 2015). Consequently, this type of action carried its own risk of exposing participants to further abuse and this is indeed what happened to Ford when she spoke out and posted some of the abusive messages that she had received. The fact that there were public figures involved (like Ford and Sackville) and that the activists were all sharing the same predetermined posts in a scheduled protest meant that the risk of individuals being targeted was lowered.

In a similar vein, individuals felt safer participating in the #MeToo movement because of how large the collective was (safety in numbers), which removed the focus from individual women. Previous research has found that speaking publicly against e-bile and online harassment has been associated with an escalation of abuse (Nagle, 2013). Nagle (2013) argued that individual activists who engage in calling out their abusers need the support from wider politics. In both these campaigns as well, it was women as public figures or celebrities who carried the burden of the backlash of online abuse. While Ford was the figure who prompted the campaign, she was not actually involved in the organisation of the protest. However, Sackville was conscious of the heightened risks of online abuse that Ford might be subjected to as a result of the campaign, so she actively contacted Ford to ask her permission before organising the protest.

To help combat some of the risks, Sackville framed the private Facebook group as a type of affinity group in which activists and participants were provided support if they encountered further abuse. A way in which the group operated as a solidarity and affinity group for the protest was by developing a list of trolls (users who were harassing and abusing people involved) so that each person was aware that they were not being personally attacked. There was corroboration and confirmation that particular users and accounts were trolls, which helped activists more effectively block and disengage from any abusive accounts. The activists reflected on the ways in which they considered the risks of further abuse and how the Facebook group provided support for the community of activists involved. However, they also minimised their experiences of encountering the abuse, at times laughing it off, and saying it could have been worse. One of the

interviewees reflected on her experience with trolls at different moments throughout the interview:

Of course I got attacked by trolls (Interviewee I, Interview, 19 July 2016).

And then the trolls started attacking. There was one where they started attacking each other, which was amazing (Interviewee I, Interview, 19 July 2016).

Definitely got attacked by trolls, responded to some of them, blocked the rest of them. Once, I blocked enough [that] they decided to go away or turn their attention to other people (Interviewee I, Interview, 19 July 2016).

We were a bit worried at some point because it caught the attention of some MRA (Men's Rights Activist) somewhere in the US, who was the leader of some MRA group, and we were a little worried it would turn into a massive thing. But, it didn't eventuate as badly as we thought it would, which was nice. But, there was a lot of talk on the Facebook group about what the consequences would be (Interviewee I, Interview, 19 July 2016).

I did get trolled pretty badly, to the point where I had all these horrible images tweeted at me. I've definitely had that happen to me, but whether it was this campaign or not... (Interviewee I, Interview, 19 July 2016).

Trigger warning: it's a headless woman. So that was a response that someone gave to me in response to the campaign. That went around to a few people and then I said 'Hey Twitter, is it too much to hope that you'll take action on this?' and tagged them into my response (Interviewee I, Interview, 19 July 2016).

Some activists had developed strategies and teams of moderators with other feminists to help deal with trolls and harassment campaigns. These digital vanguards of feminist moderators highlighted the immense physical and emotional labour required to deal with the onslaught of abuse:

We had a troll attack that started at two o'clock in this morning. They always start in the night because they're coming from places like the U.S. and I'd just been out to an event and I got home and it was about 1:30 in the morning and I just happened to be awake and my phone rang. Another mod[erator] texted me, saying they were having an attack, so I jumped on the PC and there was like the biggest attack. There were already thousands of comments on the page. We texted another half a dozen mods and got them out of bed and immediately we shut off the countries and then spent the next three hours deleting all the comments. It's actually really funny; in the middle of a troll attack, you can have six, eight or ten mods sitting there, all deleting comments as they come up and then you might have someone saying a perfectly rational comment in the middle and they've got no idea there's a war going on around them. It's the funniest thing every [time]. You're clicking off these horrible comments and

pictures of dismembered bodies and all this shit like it's just unbelievable and, all of a sudden, someone might post, 'Oh, when I was breastfeeding my daughter ...' and they're doing this lovely little comment on the post and it's like there's this world war three going on around and they haven't even noticed. I find it exciting (Interviewee N, Interview, 8 June 2016).

The humour depicted in the comment above developed from a sense of solidarity and safety that came from working in a team of up to 10 other activists—who were all working together to fight back against the abuse that they were subjected to. What is striking about the recollection of the abuse is the fact that the activist has become quite desensitised by the extremity of the abuse and the physical labour required to combat such online abuse and harassment. In addition, activists briefly mentioned that they 'shut off countries' at the beginning of the attack. This refers to the tool on Facebook pages that requires the administrators to block a page's visibility from particular locations. While this tool is useful and has become part of the activists' repertoire for battling abuse, it is evidently not effective enough to prevent such large-scale attacks.

Most women involved with the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign worked in the media industry and their experiences with online harassment was what prompted them to participate in the campaign to begin with; so, comparatively, they did not feel that there was much more of a significant risk in participating. They were also clearly aware and well informed about the risks and dangers of participating in the campaign before engaging with it. The quotations above began to illustrate how digital media platforms did not just operate as sites for organising or protesting, but they became active targets themselves of the campaign, as the activists tried to hold them partially accountable for enabling the online abuse of women.

7.3.3 Platforms Beyond Organisational Sites

The ways in which the activists used different levels of communication on Twitter and Facebook prompted further investigation into the role of digital media platforms as sites of organisation. Further, the analysis highlights how digital platforms can simultaneously be positioned as both organisational hubs and targets of actions. Bennett and Segerberg introduce the idea of digital platforms performing the role of organisation in connective action and this chapter takes their theory a step further to understand the multidimensional nature of how these platforms are positioned within feminist actions.

Bennett and Segerberg argue that ‘the question is not whether a particular medium is being used, but how and in what context, by whom, and with what sort of control and conflict within organisations and broader user communities’ (2013, p. 41). This chapter broadens that question to consider how the politics of the platforms themselves may affect the ways in which they are used and how the companies behind the platforms can be made part of the targeted audience for protests. The chapter further asserts the need to regard the site of online protests as significant as the sites of physical marches, and to consider the reasons why these platforms are chosen for actions beyond their technological networked capabilities and their potential for enhancing the scale and reach of a protest.

The problems surrounding the experience of abuse on the platforms affected the ways in which activists chose to participate online and how they chose to organise actions in the online domain. The experience and threat of online abuse affected organisation by influencing the layered use of communication on digital platforms. Activists deliberately used private avenues for organisation and communication to protect themselves from potential abuse and risks of doxxing. However, it also affected the platforms on which activists decided to host the campaign.

Sackville explained why she decided to use Twitter as the site for the actual campaign, instead of other social media platforms:

The reason I chose Twitter is because it’s a very easy platform for things to go viral and to get a message across. And also, Twitter, I found, is the place where the most abuse takes place. With Twitter, it’s much, much easier to have an anonymous account and trolls will start off with one account and you’ll block them, and then they’ll start another, and another, and another, and there’s absolutely no checks or balances on Twitter at all. It’s just a free for all ... The thing about Twitter as well, and it’s a problem with Facebook, is the way the algorithms work, just posting something doesn’t mean it’s going to be seen in anybody’s feed. It has to be shared and the person has to have traction going. Twitter is still very much just in real time, and if you follow somebody it’s going to come up in your time line. So, I knew it would be seen by everybody who followed me and followed these other people (Sackville, Interview, 22 September 2016).

