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(Mis) Placing Race: Deconstructing Myth in Televised Advertisements for Three Child Sponsorship Organizations
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Under the Supervision of Dr. Abdoulaye Gueye
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Abstract

Direct Response Television (DRTV) programming for child sponsorship is an extremely effective form of fundraising in Canada. However, it also proves to be one way in which racialized knowledge is being reproduced. This project deconstructs the DRTV for three child-sponsorship NGOs: World Vision Canada, Plan Canada, and Christian Children's Fund. What the analysis reveals is a type of advertising dependent on antiquated dynamics of colonial dominance between Canada and Africa. This project also explores the reasons for its success despite Canada's anti-racist rhetoric. Drawing from the works of Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, Fances Henry and Carol Tator, and others, this study draws conclusions about the cultural identity of the Canadian mainstream, and proposes critical consumption and the questioning of sociocultural norms as a way forward.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Topic Statement

This study examines the representation of race in the Direct Response Television (DRTV) programming, all of which are filmed in African contexts and aired by three major child sponsorship non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Canada. These organizations are: World Vision Canada, Plan Canada and Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC). Because these organizations are creating myths through their televised advertising, a semiotic deconstruction of the advertisements is required to reveal their sub-textual meanings.

Research Questions

1. What do the subtexts of the myths in DRTV for child sponsorship NGOs reveal about the presence of racial hierarchy in the ideology of Canada's dominant social group?

2. In which ways are historical Western portrayals of the racialized Other repeated in DRTV for child sponsorship NGOs and how these portrayals changed over time?

Operational Definitions

Myth – Myth, in the context of this project, refers broadly to a narrative or text. The term is also the antonym of reality and that remains true for this project, though the subjectivity of reality, myth and imagination will all be carefully considered and placed within a Canadian socio-cultural context. Myth evokes the concept used by literary scholars such as Roland Barthes (1973) to denote a text which is made up of signs, and which holds multiple, changing meanings. (Henry and Tator 2002, 35)

Race – Wherever it is made an issue there is the danger that race will be essentialized. This study is conscious of that danger and is careful not to reproduce discourses of domination based on essentialist categories of race. (Omi and Winant in White, 416) In the context of this project, race will be defined as a political and socio-historical construct rather than a biological reality. Race will be used as a term of classification, especially in respect to the roles of the individuals featured in the televised advertisements.

What is DRTV?

Numerous organizations and companies who seek to sell a product to its audience at the time during which they air an ad, use DRTV programming. Its objective is not to build brand recognition, which is the goal of most televised commercials. DRTV consists of before images, after images and a plea for the audience to, "Call now. Operators are standing by." In the case of child-sponsorship DRTV the plea also includes the statement, "For less than a dollar a day, you can change a child's life," or some variation thereof.

The ads are usually thirty to sixty minutes long, though CCFC also uses a shorter form of DRTV, which lasts only two minutes. The programming is generally aired late at night during the week, or in the morning on weekends. The organizations buy timeslots which are not highly coveted by other companies but which reach their target audience nonetheless. The DRTV programming for child sponsorship is a very effective means by which to raise funds for child sponsorship in Canada. (For further definition and a comprehensive analysis, see Chapter 3.)

Background and Rationale

This study will build on bodies of existing theoretical literature while complimenting others, and it will reveal that the misrepresentation of Africa present in the DRTV has been naturalized in Canada.

In order to frame this topic within existing theories I will be drawing heavily from the post-colonialist thinkers especially Franz Fanon, Edward Said and Arturo Escobar. The post-colonialist and neo-colonialist bodies overlap in this context, but the distinction between the terms is important.

I will be using the term post-colonialism to refer generally to the states, which have gained independence from colonial powers. Thus, post-colonialists include all authors who have written in post-colonial states and/or identify themselves as belonging to those peoples. Most neo-colonialists are situated within this group, but hold that the economic and political systems of colonialism remain in tact, though the "old masters" may have been replace or joined by new players such as the United States or World Bank (Nkrumah 1966). Neocolonialism then necessarily goes hand-in-hand with the ideals and principles of national liberation, which is one fundamental way in which it is distinguished from post-colonialism. (Juan, 287)

Fanon will be of great importance to this project, because he writes about the inseparable relationship between colonialism and racism. He asserts that a society that lives and draws its substance from the exploitation of other peoples, necessarily makes those other peoples inferior. And he goes on to explain that, "race prejudices applied to those peoples are normal." (Fanon 1988, 41) Thus race is a political and socio-historical construct,

which acts also as an aspect of identity, and as an organizing principle in forging social structure. (White, 408)

If we then look to Nkrumah's conceptions of neo-colonialism, he explains that very little has changed in the political or economic systems of many African countries in relation to the West since independence in the sixties (see also Escobar 1986).

The theoretical rationale for this topic is found in the connection between the preceding bodies of literature. Since racism has been defined as both a political and socio-historical construct it can therefore be said not to be "a constant of the human spirit" (Fanon 1988, 40). And if during colonialism, racism was a prevalent part of society, and culture and the political and economic structure of colonialism is still largely in place, then there must still be racism in our Canadian society and the depiction and reproduction of those ideas are likely seen as normal; for as Fanon states "the racist in a racist culture is normal." (Fanon 1988, 40)

In order to locate the racial dynamics, which can be difficult to perceive in the Canadian mainstream given their deep internalization, I will evoke the theories of Pierre Bourdieu whose concepts of habitus and field will be discussed at length in Chapter 2 and revisited throughout the project. The collective Canadian habitus is a socio-psychological structure situated between the conscious and unconscious where historical patterns of dominance are located. (Bourdieu 1990, 1999) The habitus, due to its rarely being made conscious, accounts for the elusive (or democratic) nature of Canada's misunderstanding of Africa and its misplacing of race in the production and consumption of DRTV for child sponsorship.

In order to uncover the ways in which these racial inequalities are being portrayed therefore requires more than a simple skimming of cultural elements, or even a critical eye: it requires a kind of systematic dismantling or deconstruction of the myths surrounding them.

Frances Henry and Carol Tator, two academics at York University, approach the study of race and representation in Canadian popular culture with a rationale similar to the one I have stated above. I will be drawing heavily from their work for this project. Their theory of democratic racism asserts that many people believe that Canada is not a racist country because of its laws and the charter of rights and freedoms, for example. But they say that Canada's citizens and institutions function in a state of denial: and that we have forgotten the racist laws, policies, and practices that have shaped our major social, cultural, political, and economic institutions. Through numerous studies, some of which are outlined in the review of the literature, they confirm that racist attitudes are present in Canada due to underlying political and economic systems. They also confirm that discriminatory portrayals of the racialized "other" have been normalized. (Henry and Tator 2002)

Significance

In some of the most current research on representation in development, child sponsorship organizations have been singled out as the most offensive, and discriminatory amongst numerous categories of NGOs (Palmer 2003). To the best of my knowledge, however, no author has deconstructed the myth in order to make assertions about how

racial discrimination is constructed in the subtext. Thus there is a definite gap in the research that needs to be filled.

Further, the televised advertisements for these particular NGOs air between seven and ten hours a week every week, making them a constant presence on Canadian television. With no significant form of accurate information to act as a counterbalance, these ads remain one of the primary sources of information for Canadians about black Africans and other peoples in the global South.

Also, there is a significant body of non-academic literature coming from African countries, which exclaims, "Never about us without us." (coined by Manji 2005) These journalists call for increased dialogue between Northern organizations and communities in the South, especially in regards to fundraising or publicity campaigns. This study includes this body of literature and attempts to incorporate the solutions articulated therein.

Broader Impacts

This study will shed light on the presence of race discrimination in Canada and the ways in which it has become normalized. It will thus create a platform for discussing solutions, which might include accurate and comprehensive education about the global South in the Canadian school system. Solutions may also include policy changes within child sponsorship NGOs, which facilitate increased dialogues with beneficiary communities in regards to the way in which they are represented. The most significant impact this study will have will be to add a seemingly benign element of Canadian culture to the discourse of democratic racism.

Research Design and Justification

This study will consist of two major parts. The first will consist of interviews with professionals within the three child sponsorship organizations, and the second part will be the semiotic deconstruction of the televised advertisements.

The interviews will be used as a variable in discerning the relationships between the signs in the videos. They will be analyzed in an attempt to understand constraints placed on the organization by their goals, their logistical limitations and by current policies in place. Each of these aspects of advertisement production can impact the relations between signs in the same way as my goals and constraints as a viewer. Spencer explains that because of the layered meanings of a myth, special attention should be paid to,

> ...the way in which an image is chosen and framed to contextualize and foreground a 'preferred meaning' while maintaining the myth of the image as natural. (Spencer, 15)

The videos will be analyzed through content analysis consisting of semiotic deconstruction following the theories of Roland Barthes (explained in detail in Chapter 4). Henry and Tator explain that semiotic deconstruction is required to uncover the various levels of meaning in a text. They also express that this type of deconstruction is becoming ever more important as a research technique in relation to the portrayal of race in Canada due to its "democratic" nature. (2002, 35) Sarah White also echoes the need for such deconstruction as she refers to the discussion of race in development as being "a bit like breaking a code" (White, 408).

Summary and Remainder of the Document

My research will reveal that the DRTV for child sponsorship in Canada is reproducing misrepresentations of Africa, a practice that has long been present in the West. The project will demonstrate that this misrepresentation is possible in Canada due to the collective belief that Africa is a symbol of need, and that it is the role of the West to act as hero. Since the belief that black Africans are victims is held by both the producers and consumers of DRTV for child sponsorship, this form of democratic racism goes undetected by the parties involved.

In Chapter 2 I will undertake a thorough review of the literature on the topic of race and representation as well as carefully define the terms and concepts on which the remainder of the project relies. I will look closely at the ways in which the West has defined the ethnoracial other over time, and how, using these definitions, Canadians continue to produce images of Africans, which reinforce the Canadian identity as superior. Further, I will consider the literature on race and development.

The work in Chapter 3 revolves mainly around the data collected from four interviews. I conducted interviews with four NGO professionals who produce and design DRTV programming for the three child sponsorship organizations with which I am concerned: World Vision Canada, CCFC, and Plan Canada. A fourth interview was conducted with a high-level professional at Eagle-Com, a firm specializing in the production of DRTV for NGOs. The interviews reveal the logistics, objectives and policies that impact the production of DRTV. The purpose of the interviews is to determine the level of awareness amongst the organizations of their participation in the reproduction of historical misrepresentations of Africa as well as to discover what makes DRTV such an effective

form of fundraising. This chapter also contains a discussion on the topic of ethics and development as well as the evolution of ethical codes of conduct and the images used for fundraising.

Chapter 4 deals comprehensively with the DRTV programming itself. The chapter aims to critically deconstruct the ads in order reveal faulty logic and nonsensical arguments which raise questions about the Canadian audience members who call in to sponsor. The chapter reveals that without the maintenance of the historical belief that Africans are necessarily victims and Canadians heroes, the ads would not be as effective. This notion becomes especially evident with the analysis of Africa Rising, an unsuccessful ad aired by Plan Canada.

Chapter 5 includes concluding discussions and areas for further research. The study to this point has opened numerous doors and raised numerous questions as to the nature of the Canadian identity as well as the nature of the Canadian relationship with Africa. At a time when nations are becoming more closely connected through communications than ever before, it is important for us as Canadians not to be limited by historical understandings of peoples, nations or continents. This chapter looks at the present and to the future as possible points for change.

Chapter 2 - Placing Race in Canada

Locating Myself

I am attempting to approach this project with the self-reflexiveness required to produce conclusive, repeatable results. This study aims, in part, to demonstrate the indigenous relationship that members of the dominant Canadian social class have to our own lifeworld (Bourdieu 1992, 73), history and the ethnoracial Other. In order to uncover the social determinants of perceptions and actions that, on their surface, appear to be arrived-at freely I must understand the limitations of my own socio-cultural context and escape them, if only partially.

I acknowledge that my femininity, whiteness, Canadianess, socioeconomic privilege, and scholarly gaze, have long bound me in a lifeworld in which I assumed that the repeated social coincidences of my relations were perfectly aligned with the objective reality of the world as a whole. Here, I acknowledge that the subjective-objective relationship is at the heart of this study and in so doing I am attempting to break the historical cycle of domination, but am, because of the conformist nature of social relations, in danger of reproducing the domination I analyze. Therefore it is imperative that I understand and value my own social dispositions, because while they present part of the challenge involved in this study, they are also the reasons for its conception, relevance and significance.

The reason I have chosen to deconstruct myth in televised advertisements for child sponsorship NGOs lies primarily in my development experience in Zambia where I learned several things about myself in direct relation to the DRTV for child sponsorship. The first

was that most of the assumptions I had about Zambia were wrong, and second that these televised advertisements were my main source of information about Africa before I arrived.

Upon my return to Canada I saw the DRTV anew, and realized for the first time that the portrayals of the individuals in these televised advertisements were inaccurate. I understood that I lived in, as Bourdieu has so eloquently put it,

> ...a universe where identity is made largely through symbolic strategies, and rests in the final analysis on collective belief. (Bourdieu 1992, 71)

Therefore my position as a member of the audience for these advertisements is one that began as uncritical and mainstream, but which is now very critical both of the methods used to construct DRTV and the passivity with which it is consumed.

By escaping these social determinants I may shed insight on the conformity that comes from their passive acceptance. Since I will go on to show that knowledge and historical patterns of dominance are, in some instances, a product of this conformity, it is imperative that I acknowledge my social posture and hold it separately from the following analysis insomuch as that is possible. Due to the necessity of viewing myself and my work simultaneously in order to regulate their interaction, this work becomes in some ways a reflection of myself and my experiences.

Colonialism and Colour

The production of racialized images in the televised advertising for child-sponsorship DRTV is partly a manifestation of what Paul Gilroy refers to as "imperial" or "colonial nostalgia" (2000). This study argues that the representation of race in these ads is representative of a less-than-conscious desire in the Canadian mainstream for a time when there was an easily identifiable white camp and black camp: a clear-cut "us" and a "them."