As Sackville highlighted, the experience of abuse on Twitter and the perceived lack of regulation is one of the reasons why they chose to protest in that space; to make a stand and show that abuse will not be tolerated, even if there is no official regulation. It was also interesting to note how the perceived algorithmic differences between Facebook and

Twitter affected the ways in which they were used—which also suggested that these algorithms would affect the very shape and unfolding of a protest and, in the case of Facebook, potentially limit the reach and capabilities of a protest. However, it is clear that Twitter played a much larger role than simply that of ‘a traffic direction and resource allocation system’ (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 8). In addition, Sackville demonstrated a strong understanding of the networked potentials of Twitter and the importance of activating specific people’s networks to increase the campaign’s reach, to gain traction and to become viral:

If it had just been me, it wouldn’t have been effective. It was harnessing the power of all these other people with large social media followings and quite a broad range as well. There were people with a handful of Twitter followers, there were people with thousands and thousands, but it was the collective power of it that made it effective (Sackville, Interview, 22 September 2016).

Sackville’s understanding of how the algorithms worked also led to her organisational efforts on Facebook to build a community and network before beginning the protest. Scheduling the beginning of the tweets at a particular time ensured the virality of the protest on Twitter. It also meant that the protest network that existed on Twitter during the campaign was carefully curated and was beyond just a straightforward understanding of a crowd-enabled connective action network. Instead, the protest network is indicative of a hybrid media logic (Chadwick, 2013). Once the campaign began on Twitter, Sackville became just another part of the broader crowd—another node in the campaign network that was tweeting the same 20 screenshots with the same hashtags. From a social network analysis, it would not be clear that she was in fact the leader and primary organiser of the campaign and it would be difficult to trace the influence of the hashtag across the protest network on Twitter when some of the connections and relationships between individuals only existed on another social networking platform—Facebook. Further still, the strategically timed beginning of the campaign meant it simultaneously began at a range of places in the protest network, ensuring the appearance of a decentralised movement.

The politics of these platforms was also questioned by many of the activists, along with the processes behind reporting abuse and harassment. The decisions surrounding who was banned and what counts as breaching community standards on the platform has been a topic of much speculation for activists and one in which very little information is known

to the public. Many activists voiced their frustrations over the lack of protection that digital platforms provide them, but also that the hypocrisy surrounding who and what was banned and suspended:

I've reported things back to Facebook and that often has very little outcome (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018).

I haven't actually spoken to Twitter directly, but I've watched other people try and get things changed. I've certainly watched a number of things on Facebook, where people have tried and Facebook is all over the place. I know it's extremely easy to have an anonymous Twitter account and it's extremely easy to have multiple Twitter accounts. And I've blocked a lot of people and I've reported a lot of people, but I think that's completely inadequate (Interviewee O, Interview, 22 September 2016).

There were many images, including that of headless women and pictures of women being stoned, thrown rocks at her and stuff, and I reported them and it made no effect (Interviewee I, Interview, 19 July 2016).

Yet a few of the activists had experienced being banned themselves. Some of their bans from Facebook had been from reposting or sharing abusive or offensive content that they had received emphasising the difficulty of independently engaging in this kind of call-out culture:

I have been banned and it was so frustrating (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018).

As an individual, I found that if you get banned on Facebook, there is very little to no transparency around how that decision was made or why, and no course of action. There's no recourse for something you feel was unfairly decided (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018).

The feeling of being powerless as an individual is also reflected in Jane's (2016) criticisms of feminist digilante actions. Jane (2016, p. 291) argues that individualistic activist responses are 'easily forgotten' and may go unnoticed by the public and the media. Instead, Jane (2016, p. 291) argues that while this type of individualistic calling out may be useful in terms of consciousness raising, it needs to be accompanied by 'hard advocacy, political organisation and collectivist approaches' for it to move beyond this and achieve genuine change. Some activists recognised that without a position of authority with institutional power or a public profile, their individual attempts at dealing with online harassment resulted in nothing. Moreover, some of the activists expressed

frustration at being banned and silenced for their attempts at calling out the online abuse they encountered:

If there was more transparency of how these decisions are actually made and some kind of channel if that decision is made against you, you can at least enquire about why. You just get this very standardised message going you shared this content, you are banned for a certain amount of time (Interviewee G, Interview, 8 January 2018).

This frustration has discouraged some of the activists from individualistic response to online harassment and instead encouraged them to participate in more collective forms of actions such as the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign.

There is an existing body of research that analyses the banning practices and problems surrounding conceptualising and enforcing community standards on digital media platforms that supports the activists' experiences and critical attitudes towards the platforms. In early 2017, *The Guardian* published a series of articles labelled the 'Facebook files', including Facebook's content guidelines for moderators, which highlighted some inconsistencies in their approach and how they value offensive content. Scholars such as Nicolas Suzor have further theorised and written about these issues and what social norms they represent. For example, in his commentary of the 'Facebook files', Suzor (2017) highlighted how:

Direct threats of violence against Donald Trump will be removed ('someone shoot Trump'), but misogynistic instructions for harming women may not be ('to snap a bitch's neck, make sure to apply all your pressure to the middle of her throat').

Suzor (2017) further advocates that social media platforms like Facebook need to have more transparency about their regulatory practices and they need to engage in genuine public debate about what the public believes should be allowed.

In an article exploring US social networking sites' content moderation processes, Adrian Chen (2014) investigated the labour and labourers behind the moderation. Chen describes how moderation work for Facebook and Twitter is increasingly being done in the Philippines because it is a former US colony and thought to maintain close cultural ties with the US—ties that help Filipinos determine what might be offensive to Americans. Chen further complicates this notion by outlining the brutality of working as a moderator

and the cost of being exposed to such violence and depravity. He argues that moderators are not trained law enforcement or mental health professionals and the fact that the work is often outsourced for cheap labour highlights how technology companies are failing to grasp the seriousness and significance of the moderation process. While these companies fail to value the seriousness of moderation work, there cannot be a high standard implemented across the platforms.

Like Chen, Katie Crawford and Tarleton Gillespie (2016)—in their research into social media flagging processes—identify the type of moderation undertaken by Facebook as mostly ‘reactive’. Content has to be flagged as objectionable by users before it is presented to a moderator to decide. Crawford and Gillespie (2016, p. 424) posit that flagging may be ‘structurally insufficient to serve the platforms’ obligations to public discourse’. Crawford and Gillespie (2016) draw attention to the ways in which flagging mechanisms can be abused when they recounted how white supremacists collectively took action to flag and shut down feminist accounts that were using the #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen hashtag on Twitter.

Crawford and Gillespie’s analysis of the Twitter flagging option reveals how the affordances of the platform are ‘borne out of cultural and political strife’ (2016, p. 423). As Crawford and Gillespie identify, a key moment that shaped the structure of Twitter was when Caroline Criado-Perez convinced The Bank of England to have more women represented on banknotes, after which she was consequently subjected to a torrent of abuse on Twitter. Criado-Perez initially complained to Twitter that they had no mechanism to provide support, but Twitter did not take action. However, after a petition to review Twitter’s policies achieved over 120,000 signatures, including those from members of the UK Parliament, Twitter altered their position. Crawford and Gillespie’s research outlines how Twitter was pressured into creating the flag tool for users to report individual tweets, along with more staff to address them. Yet, despite the development of the flagging mechanism in the face of gendered abuse and harassment, it remains insufficient in protecting women and, as mentioned above, it is open to being co-opted by white supremacists and men’s right’s activists to further silence women.