(Fanon in Gilroy 2000, 244) But as Gilroy points out, this "stark dualistic diagnosis" is not the reality of race relations in a globalizing world. Gilroy's understanding of race relations as nuanced and complicated stands in contrast to Fanon's "black and white" vision. However, despite the contrast, they both remain relevant. While the reality of race changes, the perceptions and dispositions of the Candian mainstream have been slow in catching up.

The ways in which the racialized Other have been defined and examined are generally political and/or historical in nature. For example, Frantz Fanon defines the Other as the black man (or "native") in colonial Africa. Thus he defines the Other as the Wretched of the Earth (1963) or the colonized subject. That is to say, the Other for Fanon is a political construction born directly out of colonialism. Though it should be noted that he attempts to subvert the very concept of the Other by writing for a colonized audience, referring instead to the colonizer as the outsider. This striking subversion is underscored by Jean-Paul Sartre's preface of the book, which makes Fanon's intentions explicit.

Edward Said (1979; 2002) and Homi Bhabha (1984) also define a racialized Other. Said refers to the Other not only as a colonized subject, as did Fanon, but also as an Oriental (1979; 2002). He goes on to explore how this dichotomy exists outside of the traditional political arena (that is to say outside of the discourse of colonialism and slavery, etc.) and into academia as well as literature. He aims to show that the incorporation of prejudice and racial otherness into British culture specifically was both systematic and ubiquitous. He points out later, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) ways in which omission of the Other in British literature continued, throughout the twentieth century and beyond colonialism, to marginalize characters based on skin colour.

However, the colonial dualism of black and white is no longer reflective of reality. Paul Gilroy explains that identity is a cultural construct and a noun of process. (Gilroy 2000, 252) Race, one dimension of cultural identity, also changes over time. In this way, it can be said that there is no way that it can be consistently defined: and yet, race exists. Michael Omi notes that, "In a social sense, race is a reality; in the scientific sense, it is not." (Omi in Reilly, 6)

The reality of race in Canada is that it is a social and political construct used to divide and categorize individuals based on appearance. Since race is constructed socially, and the meaning with which it is imbued is agreed upon by members of that society.

There are numerous ways in which cultural knowledge in Canada is produced and many ways in which historical patterns of dominance are reproduced simultaneously with the anti-racist policies and rhetoric we see as defining Canadian society. (Clarke 2002, 55) Chris Mullard is widely quoted as defining Canada's multi-culturalism as revolving mainly around the three s's "saris, samosas and steel bands," while excluding the three r's, which are "resistance, rebellion and rejection." (Mullard in Pabst, 118) In other words Canada promotes policies, which include elements of the Other which are most palatable to us, leaving out those stories and pieces of history in which challenge our Canadian identity as an equitable cultural mosaic.

Beyond Anti-Racist Rhetoric - Production and Consumption of Race in Canada

The visibility of this colour line, which pits black against white, and so heavily impacts our interactions as a society, needs to be deconstructed and reconsidered. The politically correct rhetoric, which attempts either to dissolve this reality, or oversimplify it through compartmentalization, stands in the way of a realistic, fluid understanding of contemporary

Canadian culture and race relations. The effects of official multiculturalism policies serve to fix people as racialized Southerners: as,

> ...permanent 'Third World-looking people,' and as such, objects of government to be 'welcomed, abused, defended, made accountable, analyzed and measured.' (Heron, 4)

Canadians, thus, hold a dualistic view of ethnoracial others: we are socially and politically determined to eradicate racial hierarchies while simultaneously engaged in the reproduction, consumption and modernization of racial misrepresentations which maintain historical structures of dominance.

The rhetoric of anti-racism, which is prevalent in Canada is also a point of national pride, especially as Canadians view themselves in relation to the United States. On that topic, Clarke quotes Michael Eldridge who claims that there exists a "disingenuous liberal smugness" in Canada "towards the US about its historical treatment of racial minorities." (Eldridge in Clarke 2002, 30) Meanwhile, in contrast to the United States, Canada is a place where "blackness is threatened by psychological evisceration." (Clarke 2002, 44)

This simultaneous belief in liberalism and ahistoricism is possible because Canada is what Margaret Cannon deemed an "invisible empire." In creating an "un-American" national narrative Canadians have repeatedly rediscovered and re-forgotten their two centuries of black slavery in order to remain the light at the end of the underground railroad, so-to-speak. (Pabst 113, 114)

Jack Tchen echoes the problematic of a forgotten past:

> A lot of the discussion about color-blindness as a paradigm for understanding the present often times also means an effacing of a past in which colour was of paramount importance. (Tchen in Ruffins, 6)

Not only are colonial representations of black Africans still present in the DRTV for child sponsorship NGOs, they have also been modified to co-exist harmoniously with our liberal values of multiculturalism and diversity. Alongside codes of ethics and NGO policies, the images used for fundraising continually evolve to suit the tastes of its audience, never acknowledging that the individuals being represented have been alienated from the process of representation altogether. (See Chapter 3 for in-depth discussion.)

Present Denials and Selective Histories

The reproduction of racialized identities is a controlled process. This process is outlined by authors such as George Sefa Dei (2004), in the realm of the African education system, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1986) in direct reference to colonialism. Messages of racial and cultural hierarchies continue to be produced both in Africa as well as in Canada through Western teaching materials such as textbooks and curricula. In his work, Dei links the reproduction of this type of racialized knowledge to the reality of underachievement amongst black high school students and university students within the Canadian education system. (Dei 2004)

As a collective we have agreed to forget that that despite our smugness in relation to the treatment of blacks in the United States, we allowed the first meeting of what would be the N.A.A.C.P. take place on our side of the border, but prohibited black Canadians from attending. (Pabst, 4) This event, and others are buried beneath statements such as the following, which permeate the mainstream:

> I am not a racist.
> She/he is not a racist.
> This is not a racist institution.
> Canada is not a racist society.
> (Henry and Tator 2006, 5)

This conflicted approach to black Canadians, as George Elliott Clarke points out, is not a new phenomenon. To demonstrate that racial hypocrisy exists, he uses the following anecdote relayed by an African American woman who came to Canada with her family in the 1960s:

> .... And my children. They were real curiosities up there. There were no black people where we lived, and white people were always coming up patting the kids' heads and smiling. But I remember how long it took us to find a place to live. Those same smiling faces didn't know whether they wanted Negroes living right next door. (Farmer, Soul on Fire in Clarke 2002, 32)

To underscore Clarke's point, and this woman's experience, despite the head-patting and smiling, terms which here can be read both literally and figuratively, race remains a powerful force in Canadian culture: and denying its existence enables it to be far more elusive. Because of an overt proclamation of anti-racism in this country, as Canadians we must delve beneath our words to examine ways in which we exclude, exoticize and marginalize.

The Habitus – The Man Behind the Curtain

While Canada's mainstream, especially those who shape the dominant culture (Walcott, 10), and who have the power to define reality: including educators, editors, politicians and advertisers (Henry and Tator 2002, 37), may be producing images which continue to misrepresent non-white Canadians. This project aims to show, without absolving any individual or group of responsibility, that the production of these images is a,

> ...part of an overall pattern: it is neither coincidence nor deliberate conspiracy. (Goudge, 31)

In her illuminating analysis of representations in foreign aid, Paulette Goudge refers repeatedly to the production and consumption of racialized images as "subliminal."

(Goudge, 31) Sarah White explains that the discussion of race in the world of development is "a bit like breaking a code" (White, 408). These perspectives are true for the dominant social group, the position from which I speak, and I will attempt to break that code in the coming chapters so that the racial dynamics become clearly visible. Members of the mainstream,

> typically fail to see how their thoughts and actions uphold someone else's subordination. (Collins in Goudge, 26)

That failing is what makes the deconstruction of racial hierarchy in Canada imperative. The reality of race in Canada is that, while the mechanisms for discrimination are in place politically and economically, it is a psychosocial structure, which allows for the persistent creation and consumption of images of racial inequality.

Bourdieu's concept of the "habitus" will be useful in understanding how individual behaviour can be an inadvertent choice. Behaviour based on cultural learning can be neither conscious nor unconscious but instead be based on an internal "structuring structure" (Bourdieu 1990, 53). Having been culturally built, in a manner of speaking, by our surroundings, the actions we take are a reflection of what we've been taught, or how we've been socially constructed. While the correlation between what an individual has learned and what he or she produces is not entirely predictable, the habitus, or psychosocial structure built within the individual, allows only for a limited number of possibilities for actions. (Bourdieu 1990, 54) The habitus:

> ...is a socialized body. A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structure of a world or of a particular sector of that world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world. (Bourdieu in Reay, 432)

The habitus then is the cultural filter through with an individual makes decisions and performs actions. When Bourdieu refers to a "structured body" here it is important to note that he is referring to the physical body of an individual. Therefore, what he demonstrates is that what materializes as a result of an individual's decisions is the result of the mediation of the habitus. Changes in the individual habitus are possible, though difficult to achieve:

> While the social constraints of one's formative environment are inscribed in the habitus, transformation of habitus can result from radical environmental change and/or 'pedagogic action' of such a nature as to effect an altering of consciousness. (Scahill, 2)

In Bourdieu's definition of habitus he refers to its existence within the world in which it was created. Thus, the habitus operates as a means of functionality, or comfort when interacting with others who share similar dispositions, and discomfort when interacting across class, gender, ethnic or racial lines, for example. The habitus, is located in the individual but shared by others of the same class, gender, ethnicity, etc.: groups who share a common history. Bourdieu and Wacquant explain,

> And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water:' it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted. (Bourdieu in Reay, 436)

Not until an individual is "out of her element" is she forced to take stock, even to a small degree, of the social processes that have shaped her individuality.

The habitus can be a helpful, functional structure, which ensures that we choose the right fork for salad at the dinner table, and wipe our boots on the welcome mat. There are, however, dangers associated with it. Primarily, it should be understood that the habitus is constructed not entirely from an objective reality, but rather on the mediated habitus of our

teachers and parents. Thus, what Fanon means when he says "the racist in a racist culture is normal," becomes clear. (Fanon 1988, 40)

Diane Reay notes that,

> ...dispositions are inevitably reflective of the social context in which they were acquired. (Reay, 357)

Put yet another way, in our own social groupings, we are playing the same game: one in which we are all relatively clear on the rules. (Bourdieu, 81) If racial hierarchy then, is inscribed in the mainstream Canadian habitus it could be made manifest through our actions in spite of our words.

Where We Stand – Perspective and Representation

Despite the assertions that Canadians are not racist, however, racist images continue to be readily produced and consumed. Overt changes in Canada have been made over the last several decades to ensure that these messages of racial tolerance permeate all levels of society, from multiculturalism policies to practices of affirmative action, etc.. However, there are numerous voices (Brand 1994; Philip 1992; Calafell 2005) contending that while non-whites may be increasingly visible in the media, they are not accurately portrayed. Bernadette Calafell asks,

> Do we receive complex representations of minority groups that match the level of complexity demonstrated in representations of mainstream white Americans? (Calafell in Ruffins, 13)

While Calafell is not speaking in a Canadian context, her question is relevant here. And the answer, in either case is no. In the same way that the proclamation of a non-racist Canada is not self-fulfilling, neither does increased representation equate to accurate representation.

Patrice Palmer's dissertation, *Race and Representation: The Impact of Constructed Images of People in the "Third World"* (2003) is one of the most recent studies on race and representation in the advertising for Canadian NGOs. Palmer examines the use of still photographs used by numerous categories of NGOs in order to compare and contrast their uses of "positive" and "negative" images. Palmer finds that child sponsorship organizations, more than any other type of NGO, use "negative" images to raise funds.

Her use of "negative" and "positive" images, however, fails to take into account (in practice) the theories of cultural hegemony, Orientalism or the "anti-conquest" in their most nuanced senses. Deeming an image of an African child in a school or drinking clean water "positive" when used for the purposes of advertising is inaccurate, as it is not necessarily conveying a positive message about the child herself. I suggest that it would more accurately be described as an "after" image because the audience sees a child who has been helped by the organization in question, which means that child is not perceived by the mainstream as having agency or being equal.

These images are positive in relation to the work of the organization and the donations from viewers they have succeeded in soliciting. These images are a positive comment on the Western organization, not the beneficiary depicted, and to label them as such indicates that the definition was formed by the same habitus as were the ads. In this way, the racialism eludes Palmer and the forces of domination remain in tact. (For further discussion on ethical representation see Chapter 3 and 4.)

A "negative" image of a child who is dirty, or hungry with "helpless eyes" (Palmer, 50) therefore might better be referred to as a "before" image. "Before" and "after" images are two sides of the same coin. They reflect the dominant position of the Western

organization while in each case objectifying the child pictured. Palmer's failure to acknowledge that is problematic, but also consistent with the theories of Fanon, Goudge, Bourdieu, Henry and Tator, and others, who explain that the current racial hierarchies in Western culture make racism difficult for the dominant social group to perceive.

History and Patterns of Dominance

Palmer's perspective is a kin to that which Mary-Louise Pratt examines in her work *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). Pratt studies travel writing in light of the perceived neutrality of the authors, who though they traveled to South Africa at the height of colonialism were determined to be a party to the "anti-conquest." (Pratt 1992) The concept of the "anti-conquest" denotes the idea that though an individual's explicit intentions are to work towards a positive solution in the face of a perceived injustice, without an awareness of cultural positionality (or habitus) they are apt to reproduce the injustice they purport to stand against. Altruism and proclaimed "good intentions" can act as a smokescreen for the self-fulfillment of the development worker at the expense of communities in the global south.

It is important for those of us who attempt to tackle issues of international development to guard against supporting the anti-conquest by consciously recognizing the political and historical standpoint from which we take action. Because, as Heron explains,

> ...Historicized imperial relations shape the world and our subjectivities, so that if we do not understand how we are implicated in the perpetuation of global domination, we are bound to reproduce it. (Heron, 22)

To return to Bourdieu, his concept of habitus also consists of an important historical component. That is to say that it has been built over time and that it, and therefore every

individual, carries with them certain elements of the past. As the concept itself is at once individual and collective, so is the history it contains. Thus, the way in which an individual makes choices and takes action in the world is, on the one hand, shaped by their family and other childhood influences, and it is simultaneously shaped by the collective history of her class, gender and race. This becomes more commonsensical if it is examined at a macro level: we are all taught by predecessors who they themselves have been taught by others within the same group who came before.