The example of Criado-Perez’s experience of abuse and her successful advocacy for a change in Twitter’s policy demonstrates a more collective approach to addressing online harassment. Jane (2016) argues that a collectivist approach that integrates activist

strategies into a more hybrid movement is needed to achieve real change. She states that the individualised and even collectivised speaking out about the experience of online harassment, including the republishing of abuse, remains in the consciousness raising phase of the movement (Jane, 2016, p. 291). Further, Jane (2016, p. 292) declares that to move beyond consciousness raising, a hybrid model of activism that integrates traditional social movement tactics is required. Jane's criticisms of individualised online actions are similar to Freeman's critique of feminist groups in the 1970s, which oriented around the topic of speaking out. Freeman (1972) argues that a clearer and stronger structure is required to move beyond consciousness raising.

Freeman (1972, p. 162) argues that 'consciousness-raising ... is becoming obsolete' due to an intense publicity of the women's liberation movement in the early 1970s. Given the enormity and international influence of the #MeToo movement, Freeman's argument holds even more relevance in the current age. To move beyond awareness raising, Freeman (1972, p. 162) states that the women's movement must 'establish its priorities, articulate its goals and pursue its objectives in a coordinated fashion'. To do this, Freeman alludes to a hybrid form of activism—one that integrates traditional techniques, but does not blindly imitate traditional forms and structures of organisation. The tension that both Freeman and Jane describe in terms of the limitations and failure of consciousness raising campaigns to affect material change is demonstrated in the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, despite the campaign's collectivist approach.

During the campaign, Twitter became a secondary target of the protest, following the experiences of the activists and the abuse they received while participating in the campaign. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) describe how digital platforms operated as organisational hubs for connective actions; however, as demonstrated above, the companies behind these platforms are not apolitical, which influences how the platform is used and how it may shape a campaign. In the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, some activists directly contacted Twitter, sharing and linking them to examples of the violence and abusive tweets that they were receiving:

I started ccing @ing Twitter Australia and someone I knew worked for Twitter Australia, into my responses to these trolls. The trolls ... there was another one where they started attacking the Twitter employee who I'd cc'ed into these tweets (Interviewee I, Interview, 19 July 2016).

The headless woman tweet ... I said ‘Hey Twitter, is it too much to hope that you’ll take action on this’, and tagged them into my response ... In the end, the Twitter employee that I’d cc’ed all my responses into had taken it to the San Francisco team and I ended up having a conversation with someone who worked in San Francisco about all of this stuff and it’s a real problem. For some reason, out of that whole group of women, I was the one person that Twitter decided to contact about this. There had been thousands of women who had been telling them about this shit. So, I ended up having a video conference call with someone that worked in the San Francisco team and had worked on this kind of stuff repeatedly and the long of the short of it was: I gave a list of all of our concerns, because I talked to everyone else. I posted something in the group before I had the conversation and said let’s make a bit of a list so I can take it to this Twitter person. I sent them all to her and she came up with a bunch of different responses—which some were good, some were terrible, and then I never really heard much back from her. Like that was it (Interviewee I, Interview, 19 July 2016).

This experience of tagging Twitter into the campaign and the attempt to hold them accountable for the level of abuse that women are subjected to highlights the role of the platform as more than just an organisational platform. It is in this way that these digital platforms are more than just apolitical organisational hubs; they directly influence and shape the discourse allowed on their sites, based on who and what is deemed to breach their community standards. While these digital media platforms can operate as sites of organisation, they are also politically invested sites of protest.

At the end of the above quotation, the activist reflected on how they never heard anything back from Twitter and their actions appeared to be unsuccessful. The ineffectiveness of contacting Twitter could perhaps be attributed to Jane’s (2016) criticisms: it was perceived as an individual act, rather than sustained by a more conventional collectivist approach and a result that was easily forgotten. The secondary protest against Twitter was also not strategically organised or planned; rather, it arose from the circumstances and was awareness raising by nature, as opposed to Criado-Perez’s e-petition. Jane (2016, p. 292) argues that a stronger mobilisation and cohesive advocacy is needed to increase the pressure on corporations and to affect change.

However, despite these limitations and the problematisation of individualised and personalised engagement, scholars have argued that there is value in these campaigns and in drawing attention to the scale and pervasiveness of violence against women. In a similar campaign that preceded the #MeToo movement, Mendes, Ringrose and Keller’s (2018) research into the #BeenRapedNeverReported hashtag also highlights social

change that can develop in response to personalised and solidarity hashtag campaigns. They argue that ‘these shifts in consciousness may go undetected at first, but over time, this “mainstreaming” of feminist activism is laying the foundation for a collective shift towards a more just society’ (Mendes et al., 2018, p. 239). Mendes et al. (2018) also identify key incidences that their interviewees reflected on—which highlighted the protest’s significance for those involved. Even if these effects occur at a personal level, that should not detract from the efficacy of these types of campaigns. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was designed to provide solidarity to Clementine Ford and other women in the media; this was reflected in the activists’ experience of engaging with the campaign and how they came away from the protest feeling like they were not alone. Further still, the protest contributed to the pressure placed on digital media platforms like Twitter to provide safer spaces and protection for women on their platforms, even if the campaign did not result in change. While the effects of consciousness raising efforts and solidarity actions may be difficult to trace, they are evident in the personal reflections of many women and activists in this research and similar work (Mendes et al., 2018), and they also contribute to questioning the existing paradigm of patriarchal structures. In this way, solidarity and online shaming campaigns will continue to be an element of feminist activism. However, the frustrations felt in response to individualised responses compared to the feelings of support and solidarity experienced from collectively organised campaigns reinforces Jane’s (2016) demand for more collectivist approaches to feminist online shaming and solidarity actions.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the organisational structures of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign and has analysed the distinctly feminist issues that affect the organisational and communication practices behind contemporary feminist actions, providing further insight into the first research question. The analysis found that, consistent with Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) crowd-enabled connective action, large-scale access to social and digital media technologies was essential for the campaign’s development and for empowering individuals like Sackville, with no history of activism, to lead a protest. However, Sackville’s pre-existing online profile and connections with corporate media contributed to her social media skills and the digital network to influence and organise such a protest. Further, there was an absence of existing formal organisations in the

protest, which again aligns with Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) crowd-enabled connective action.

However, there were several elements of this campaign that complicated Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) connective action model. The analysis primarily revealed a strong coordination of action led by Sackville, with her leadership role and the scope of the protest clearly stated in a call-out recruiting other feminists and like-minded women in the media industry. The organisational team led by Sackville consisted of trusted friends and colleagues who helped moderate and control the larger protest network. Together, they debated ethical issues and developed set responses and templates for participants to use and ensure a clearly defined message and mode of action. These organisational processes demonstrate a strong coordination that challenges the 'little or no formal organisational coordination' characteristic of crowd-enabled actions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 47). Bennett and Segerberg described how 'crowds can use densely layered communication processes to attain some of the features of loosely bounded organisations' (2013, p. 45); however, the activists behind the organisation of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign were quite firm in how they structured the campaign, replicating a much stronger bound protest network than what Bennett and Segerberg suggested. This is further demonstrated by the moderation Sackville and her friends conducted as administrators of the Facebook group and the limitations they instilled on participation (by developing the set templates).

The chapter also highlighted the role of covert organisational practices in feminist actions, due to the online abuse and gendered harassment that women and activists experience. Research has shown that speaking out against online harassment can lead to an increase and intensification of abuse towards victims (Nagel, 2013). Activists thus chose more private forms of communication, including vetting the recruitment of other activists and participants to ensure the safety of those involved. Further, this has resulted in less transparent forms of engagement that complicate analysis of contemporary feminist actions.

Another theme that emerged from the analysis was the role of solidarity action frames and the complication of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) notion of personalised action frames in feminist hashtag campaigns. The participation in a solidarity hashtag, regardless of personalisation, can work as a recognition or acknowledgement of a shared

identification and common experiences, and can contribute to a broader baseline of empathy. Further still, the sharing of testimonies and experiences through hashtag campaigns can position audiences as witnesses to violence against women, potentially prompting a consideration of their own position and complicity to such violence. However, this type of personalised engagement has a far greater and often more hidden emotional cost to the individual than what is considered in previous literature regarding collective and connective action frames. Analysing the cost of participating in the feminist movement, particularly when engaging in personalised action frames, highlights some differences that arise for a feminist connective action that need to be considered by both social movement scholars and feminist activists. This thesis proposes that solidarity action frames are essential in feminist actions and that they are a hybrid form of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) personalised action frames. It further contends that, depending on the cause, there needs to be a careful consideration of the appropriateness of different types of personalised action frames. Activist organisers should consider what demands are being placed on individuals to participate and what the hidden costs of participation might be.

Bennett and Segerberg's (2013, p. 13) description of connective action emphasises the centrality of media platforms as organisational hubs and, while they were central in the organisation of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign, the role they played was much greater than apolitical sites. Digital platforms and the companies behind them became secondary targets of the campaign, as activists demanded protection from the abuse enabled by these digital services. However, while feminist activists problematise the tools that they employ, they will continue to use them for their networked capabilities and potentialities, with an added element of reflexivity as they continue to rethink the platforms and tools at their disposal.

It is important to highlight the similarities between contemporary digital actions and more conventional offline actions because it clarifies the hybridity of connective action rather than analyses these campaigns as entirely separate phenomena. A reason why this connection is important to note is because contemporary scholars have tended to conceptualise digital campaigns as something led by a younger generation of activists; however, in terms of the feminist movement, this does not necessarily seem to be the case. Bennett and Segerberg fall into this assumption when they claim it is 'citizens

coming of age in the current era' (2013, p. 24) that are engaging with these types of connective actions, and they are not alone in this assumption. Julia Schuster (2013) also argues that, in terms of the feminist movement in New Zealand, there is an invisibility between young women engaging in online activism and politically engaged older women. However, in all the case studies examined in this thesis, no invisibility between generations of feminist activists is present. In fact, most drivers and leaders of the campaigns examined (19 out of the 24 activists interviewed) were over 30 and, again, most of them came of age and were first introduced to the activist and political scene in a more traditional era in which they had stronger ties to official organisations and parties.

The #MeToo movement and the process of speaking out against sexual violence is not a new type of activism. As Zarkov and David (2018) highlight, combating sexual harassment and violence were top concerns of the feminist agenda in the 1970s and it used the personal testimonies of survivors in an attempt to break the 'patriarchal prescription of silence and shame' (p. 4). In this way, the historical and social significance that lies behind feminist hashtag campaigns must not be overlooked in favour of technologically glorified analyses of contemporary activism. Ganesh and Stohl (2013, p. 447) caution against logics of connective action that 'privilege the rapid spread of broad and ambiguous movement frames' and argued that analyses of the Occupy movement tended to describe it as a purely technological phenomenon. They further argue the need to study protests not just for what is new, but also for what is old in them. While digital media platforms certainly played a crucial role in both the scalability and virality of #MeToo and #EndViolenceAgainstWomen, what emerges are feminist narratives that are decades old in actions that incorporate a hybridity of media and activist logics.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis provides a theoretical account of the organisational structure and practices occurring behind the scenes of contemporary feminist actions. Based on a social media ethnographic approach and including rich in-depth interviews with feminist activists, the research has documented key organisational themes that affect the development, execution, and longevity of feminist actions. Two research questions were investigated in the examination of contemporary feminist protests. First, the thesis analysed the organisational structure and practices of three contemporary feminist campaigns and identified specifically gendered and feminist issues that affect these organisational practices. Second, it assessed the veracity of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) model of connective action for understanding feminist actions. The thesis finds that Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) model is helpful in that it identifies key elements within contemporary feminist actions, but the restrictive nature of categories and the ambiguity surrounding the arrows between each category limits its capacity to capture the 'repertoire switching' described by Bimber et al. (2012). Moreover, the findings document gendered issues that specifically affect the practices of feminist activists, leading them to organise in more private and covert ways. This additional complication further contests the effectiveness of Bennett and Segerberg's model for understanding contemporary feminist protests. The results affirm Chadwick's (2007) conceptualisation of organisational hybridity and demonstrate that behind the scenes of feminist protests there is a cacophony of organisational practices that draw on elements from Bennett and Segerberg's connective action model in different configurations within networks that often remain in flux.

This research has examined several case studies in answering the research questions and has deconstructed the notion of structureless protest networks by identifying the informal and deliberately covert organisational practices present within contemporary feminist actions. Chapter Five proposed a conceptualisation of franchised activism, documenting the ways in which Hollaback! activism has been globalised and localised. Chapter Six focused on the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests and renewed Freeman's (1972) warning about the pitfalls of organising informally, drawing attention to the issues that arise when formalised leadership is avoided. The analysis highlighted the significant role of individual and highly networked activist 'stars' and post-digital activist vanguards in the

development and execution of protests. Chapter Seven centred around the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign as well as the #MeToo movement. The analysis of these hashtag campaigns was used to identify the gendered experiences of online abuse that feminist activists experience and which affect how they operate and choose to engage in activism. The analysis also emphasised the need for a collectively organised response to online abuse as opposed to an individualistic approach to naming and shaming abusers. Chapter Eight collectively compares the case studies and the assessment of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) model of connective action. This chapter also reflects on the limitations of the research, the challenges of a categorical approach to understanding organisational models of activism, and indicates areas for future research.

8.1 Comparison of Case Studies

There were several elements that emerged as common themes in relation to the structure and organisational practices of the case studies examined. These themes are: shifts in structure; solidarity action frames; less transparent organisational practices; friendship networks; tension around leadership and formalised structure; and higher psychologic costs for participation. These elements affected the development, execution, and continuity of the feminist actions in different ways.