> The subject is not the instantaneous ego of a sot of singular cognito, but the individual trace of an entire collective history. (Bourdieu in Reay, 234)

The presence of the past in this "structuring structure" allows for a certain cultural continuity, and by extension, colonial continuities within specific groups. Hugh Ridley notes that,

> The essentials of the colonial encounter are pre-formed within the European psyche, pre-recorded in the deep waters of European life and merely waiting for actual faces and landscapes to take up pre-ordained roles. (Ridley in Heron, 149)

Therefore, the mainstream or white bourgeoisie in Canada holds some of the same dispositions as did their British colonizer forefathers. This study contends that these dispositions reproduce themselves in the media, including in the DRTV for child-sponsorship NGOs. In his seminal work, *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Ngugi Wa Thiong'o looks at ways in which language and texts were used as tools of domination against the colonized. He explains that the reproduction of knowledge, stereotypes and power inequities often serves the purpose of the dominant social class. This concept of cultural domination as being one of the most powerful tools of oppression is a part of the concept

that Gramsci refers to as cultural hegemony (as applied to culture in Hall, 1996). From this point forward I will refer to the habitus as both the point of production of racial representations in Canada, as well as the mediating structure through which they are consumed uncritically.

From Whence We Came

The study of the incorporation of a racialized Other into Western popular culture reveals that distorted images of Africans, Indians and other indigenous peoples have been produced and reproduced. Gustav Jahoda analyses images of Africans beginning with ancient myth in his work *Images of Savages* (1999). He examines the roots of these racialized portrayals and their continued reproduction. He also explains that there is a history of demonization of black people in Western culture, and this demonization is the source of the constructed Other. Jahoda goes on to show that the image of the Other changed over time, and he locates the racialized Other as being associated with cannibalism, sexual abandon and animalistic drives.

Another important and consistent representation of the black African in Western culture is the image of the helpless, dirty, and "child-like native." This Western idea led to colonialists and North Americans, until the middle of the twentieth century (at least), referred to grown Black men as boys. Science attempted to naturalize the idea of the "child-like native" by drawing a parallel between individual human development and modernization: childhood and primitivism. (Jahoda, 131) Jahoda explains that science was at once influencing popular culture and also being influenced by it.

Jahoda's in-depth analysis of the patterns and origins of the black African over time remains, until the final pages, only an historical account. However, he does conclude the

book by looking at ways in which images and language historically used to subordinate the Other are still present today. He refers to studies that reveal that the police in Britain continue to refer to "Blacks as being 'animals' and 'bestial'" (Jahoda, 245).

Thus, while he does not offer a comprehensive answer to the questions of how or why the images of the Other have changed over time, he does make some important points in this respect. Firstly, he established that the same images present in the eighteenth century continued to be present in 1999. Secondly he demonstrates, through his discussion of science and race, that cultural systems can impact popular culture and vice versa. Today, though science is no longer viewed as being entirely objective as it was in the nineteenth century, economic and political systems serve to "confirm" that individuals of colour both in North America and globally are inferior to the dominant social groups of the West.

Colonial Continuities

In her research, Barbara Heron refers to the idea that in the world of development there exist "colonial continuities." That is to say, the colonial desire to conquer or dominate is present in modified, but recognizable forms. (Heron, 7) While she uses the term "colonial continuity" in relation to the helping imperative of the white bourgeois women in development, I extend its use to refer beyond invisible forces of desire to include actual images – though the term will be useful in both senses. In this way, the racially stereotypical representations that Jahoda describes, as well as images of the white saviour, can be seen in the DRTV for child-sponsorship NGOs. What is being portrayed in the ads reflects a relationship with deep historical roots. It portrays the black and white dualism Fanon describes in a globalizing world in which the reality of race is far more complex. In this

respect, the ads create myths which are complex, layered narratives, but which also stand in opposition to reality.

Paulette Goudge and Barbara Heron have both made valuable contributions to the literature on the topic of race, dominance and development. Goudge describes the systems of foreign aid as

> ...one more expression of global power imbalances, similarly infused with racialised judgments, and perhaps even more dangerous because of the appearance of benignity. (Goudge, 25)

Both assert that the motivations for Westerners to become involved in development work originate with the Westerner's desire to experience, "the effect that 'helping' the passive Other will have on our own life experiences." (Heron, 5)

To elaborate on this point, development work is less (if at all) about the "developing world" and more about the Western "desire for development" (as Heron has titled her book). Goudge also asserts that foreign aid is not helpful to the global south except in few, specific instances. (Goudge ,14)

The concept of the anti-conquest as it applies to development workers remains essentially in tact. These individuals, who reflect mainstream values and dispositions, perceive themselves as separate from, or above, the same oppressive political and economic structures responsible for poverty in the global South. These same structures, conversely, are responsible for the wealth in the North, which continues,

> ...extracting from the Southern countries precisely what it needs to sustain its own way of life. (Goudge, 19)

Margaret, one of the participants in Heron's study, when asked about her motivations to work abroad, remarks:

> ...I think we should be sharing as much as we can until there's a more equitable balance and maybe we have to start with some of these forgiveness of debt loads because we are crushing people. ("Margaret" in Heron, 42)

Despite her intent to share her wealth and her time through her work, Margaret makes a rather profound point to which she remains oblivious: "their" poverty is constructed by "us," in the same way it has been since colonial times. She is acting out the anti-conquest without being aware: and her inability to implicate herself in the poverty of the developing world is troubling.

The representations of Africa as a continent of beneficiaries, which exists in Canada, are careful to show that the problems of health, poverty, education, etc. exist "over there" and are separate (unless we choose to get involved) from us "over here." Again, a binary relationship emerges. This relationship allows us to avoid accountability for our economic and political actions in relation to the global south. As Heron notes succinctly, "space and race hold the development binary in place." (Heron, 54)

The perceived need in the South is a motivating force for Canadians seeking to identify themselves as Good Samaritans. In this chapter, it has become evident that representations of black Africans in Canada and the West continue to,

> ...focus exclusively on the developing country and on what its people have, to date, done wrong or not done well enough, and what they might do better in the future. (Goudge, 25)

Further, these inadequacies are historically portrayed in relation to the virtuousness and power of white individuals and Western countries. The stark dualism that these types of images reinforce betrays the reality, complexity and nuance of race and racialized peoples in a globalizing world.

Goudge and Heron have undertaken comprehensive analyses of the female development worker, her motivations and her perspectives. Their work compliments this study, which aims to uncover ways in which these motivations and perspectives are formed: how Canada as a country is reproducing the anti-conquest and colonial continuities through the long-distance donor-beneficiary relationship.