8.1.1 Shifts in Structure

Demonstrated within each of the feminist actions examined were shifts in the structure, whether formal or informal, over the duration of the action. The Hollaback! case study demonstrates how a protest's organisational structure can evolve over time; beginning with a very loose organisational structure and developing a firmer formalised structure. The interviews and observations revealed that the group has struggled to achieve the right balance of power between providing enough support to sustain a global campaign and unite citizens for a collective purpose, and allowing for the local adaptation of the campaign by diverse site leaders. This tension has developed in various stages of the Hollaback! campaign since 2005 and has prompted structural changes within the organisation. At the beginning, the Hollaback! campaign was very loosely coordinated with local versions being developed on a range of different sites with varying branding that made it difficult for it to be recognised as the same campaign. This loose and less formalised version of the campaign took advantage of the initial affective public

(Papacharissi, 2015) that had accumulated on social media, but demonstrated difficulty in sustaining the action over the long term. As a result of this difficulty, the Hollaback! group underwent a formalisation of the campaign, developing a stronger organisational network that adapted a franchise model, in which new local chapters of the campaign were developed from a set template and followed formalised guidelines established by the Hollaback! headquarters.

By adopting a franchise organisational structure (Bradach, 1997, 1998), the Hollaback! group was able to implement multiple organisational models that enabled the development of local chapters which adapted the campaign and enabled its spread across the globe. The evolution of the campaign from its original conception in 2005, to the maintenance of the campaign up until today supported in over 60 cities, demonstrates the ongoing discussions and negotiations surrounding organisational structure that feminist activists engage with in the development and continual advocacy of feminist protests.

In contrast to the Hollaback! campaign, the series of protests surrounding #TakeDownJulienBlanc remained informally organised yet also managed to spread globally. Australia was the first country to revoke or ban the visas of the RSD pickup artists and as a result of this success several other countries developed petitions of their own that eventuated in the banning of RSD pickup artists from entering into their countries as well. While #TakeDownJulienBlanc was replicated globally, unlike Hollaback! it is not an example of franchise activism. The Hollaback! mothership provided templates for the campaign to be reproduced by chapters and enabled a level of local adaptability by these chapters. However, in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc campaign, each of the localised e-petitions (Australian, British, Singaporean and more) were developed by activists who were inspired by Li's first e-petition but acted independently. Each of the localised e-petitions used the vernacular present within their country's political discourse, framing the action in a way that related to the country's specific concerns and issues at the time.

Moreover, there was an absence of consistent messaging and branding within the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests. Several activists struggled with framing the meaning of the campaign. The interviews and observations of these actions highlighted how there were disagreements about the messaging and agenda of the actions within the broader network. For example, several activists involved with physically protesting venues from

hosting RSD seminars were against advocating for the banning of visas but found they had to reconcile these views to remain part of the protest network. Further, during the second wave of the protests in 2016, a post-digital vanguard of activists decided to employ the hashtag #shutdownRSD in an attempt to manipulate the trending algorithms on Twitter and achieve trending status or ‘go viral’ for a second time. While they were ultimately successful in preventing further RSD seminars from being hosted, they were unsuccessful in getting the new hashtag, #shutdownRSD, to trend and this hashtag was not picked up by other activists around the world.

The structure of all of the feminist actions examined was reconsidered by the activists once the peak of the protests occurred. As previously explored, the Hollaback! organisation developed a firmer and more formalised structure to enable the continuance of the campaign over time. However, the other two case studies varied substantially after their initial protests. The activist network that developed from the initial protests surrounding #TakeDownJulienBlanc in 2014 was maintained on digital platforms and was reactivated in 2016 when another RSD pickup artist Jeff Allen attempted to enter Australia. Further still, parts of the network have continued to be reengaged to efficiently mobilise other single-issue feminist protests that are concerned with the general theme of violence and misogyny against women. Most recently the same network and post-digital vanguards involved in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest in Melbourne were reactivated to organise a physical mobilisation in support for Euryce Dixon (a young female comedian who was raped and murdered) in June 2018. Four years on from the first #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest, the digital network curated continues to be engaged in the organisation of feminist connective actions. This finding supports Chadwick’s (2007, p. 294) description of ‘sedimentary networks’. Chadwick (2007, p. 294) argues that digital platforms support the creation and maintenance of sedimentary networks, which can allow for organisational networks to be revived or reconfigured in response to new demands or issues.

Some of the activists interviewed reported that their private Facebook message chat was kept after the initial #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests but it remained dormant until a similar issue arose. Some of the interviewees described how occasionally an activist would post in the chat group alerting the rest of the network if RSD associates were on the move. In this way, the protest network was maintained to enable efficient reactivation

in the future. However, the case study of #EndViolenceAgainstWomen demonstrated a very different approach. The initiator of #EndViolenceAgainstWomen, Sackville, recounted a deliberate decision to deactivate the private Facebook group that had developed in the organisation of the campaign. Sackville stated that she did not have the time to meet the moderation and administrative demands such a large group requires and felt it was best to dissolve the collective. One of the activists involved disagreed with the disbanding of the feminist collective that had developed on the private Facebook group, reflecting on the potentialities such a network offered for future reactivation and protests. However, she understood the free labour required to organise and maintain such a group and emphasised the potential for burnout, recognising why Sackville ultimately decided to disband the group.

All of the case studies demonstrated the prevalence of discussions about structure and how the structure behind each action was fluid, evolving in ways that eventuated in both the strengthening and dispersion of the networks between activists. The constant discussions and adjustments of structure remain a core element of feminist organising as activists constantly aspire to provide inclusive and intersectional processes. This contributes to the state of flux feminist groups and organisational networks embody, making it difficult to categorise these actions into a static framework. It also indicates how some protest networks may begin as one organisational category, such as Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) crowd-enabled or self organising protest network, and later evolve into an organisationally enabled or organisationally brokered network.

8.1.2 Covert Practices and Friendship Networks

Prevalent within all of the case studies examined were friendship networks, as well as less transparent, private, and at times deliberately covert organisational practices. While the Hollaback! campaign was the most public in terms of its organisational structure, friendship networks were at the core of its development. The initial blog was developed by a group of friends who were inspired to share stories of street harassment as a means of raising awareness about the issue. Further, many of the Hollaback! chapters were initially established by friendship groups as the headquarters generally requires there to be three activists involved in the development of a new chapter.

Similarly, friendship networks were at the crux of the organisational team behind the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign. The analysis revealed that the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen hashtag campaign was strategically and deliberately planned by an informal digital vanguard led by Kerri Sackville and administered by a few of her trusted friends. The execution of the protest on Twitter at a scheduled time was deliberately planned in order for the protest to exploit the algorithms behind the trending feature on the platform to bolster visibility and impact. It also ensured the action appeared to the public as a spontaneous uproar, which assisted in spreading the message and contributing to the appearance of an affective public (Papacharissi, 2015). While there was no official or formal organisation or party behind the protest, Sackville and her friendship network constituted a digital vanguard or activist elite (Freeman, 1972; Gerbaudo, 2017) and were recognised as authorities within the broader organisational group established on Facebook in preparation of the protest.

In addition to relying on friendship networks, the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was organised privately in part due to concerns surrounding safety. A vetting process was conducted in the development of the private Facebook group. A call out for participants was shared on private feminist groups on Facebook, however individuals were only added to the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen group if they were known to another activist involved. In this way, recruitment snowballed as activists invited people within their networks yet individuals without a connection were excluded. A similar dynamic was documented within the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest. A vetting process was also included in the development of a private Facebook group in which activists operated. This was taken further in the development of a private Facebook message chat between 10 activists who constituted a core elite and whose connections were reinforced by pre-existing friendships or a reputation within the activist community.

In the case of #TakeDownJulienBlanc there were also informal post-digital vanguards that comprised of seasoned activists whose reputations were already known within the feminist community and who were seen as trusted colleagues and friends. These vanguards operated on private avenues and were not publicly visible in relation to the organisational role they played. This has ramifications not just for the feminist movement but also for researchers who are studying the organisational structures of activism. First, the lack of transparency around who is involved can lead to unchecked power within the

movement and means that the organisational group can operate without accountability (Freeman, 1972). It also creates a level of exclusion within the feminist community around who is granted permission into these private groups. However, there are legitimate reasons why the activists engage in this way and challenges they contend with in the operation of feminist activism. The key reason for operating informally and privately is to ensure the safety of each activist involved in the protest. Feminist activists and women are subjected to an epidemic of online abuse and harassment, which can include doxxing and have major impacts in the material sphere (Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler & Barab, 2002; Jane, 2014a, 2016; Warren, 2015). In protests against groups that already demonstrate misogynistic abuse this becomes an increasing concern and to maximise the engagement of activists, safety and privacy is often a requirement for those to become involved. A second ramification that arises from the private nature of organising is the difficulty for researchers to analyse and develop a clear picture of the influences behind a protest. This emphasises the importance of the interviews conducted in this thesis, as they provide insight into understanding the informal power dynamics at play behind the scenes of these actions.

The lack of transparency surrounding the activist elite within the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest also created a perceived space for independent activists unknown to the core elite to step in and organise other aspects that contributed to the message and direction of the protest. This was evident in the development of the Australian based petition to cancel Blanc and Allen's visas by Jowett. It is in this way the protest sits between a crowd-enabled and an organisationally enabled connective network: there was clear (albeit informal) organisational coordination that intersected with dispersed independently organised efforts. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign in comparison did not encounter this difficulty because it was a much shorter campaign with specifically defined parameters established by Sackville and enforced by her friends who worked as moderators for the private Facebook group. In fact, this dynamic reflected another component of organisationally enabled connective action: the organisational moderation of personal expression (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013, p. 47). This becomes particularly apparent when Sackville and her team had to deal with disagreements that arose within the group due to clashes in broader ideology and outside group affiliations. This difference overlaps with another element that was present within each of the case studies: personalised and solidarity action frames.

8.1.3 Action Frames and Participation

In both of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) connective action networks, personalised action frames are central to contemporary protest. The analysis of the feminist case studies however revealed another type of action frame: solidarity action frames. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was designed to be a solidarity action; a show of support for Ford and other women in the media industry. Sackville and her friendship network shaped the type of participation and engagement that was incorporated into the campaign. They developed templates for the posts that were to be shared alongside the hashtag on Twitter by participants, ensuring the integrity of the campaign and the maintenance of a clear and unified message. This somewhat challenges the notion of inclusive personalised action frames central to Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) crowd-enabled connective network. Instead, this moderated form of engagement aligns more strongly with one of the elements Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 47) describe in their model of organisationally enabled connective action: organisationally generated personal action frames.

While many of the organisers and participants had their own experiences and examples of online abuse, the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign was framed around sharing the same twenty examples and expressing solidarity to Ford and more broadly women in the media industry. Some of the reasons for developing a solidarity framework were to minimise the emotional and physical labour required to engage with a campaign; the personal cost of engaging (i.e., the cost of providing a public testimonial); and the risk of becoming a target with a more individualised form of participation as opposed to participating within the safety of a collective. The analysis within Chapter Seven also highlighted the labour, both physical and emotional, required of women and feminist activists to engage with feminist hashtag campaigns (Gleeson, 2016; Jarret, 2015; Terranova, 2000). This analysis helps to shed light on why some feminist campaigns are choosing to develop solidarity action frames instead of the more personalised forms of engagement depicted by Bennett and Segerberg (2013).

The solidarity action frame present in the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign somewhat differed to the personalised expressions and engagement in the Hollaback! case study. The Hollaback! organisation sponsored personalised engagement with the campaign by inviting individuals to submit their own stories and experiences of street

harassment to the blog. However, the affordances of the Hollaback! blog shaped the type of submissions allowed from individuals meaning that there was a process of moderation by the Hollaback! site leaders. In this way, both Hollaback! and #EndViolenceAgainstWomen moderated participation in the campaigns. The structure of this type of Hollaback! activism echoes Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) description of organisationally enabled connective action consisting of the organisational moderation of personal expression, the generation of inclusive personal action frames, and finally the organisation's provision of social technologies. In addition to the collection of the personalised stories, Hollaback! converted the stories into data points and flagged these on a map hosted by their blog. In this way, digital technologies played a crucial role in providing the campaign with the power to leverage data and personalised expressions in an innovative manner: they transformed women's lived experiences into a quantitative data set visualised on the Hollaback! map.

Comparatively, in the #TakeDownJulienBlanc case study, personalised action frames were adopted at different moments of the action to demonstrate the collective support for the protest, but they were not the primary form of participation and engagement. The core forms of engagement with the protest were traditional, in that they required participants to sign an e-petition or physically participate in a rally. However, there were peripheral personalised action frames that contributed to the development of an affective public (Papacharissi, 2015). These action frames did not demand emotional labour; rather, they were framed in a playful manner and employed humour to construct a narrative of good guys and bad guys. This was demonstrated by the #PutYourBroomsOut hashtag as well as the creation and deployment of memes to shape the agenda of the movement. Feminist hashtags and memes have become embedded in contemporary post-digital feminist sociality (Thrift, 2014). The secondary nature of the personalised action frames in this protest highlight the hybridity of organisational structures at play in contemporary feminist actions and illustrate the demand for different structures depending on the purpose of a protest.

8.1.4 Formalisation and Leadership

The use of more conventional and formalised organisational structures has also been a cause of tension within the feminist movement and broader political groups. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) documented a shift away from party affiliation and membership,

arguing that citizens are preferring individualised and personalised modes of political participation. This finding was to an extent highlighted within the research. Many of the activists reported an apprehension toward traditional models of organisation and especially toward hierarchical structures and were unwilling to compromise their own beliefs for a wider organisation. However, resulting from a lack of an established and formalised structure were issues surrounding leadership within contemporary protests. In the case of #TakeDownJulienBlanc, one of the activists who was perceived as a leader experienced a backlash from other activists within the broader feminist community who felt she was not qualified to represent them. However, there were also issues surrounding leadership within the Hollaback! case study, despite having a formalised structure. Local chapters were resentful when the leader from the New York headquarters would publicly operate as a spokesperson in their communities rather than passing that position to them. They felt Emily May did not have the local knowledge to speak on behalf of their chapters without consulting them.

In regards to the Hollaback! case study, this tension was heightened when conflict arose between the Hollaback! headquarters and the local chapters, and without a collaborative and transparent resolution process some site leaders and chapters felt the need to disaffiliate and transform themselves into independent organisations. Thus, there appears to be an ongoing struggle within feminist organisations as they oscillate between more conventional models of organising such as an organisationally brokered network and looser organisational structures such as organisationally enabled. Some activists felt the costs of operating a campaign under the name of an international group was too great and they encountered criticisms from their communities for actions conducted by other groups using the same name. Thus, some of the activists reported a resistance toward formal associations and preferred to operate independently instead.