Summary

The habitus is the psychosocial locus where the reproduction of historical patterns of domination is possible at a depth which is neither conscious nor unconscious. It is because of the filtering of our environment and interactions though the habitus that it is difficult to perceive that the cultural norms with which we have been living are separate from objective truths.

The habitus makes it possible for us to say one thing, and do another: as exemplified by the statements condemning racism at the level of the individual, and policies of multiculturalism at the level of the collective. Because we are unable to easily introspect on the depths of our consciousness, we, as Canadians, often find ourselves falling unknowingly in to the role of anti-conqueror or Orientalist. Despite our good intentions and need to connect and feel closer, we may accentuate the imbalances already present between us and the individuals to whom we donate.

Chapter 3 – Constructing DRTV

Introduction

The findings in this chapter are based primarily on four interviews. Three of the interviewees are upper management communications representatives from each of: CCFC, World Vision Canada, and Plan Canada, directly involved in the production of DRTV ads for child sponsorship. Also included in the data is an interview with the President of Eagle-Com. Eagle-Com is a small production company that specializes in DRTV production for NGOs. Last year they began working with CCFC and also ended their twelve-year relationship with Plan Canada. Both of these NGOs outsource their DRTV work. Eagle-Com continues to work with Plan USA.

DRTV programming for child sponsorship is a type of television fundraising that depends on stories told about rural or peri-urban African children who, according to the structure, script and host featured in the ads, require the viewer's immediate action in order to save their lives. The ads are an effective tool for soliciting donations. They usually air in the wee morning hours, or on weekends and often implore their audience to "pick up the phone and call now." While the three organizations in question have all had success fundraising through DRTV, they also use methods such as direct mailing, door-to-door canvassing, exhibitions at public events, and web advertising.

Also, DRTV targets a specific demographic that Kevin refers to as "the figure-skating demographic." They are well-educated women, either married or single. They are also

professionals or stay-at-home mothers between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-five. According to social mobilization theory this demographic is a lucrative one:

> There is cross-sectional evidence that the higher the income, the larger the average gift to charitable activities and the greater the proportion of total income given.... Moreover, Morgan et al show 1) the higher the education, the more likely the giving of time, and 2) people who give more time to volunteer activities also give more money. (Zald and McCarthy, 26)

Successful DRTV, according to all participants, depends on several well-established factors, which will be discussed at length in the coming pages. Also, however, the reasons for its success are somewhat elusive to the organizations by and for which they are produced. It was made clear in the interviews that omission and suggestion were used in conjunction with fact and explanation to create narratives easily interpreted by Canadians to generate mass response. DRTV is an important example of the ways in which the habitus and field interact to inspire action based only partially on objective truths while also relying on "truths" that have been socially constructed and assumptions that have been culturally affirmed.

The ways in which producers and viewers unknowingly conspire to reinforce a perceived need contributes to the reproduction of stereotypes and imagery of the black African as savage, exotic, ethnoracial other. It will become clear in this chapter that this misrepresentation is a passive activity on both the production and consumption ends, which goes easily unchallenged by the seemingly ultimate reality that the funds raised serve to "do good." At every level of production the costs of DRTV do not outweigh the benefits:

> ...we do these things to help these kids and their communities, so we've got to do what works. (Kevin)

But the costs of omissions of fact, which exploit viewers' assumptions, are significant, and serve to maintain an historic dynamic of dominance. The argument in this chapter is not an ethical one. I maintain that ethical standards set forth in the codes of conduct both for representation in international development as well as representation in fundraising are being respected. What are being questioned are the intricacies involved in the passive recreation, on the part of the organizations, of historical patterns of dominance.

Functions of DRTV

The significance of the DRTV ads is different from most televised fundraising in that it aims not only to sell the viewer a product, but also to solicit a commitment to an organization over the long term. The marketing strategy applied by the producers of DRTV for child sponsorship is defined by its ability to acquire monthly giving donors. As Kevin from Plan explains,

> It's not just a snap decision like buying a box of cereal. People can always back out, but we're not interested in people who want to just sign up on a whim and then quit, because that costs us money. (Kevin)

The ads are not meant to solicit one-time gifts from viewers, nor are they meant to explain the development approach of the organization or even acquaint the audience with the brand. DRTV's primary (and some participants went so far as to say only) goal is to acquire monthly donors. The average length of child sponsorship is ten years, which at thirty-five dollars a month results in a total of $4200 for the organization. Joe elaborates on the costs and returns of DRTV for his organization:

> ...the common metric is something called cost per sign, or cost per paid sponsor and ... in our business, a sign is the assignment of a child to a sponsor. And that's the benchmark. So if you look at our sponsorship program, it's

> $35 per month, so the breakeven is $420. We aim for a cost per sign of $420. So, a one year payback period. (Joe)

Another way participants expressed the ratio of cost to revenue was in terms of lifetime value (LTV), where the "lifetime" is the length of the average sponsorship. If the average sponsorship is ten years then the current target ratio is 1:10 or 420:4200. The cost of acquiring a sponsor as compared to the LTV has increased over time. Where it now costs approximately $420 (or one year of sponsorship) to acquire one new sponsor, it used to cost far less. According to Bill, the cost has climbed from only approximately $50 to its current high. Thus, while it remains an effective method of raising funds, it has become increasingly more expensive to acquire sponsors. He explains,

> ...it is effective, but it used to cost us $50 and $100 and $150 to get new donors, now we're probably more in the three- to four- to five-hundred dollar range to get new donors. So, it's getting harder. (Bill)

What Joe describes above is the gauge used by all three organizations. The amount they are willing to invest per sponsor is approximately equal to the amount the sponsor will bring into the organization within a year. These numbers are what set child-sponsorship organizations apart from others. While all NGOs depend on at least one form of fundraising, few are able to rely so heavily on monthly donations over the long term. Kevin elaborates,

> You can't do long-term development work without a secure source of funding and, in Canada and the United States, DRTV is a foundation. DRTV is where it's at. It's like a portfolio: you have your stocks and your bonds, you've got your money market, you've got cash. DRTV is kind of like the stock market, it's the biggest part of your spend. It has the best returns. (Kevin)

The ability of the child-sponsorship organizations to solicit monthly donors allows them the

revenue to invest in DRTV. Thus, DRTV is a profitable undertaking for any organization with a large budget. Only Mark at World Vision disagreed with this notion. He explained that while at one time DRTV was responsible for 70% of their revenue, today it makes up only 20%. It remains an integral part of their fundraising, and they still air a higher number of videos than do the other organizations, but Mark explains that they must rely on them in conjunction with other initiatives. In general, DRTV does generate revenue for the NGO over an extended period of time, but not all organizations have the money to invest. As Bill from Eagle-Com states,

> It costs a lot of money to get into television, there's no question about it. The returns can be there but if you're a small charitable organization, you're not likely going to get into television fundraising. (Bill)

There exist over twelve hundred NGOs in Canada currently and of those very few use DRTV as a source of revenue (WANGO 2008). Funding is one limiting factor, as the overhead costs are high and may cost the organization upwards of $100,000 to $150,000 (Bill). The costs incurred by the organization are not only that of airtime and production, but include the costs of filming with a crew and host overseas. However, even with the investment of funds into DRTV not every NGO has been successful at generating revenue.