Similarly, in the case of #EndViolenceAgainstWomen, Sackville and her organisational group displayed a resistance toward the involvement of formal organisations within the protest, which remains consistent with Bennett and Segeberg's (2013) crowd-enabled connective networks. In contrast, the activists within the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protest network actively contacted other established feminist groups such as Hollaback!, Destroy the Joint, and Mad Fucking Witches, to exploit their networked positions and build support for the protests. Moreover, the resources at these organisations' disposal were

also employed to assist with some of the labour demands. This was demonstrated when Mac reached out to Destroy the Joint to help her cold call hotels and venues to protest hosting RSD events. In this way, established groups and formal organisations operated as another node in the protest network, mirroring Bennett and Segerberg's category of organisationally enabled networks rather than crowd-enabled, in which other groups are shunned. Other groups operated in the periphery of the network and were drawn in for specific purposes across the duration of the protest.

Most of the activists involved in both the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen and the #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests operated in an independent capacity. The #EndViolenceAgainstWomen activists did not have any formal affiliations or membership with other groups however a few of the #TakeDownJulienBlanc activists were members or had previously been members of political parties, advocacy groups, or unions. Two of these activists deliberately chose to remain behind the scenes and asked to be anonymised within this research because they did not want to create conflict between their activism and their work within a political party. Most of the activists reported they did not want to comprise their beliefs for an established group, yet some of the activists felt established groups and parties provided political power that could be leveraged for long term change.

The tensions within the feminist movement in relation to hierarchy and leadership can create a toxicity surrounding these unelected leaders, particularly when others involved feel they are not adequately represented, and can harm both the overall protest and the activists involved. Hence, the positioning of informal leaders within feminist connective actions demands explicit recognition when considering the organisational structures of the movement and how these structures (formal or informal) can affect the efficacy of future campaigns.

8.2 The Implications of Feminist Activism for Connective Action

This research is not intended to deconstruct Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) typology but rather to expand and highlight the multitude of organisational structures that are at play in the contemporary feminist landscape. Further, the intention was to highlight and make clear the specific issues and struggles that exist within the feminist movement and consider how these concerns impact the organisational models adopted in the connective

era. While many of the attributes identified in this analysis are not specific to the feminist movement, the ways in which they interplay with each other and are influenced by ongoing struggles and negotiations in regard to structure within the feminist movement are distinctly feminist.

The #TakeDownJulienBlanc protests demonstrate a hybridity of organisational structures that include traits from both Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) organisationally and crowd-enabled connective actions. Overall the campaign appears to be weighted more heavily toward a form of organisationally enabled connective action. However, the key structural characteristics described above highlight some complications within the feminist protest that add to an understanding of organisation. First, large-scale personal access to multi-layered social technologies remains crucial within this type of action. There is clearly a loose organisational coordination of action; however, this is driven not by formal organisations but rather highly networked individuals and informal post-digital vanguards. Due to the lack of public visibility of the organisational elite, there is also the involvement of independent, peripheral type actors that can drastically influence the shape of a protest. Further still, formal organisations are not shunned from participating, rather they are used as a resource to provide further support in the execution of a protest and remain in the background of the action network. Overall the messiness of the combination of organisational actors (organisations, individuals, informal vanguards) and the intertwined post-digital tactics makes it extremely difficult to consolidate this type of feminist protest within a concrete action model.

The case study of the #EndViolenceAgainstWomen campaign also highlights the hybridity of the organisational model as it includes traits from both crowd-enabled and organisationally enabled models in addition to incorporating other organisational factors and considerations related to the feminist movement. From the research five key attributes arose that seem characteristic of feminist hashtag campaigns. First, the campaigns are often single issue with the primary purpose of consciousness raising. Other actions and achievements usually result from satellite efforts and are secondary in nature to the main focus of the campaign. Second, there is a lack of publicly visible formalised structure causing these types of protests to be perceived as decentralised, spontaneous, and reduced to claims of clicktivism (Mendes et al., 2018). Yet, below the surface are informal structures that emerge from a range of dynamics such as friendship networks (Ellison et

al., 2011; Freeman, 1972; Vromen et al., 2015). Third, highly networked profiles or influencers (Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2017; Poell et al., 2016) are crucial at driving and propelling a protest and often contribute to shaping the agenda and message of a protest. Fourth, personalised and solidarity action frames are core to the movement, much like Bennett and Segerberg described in their conceptualisation (2013).

Lastly, these types of actions can arise as independent protests, but they can also be employed as part of a broader campaign and implemented at particular stages of a movement by established organisations that facilitate and generate inclusive action frames. In this way, the analysis further supports Karpf's (2010) argument about the importance of evaluating online clicktivist acts as part of a broader strategic repertoire rather than single isolated tactics. This was also more clearly visible in the case study of Hollaback!. The franchising of activism employed by Hollaback! demonstrates how multiple organisational models can be incorporated into long-term and sustained action. It documents how a group can employ elements from connective action, such as personalised action frames, to generate large-scale participation in a specific campaign and then leverage the data cumulated by the campaign to advance additional protest goals and forge relationships with other institutions.

In terms of who is organising these types of campaigns, many scholars have previously argued that the digital sphere is the space in which young people are choosing to engage politically instead of within formal political arenas (Bennett et al., 2009; Schuster, 2013; Vromen et al., 2015). In relation to the feminist movement, scholars have gone further and argued that there is a detachment of sorts between young feminist activists and older feminist activists from the previous waves of feminism (Schuster, 2013). Despite what previous researchers have found, the case studies investigated in this thesis reveal no such disconnect between younger and older activists. In fact, many of the activists that operated as independent actors had highly networked digital presences and were seen as trusted activists that were brought into informal post-digital vanguards to help organise single-issue protests. This experience, their cultivated network, and the broad media skillset the activists demonstrated, developed from a long history of political and activist involvement.

The research within this thesis also documented how the skillsets developed by more experienced activists, their reluctance to compromise their beliefs, and the large-scale

access to digital technologies have contributed to the development of ‘activist entrepreneurs’, and in turn a new position called the ‘feminist manager’. Activist entrepreneurs are publicly visible, highly networked individuals equipped with digital technology who construct themselves a public identity as an activist. They engage in a multitude of predominately single-issue protests, operate independently or are brought into informal vanguards to assist in propelling an action forward.

The exploitative and underappreciated nature of labour in the digital sphere (Gleeson, 2016; Jarrett, 2015; Terranova, 2000) coupled with the increased abuse and e-bile feminist activists are subjected to (Jane, 2014a) has led to burnout reported by many of the activists. To account for the labour demanded of activists, some have attempted to address this by employing their own ‘managers’ of sorts to provide a way of valuing the work they do and filtering the actions they engage with. This is particularly the case for publicly visible activists whose networks are highly valued and are called upon by a range of groups and activists for their help with campaigns, participation, commentary, or endorsement. On the other hand, some of the activists reported a return (or a consideration of returning) to formal organisations as these can offer them security, both financial and protection from abuse, and are an alternative path for individuals considering building their career around advocacy.

Overall, the contextualisation of the relationship activists have with organisations and in what capacity they are choosing to engage in protests further highlights the hybridity of influences that affect how they choose to organise actions. The experience and training within formal organisations and the presence of older activists with decades of experience within digital networks highlights the post-digital nature of the contemporary feminist activist repertoire. Moreover, it underlines the inextricable relationship between conventional tactics, offline actions, and more innovative online methods. Young activists today are continuing to receive training within formal organisational spaces and are learning a vast skillset that will help them organise within a hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013). Comparatively, older and more experienced activists are taking advantage of the capabilities of digital technologies to maximise their actions and enhance the networks and power they have previously developed within traditional institutional spaces.

This research has found that the organisational structures of contemporary feminist actions are a complex hybridisation of organisation and media logics and that a categorical approach to conceptualising these protests struggles to capture their dynamic and fluid nature. In the development of their model, Bennett and Segerberg (2013, p. 13) acknowledge that their types were ‘abstracted composites of qualities that simplify more complex realities’. However, they recognised the benefits of developing a model as it provides a way of theorising, measuring, and visualising patterns within complex protest spaces (Bennet and Segerberg, 2013, p. 14).

Bennett and Segerberg’s model has provided a guide for helping scholars interpret some of the patterns that have emerged within contemporary digital actions in a landscape that is rapidly changing. This research has concluded that while Bennett and Segerberg’s model remains helpful, it does not sufficiently capture the combination of feminist organising practices. The researcher initially considered amending Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) model but as a result of the complexity surrounding the hybrid organisational compositions within the case studies and the continually transforming environment, it was ultimately concluded that a categorical approach did not fit the findings. Instead, the thesis affirms Chadwick’s (2007) notion of organisational hybridity as a framework for recognising the multiplicity of practices that overlap within feminist activism.

This chapter has emphasised the key organisational elements and concerns that are profoundly feminist to extend the understanding of organisational practices to the feminist movement. In sum, the key findings prevalent across each case study were:

- A constant negotiation and reconsideration of structure that leads to more frequent changes in the network of feminist actions,
- Solidarity frameworks,
- Covert and less transparent organisational methods,
- A reliance on friendship networks and interpersonal vetting processes for the recruitment of activists,
- A tendency to avoid formalised leadership roles,
- Higher emotional and psychological costs for participation.

8.3 Limitations and Future Research

This thesis has highlighted diverse and hybrid organisational practices and attempts to provide a more nuanced and flexible approach to understanding structure within feminist activism. However, there are also a few limitations and points of departure from which future research could develop. The case studies were a purposive sample and therefore cannot be considered as representative of the entire feminist movement. This means that there is a potential risk for one of the case studies to be atypical in the ways in which it is structured. Further, this research and the chosen case studies were restricted by accessibility issues. This mainly impacted the analysis of the Hollaback! case study as the researcher was only able to establish a connection with activists in other English speaking Western countries. The site leaders from other countries never responded to the researcher. As a result, the analysis was only able to assess the structural issues of Western Hollaback! chapters.

In terms of future research, we are witnessing radical changes within the feminist movement and the broader political climate as demonstrated by the development of large-scale movements such as #MeToo and the Women's March. The #MeToo movement developed after the majority of the data for this research was collected hence it does not fully capture the current impacts and atmosphere within the feminist movement that has resulted from this protest. The #MeToo movement has demonstrated an unprecedented level of feminist activism affecting many industries, from Hollywood in the US to academia in India, and it has spread across the globe impacting communities in a manner of ways that are yet to be fully realised. Future research should continue to trace the impacts of this movement and the proceeding campaigns and actions that are energised by the affective public borne from this uprising. The unprecedented scale, reach and seeming permanence of the #MeToo movement makes it an important protest that demands further critique. Finally, an ongoing reconsideration and reevaluation of the impact of these campaigns, the role of digital technology, and the organisational practices behind the scenes of these actions will be needed as we continue to witness an evolving technologized social movement repertoire.

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Appendix Item One

Email notification of ethics clearance

Dear Dr Scott Wright and Ms Verity Trott,

I am pleased to advise that the Faculty of Arts HEAG Human Ethics Advisory Group has approved the following Minimal Risk Project on 27-Apr-2016.

Project title: Feminist Activism in the Digital Age

Researchers: Dr S Wright, V Trott, Dr E F Driscoll

Ethics ID: 1545816

Appendix Item Two

Plain language statement

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

School of Culture and Communication

Research Project Description (Plain Language Statement for participants)

PROJECT TITLE: Feminist Activism in the Digital Age

INVESTIGATORS: Ms. Verity Trott, Dr Scott Wright, Dr Beth Driscoll

Introduction

You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Verity Trott (PhD candidate) and Dr Scott Wright (supervisor) of the Faculty of Arts at The University of Melbourne. As a *participant* or an *organiser* of either of the following listed campaigns we would like to invite you to participate in our research project. The campaigns are:

Hollaback!

#TakeDownJulienBlanc

#EndViolenceAgainstWomen

The aim of this study is to investigate how social and digital media are used to organise or participate in feminist campaigns and whether contemporary theories of activism account for feminist activism in the digital age. This project will form part of Ms Trott's PhD thesis, and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

What will I be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview that will last about 45-60 minutes. You will be asked to reflect on your use of social and digital media (Facebook, mobile phones, communication apps, Twitter, Instagram, etc) to help organise and/or participate in one of the three listed feminist

campaigns above. With your permission, the interview would be audio-recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say. You may be contacted after the initial interview if there is a need to clarify any information. When the tape has been transcribed, you may request a copy of the transcript if you so wish. We estimate that the total time commitment required of you would not exceed two hours.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

We would like to seek your permission to use your name in the final thesis. If you would prefer some comments to be made off the record, you could indicate this during the interview. If for any reason you choose not to be named, we would refer to you by a pseudonym, and remove any contextual details that might reveal your identity. We would protect your anonymity to the fullest possible extent within the limits of the law; your name and contact details would be kept in a locked cabinet separate from the data you supply. You should note, however, that since the number of potential interviewees is small, it might still be possible for someone to identify you. All data and records will be kept, under secure conditions, for at least 5 years after the last publication of the results from this study.

How will I receive feedback?

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available by the researchers upon application. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences.

Will participation prejudice me in any way?

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice. We would like to assure you that there would be no effects if your decision is to participate or not, or to withdraw.

Where can I get further information?

For more information you can contact the researchers.

Ms Verity Trott (PhD candidate) vtrott@student.unimelb.edu.au

Dr Scott Wright (Supervisor) scott.wright@unimelb.edu.au

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the researchers on the emails given above. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

How do I agree to participate?

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided. The researchers will then contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time and place to conduct the interview.

Appendix Item Three

Consent information form

School of Culture and Communication

Consent form

PROJECT TITLE: Feminist Activism in the Digital Age

Name of participant:

Name of investigator(s): Ms Verity Trott (PhD Candidate), Dr Scott Wright (Supervisor)

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the researcher.
3. I understand that my participation will involve an interview and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
4. I understand that since the number of interviewees is small, it might still be possible for someone to identify me.
5. I acknowledge that:
 - (a) the possible effects of participating in the interview have been explained to my satisfaction;
 - (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
 - (c) the project is for the purpose of research;
 - (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
 - (e) I have been informed that with my consent the interview will be audio-taped and I understand that the digital files will be stored at University of Melbourne on a password protected computer and will be destroyed after five years;
 - (f) my name will be used in any publications arising from the research unless I ask to be referred to by a pseudonym;
 - (g) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I agree to this.

I consent to this interview being audio-taped

yes **no**
(please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings
no

yes
(please tick)

Participant signature: _____

Date: _____



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