According to two participants (Bill and Joe), organizations such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation and other health-based charities such as those specializing in cancer care, have not found DRTV to be a worthwhile investment. Other NGOs in Canada, besides those using child-sponsorship, have found success in the medium: both the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, as well as the Toronto Humane Society have done very well.

DRTV's effectiveness depends on convincing the viewer that the cause it promotes warrants donations at that moment, and also every month thereafter. Only select causes

have the power to elicit a response strong enough to get a return on their investment. Bill from Eagle-Com explains,

> We do a lot of work for Sick Kids hospital. That works quite well on television because you see children with life-threatening diseases. ... Health charities haven't made television fundraising work very well. Institutional fundraising, hospitals outside of Sick Kids, I don't think would be particularly good. Universities wouldn't work. Most health organizations wouldn't work. (Bill)

Because the effectiveness of DRTV depends on a viewer responding "right now" it is imperative that the narrative shown be both moving and evoke a sense of urgency. In other words, it must elicit a mass response in very few precious minutes, and convince the viewer that the need is severe, immediate, and ongoing: the more effective it is, the more revenue it generates. Analysis of this type of advertising has the potential to reveal what we, as Canadians, buy (both literally and figuratively) when it comes to poverty in Africa.

DRTV Structure: The Limitations of Rational Appeal

There are three components to the structure of child-sponsorship DRTV. Firstly, the viewer must be drawn into the ad emotionally. The emotional hook is what will be explored at length throughout this chapter. It is the defining feature of DRTV and accounts for modes of production and consumption that are neither conscious nor unconscious. The specifics of that emotional involvement will follow in later sections. Secondly, the viewer must believe in the possibility for actual change. After he is drawn into a narrative of need he must be rationally convinced there is a way out.

> Storytelling's first, organization, justification [come] second...So the first thing I'm going to do in television fundraising is try to touch your heart to get you to a place where you'd be interested in giving. My next job is to convince your brain that that's a good decision... (Bill)

This need for rationality comes second to the need for the viewer to be emotionally captivated by the ad, but it remains essential to DRTV where the ultimate goal is to inspire the viewer to pick up the phone and give away money she has presumably worked hard to earn. The viewer must believe that the donation is a good investment, and that she is contributing to an organization with a solid track record of success and a reputation for transparency.

> It goes from an emotional experience to a rational one. Empathy and compassion: there's an emotional element that's in that, but the call to action then becomes a bit of a rational [process] because what you have to do is make a commitment to pay $35 a month. That's very much a rational process. (Mark)

After the narrator or spokesperson for the ad gives a run-though of the capability of the NGO and the compassion it shows the beneficiary children, the potential sponsor should only need a number to appear on the screen.

The hard sell is the final portion of the ad. It lasts only a few seconds and takes the form of a plea along with all of the practical information needed by the viewer to donate: which credit cards are accepted, whether the organization takes cheques, if she can donate over the phone, online or by mail, etc. All participants admitted that very few seconds are spent on the logistics of the donation, but that it was a key element in what several called the "sell."

Despite the need for the viewer to believe in the organization in the ad, the NGOs all expressed the need to strive for a balance. Too much rationalization results in lower responses and the belief that perhaps the organization is functioning well on its own, and is not desperate for the viewer's donation: too much rationalization excludes the need for the viewer to take action. Thus, DRTV does not raise funds because of its ability to convey

facts and figures. It is successful due its power to present a sad story of which the viewer feels a part.

Need vs. Perceived Need

The accounts of the process of selection of regions, countries, communities and featured children were consistent across participants. All explained that selection of the stories and individuals portrayed in the videos were done through the satellite country offices for the NGO. First, the Canadian office selects a region in which the ad will be filmed, and then a country. The regions were chosen for several reasons. Plan chooses their region to reflect the areas in which they work. For example, since 50% of their projects are undertaken in Africa, then 50% of the DRTV is filmed in Africa. Kevin explained that this year they would be shooting DRTV in Asia, because for the last two years they had shot in Africa and before that in South and Central America. Mark, on the other hand, explained that World Vision was more concerned with relaying a story about certain topical issues and thus their choice of region was based on the story they aimed to tell. The last several DRTV shoots were done in Africa, partly because, according to Mark, World Vision is concerned with depicting the tragedies of HIV/AIDS as well as the children left orphaned by the pandemic.

All participants agreed that due to the extra responsibility involved for the country staff, it might not be possible to shoot in a given country. The in-country office of a potential location may already have played host to other media or guests and would not be available to take on extra tasks at the time filming is to take place. Once a country is chosen, the field staff is responsible for selecting a community into which the organization is moving: where they have begun to organize, but not yet begun any infrastructural

development. (Mark) Within that community, a list of children is compiled. When the crew arrives they narrow the list, which may be between five and ten names long, to three or four. Upon arrival in the host country, the crew and representatives of the Canadian branch of the NGO then make the final choice.

Not all stories of need and poverty are equal. All participants made clear that certain children, spokespeople and locations were more effective than others. Bill explained that the reality of the situations depicted in the DRTV is divided in two: the actual, objective need and the perceived, constructed need. After decades of creating DRTV for child sponsorship, Bill has discovered that while there are many impoverished individuals in the "third world" some elicit a greater response than others. The children whose stories generate the greatest response are not necessarily those with the greatest need, but those with the greatest perceived need.

Perceived need for the purposes of this study can be defined as a subjective understanding, or assumption, of need or lack. Canadian audiences perceive a greater or lesser need than exists in actuality depending on agreed upon societal ideas that are reinforced in other arenas of Canadian life such as the broadcast media and the pubic school system. Skewed representations from numerous sources help to reinforce long-held stereotypes and inhibit us from recognizing the complicated nuances of the "third world," and especially Africa. Bill gives an example of how perceived need is an effective marketing tool:

> Africa is probably at the top of the list as far as Canadians perceived needs go. ...When you say certain names of countries to people, people just instantaneously have a perception that 'You know what? You don't have to convince me, I believe you when you say there's a huge need in Ethiopia, or there's a huge need in Uganda.' (Bill)

Thus, the DRTV is designed, in part, to capitalize on the perceptions already prevalent in the minds of Canadians. Bill also notes that the perceived need changes based on information from sources such as the news media. He explains,

> ...if you had said Rwanda 20 years ago, you probably wouldn't have had much reaction. But since the genocide, now you say Rwanda and everybody understands, there [are] big problems and big needs in Rwanda. (Bill)

Bill explains that the DRTV ads shot in countries that are perceived to have a higher need are most likely to generate the highest number of sponsorships. These ads then are unique in their ability to measure Canadian assumptions about Africa while also making a direct link between the perception and the action (sponsorship) that it insights. In other words, what works in acquiring sponsorships are ads that people believe, and what Canadians believe about Africa, in essence, remains true to outdated colonial representations. This is especially evident when one considers that the effectiveness of these ads depends as heavily on what they omit as they do on what they include:

> Often times we don't even identify the country – partly because we'll go to Ghana and film three stories. I don't necessarily want to show three stories in a row and say in each and every one of them 'here we are in Ghana, here we are in Ghana, here we are in Ghana.'... Sometimes the narration will say we're in West Africa. Sometimes it won't say anything. (Bill)

There remains an ongoing negotiation in DRTV between representing actual need in terms of ethical guidelines and Canadian sensibilities, while simultaneously capitalizing on the perceptions and misperceptions of need. The selection of location, participants and spokespeople are all elements, which serve to, while depicting actual scenarios of African poverty, leave much room for interpretation and many blanks to be filled by viewer

assumptions. So without violating any regulation and with very little overt dishonesty, DRTV can produce representations that heavily skew the need they portray.

All of the participants made it abundantly clear that what their organizations depicted were true stories of real children: free from exaggeration and misrepresentation. Kevin was direct in his statement: "These are real children, there's nothing fake about this." (Kevin) However, this study maintains that the techniques used for child-sponsorship DRTV rely upon omissions that generalize and oversimplify poverty in Africa, but are only able to exploit latent perceptions in their audience. So while it may be true that there is "nothing fake" about these ads, there is nothing random or comprehensive about them either.

When asked about the selection of "third world" participants, Bill gave an example of his use of selective reality,

> ...do we walk into every community and just start filming the first child that comes along? No. Are we selective about the stories we tell and don't tell? Yes. I'm also a marketer. I know that if I tell you a story of a five-year-old girl in Ghana, I'm likely to get a better response than if I tell you a story about a fifteen-year-old girl in Ghana. It doesn't mean the five-year-old is needier than the fifteen-year-old, but in limited amounts of time I am likely going to get a stronger response to a story of a five-year-old than a story of a fifteen-year-old. (Bill)

The actual socioeconomic status of the children is not the most important factor in their being chosen. In other words, in order to show the greatest need, having the poorest child is not a prerequisite; other factors are more important. According to Bill, age is a factor. Canadians may respond more readily to a younger child than to an older one. The appearance of the child was a major consideration for Kevin who gave an example of a shoot that went awry in Haiti.

> It's got to be the right look, the right story, and the mother decided to shave the child's head just because she wanted her to look nice and put a nice dress on her. What the director fell in love with was this girl's hair. She had this amazing long hair that was all braided up and stuff. Apparently it looked amazing and he shows up and her hair's all shaved. (Kevin)

That child then could not be used. Her socioeconomic status had not changed, but her appeal, her ability to convey need to a Canadian audience had. Kevin also gave an example of a child who, while clearly living in extreme poverty, according to his account, was deemed unsuitable to be featured in an ad because she was developmentally challenged. The young girl was thus in greater physical need of support than a child living in the same area under the same conditions, but because of her inability to appeal to Canadians' sense of compassion, she was not featured.

Bill was able to provide an example of the triumph of perceived need over actual need as well. He referred to street kids and the difficulty he had featuring them in DRTV. He explains,

> Street kid stories are tough stories for us to tell. Not because they're not needy enough but because the kids are really tough, and they're really tough looking. And they have to be tough to survive on the streets but that doesn't make for good television. (Bill)

It is difficult to paint such aggressive, street-savvy children as innocent or vulnerable. Thus, they are less likely to draw the viewer in, or to easily give him a heroic role to play. The children and their circumstances are complicated, and the landscapes urban and "developed" rather than "barren" and "desolate." It becomes more difficult for the viewer when he understands that it takes more than a school or access to clean water to change the circumstances of that child. This is, perhaps, because in those stories exist familiar, Canadian elements of life. There are cars, skyscrapers and street corners much like a

Canadian cities'. Certainly panhandling is not nearly as effective a fundraising tool as is DRTV. Thus the innocence and vulnerability of the children fall into the background of the narrative, which proves to be costly for the organization. Perhaps what Bill meant in actuality was that, "Street kid stories are tough stories for us to [sell]."

"Innocent Victims"

DRTV serves to construct a narrative of a need so great that the viewer is convinced that the only hope lies with him. Bill explains,

> It's got to be pretty dire to work: life-threatening. That's why Sick Kids works and animals work and children in developing countries work. Because we can truly tell stories of those who may not make it if it weren't for the help of the organizations and the money being raised. (Bill)

Beyond urgency, the viewer must also feel that the poverty depicted in the ad is due to a simple problem: one that she can fix. The lack must be clear, along with the viewer's ability to provide sustenance, sanitation, etc., thereby solving the problem and saving a life. All participants were clear that the constructed narratives should be uncomplicated, in plot, setting and character(s). In fact, the simpler the plot, the better. Bill was particularly adamant that the message of need must not to be complicated by peripheral issues. He asserted repeatedly that he and his company were not in the "education business." At one point he elaborated by saying,

> It's not education, it's not awareness, it's not development issues. That doesn't matter to me at the end of the day. (Bill)

The message of the ads remains straightforward, without the complication of idiosyncrasies or politics. Each element of the narrative remains relatable to the Canadian viewer, easing

them into a mentality where they feel that with a minor intervention the child's life can be as meaningful as it ought to be, according to their own socially constructed expectations.

Bill went on to explain that what people respond to most readily are "innocent victims:" children or animals that, "by no fault of their own" are subject to "horrible" conditions. (Bill) The subject of the ad must be understood by the audience to be completely without recourse: without the tools or ability to change her circumstances alone.

> Whether we're telling stories about children, or animals, or polar bears struggling to survive in the arctic while the ice is melting all around them, it's the same kind of emotion. (Bill)

In the preceding quote, Bill articulates the passivity of the beneficiary in the DRTV. He highlights their lack of power over their own circumstances. He conveys, as did all of the participants, that the children in the ads are not responsible for their state, their poverty, or the conditions within their community. The implication is to assume complete helplessness on the part of the child. In the same way that the producers of the ads might leave out the country name and generalize about the conditions of the entire African continent, they also generalize about the agency, or lack thereof, of its populations.

This project does not assert that the featured children choose to live an impoverished life, but it will demonstrate (Chapter 4) that the definition of poverty is not steadfast. It is dynamic, and influenced by the cultural values with which an individual filters his perceptions. Because lack of agency is assumed by the DRTV producers: because all rural or peri-urban African children, like Arctic polar bears (Bill), are at the mercy of their circumstances, the ads manage to find sadness and hardship in every detail of their lives. Thus, the perceived need of the child grows exponentially when agency is taken away.

Constructing Generalizations

During my discussion with the participants I asked about the music, sound effects and other creative flare added during the editing process and how they were used to convey this sense of innocence and vulnerability. While I asked specifically whether stereotypical African drumbeats or choral music were used to open or close the stories filmed in Africa, Bill had the following to say:

> ...the music would be the same virtually no matter where I am, because the music we compose is emotional music, it's not ethnic music. I don't want to put you [the viewer] into some kind of ethnic mode of listening to cool African music, because then I'm not breaking your heart with a sad story, which is really all I want to do. (Bill)

Joe echoes Bill in his comment as he explains that the music is used as a tool rather as a form of entertainment. He says,

> ... the music, if you listen to the music of the commercial spots, they tell you what you should be feeling. That's one of the cues. (Joe)

This determination to elicit an emotional response from the viewer based on the telling of a simple, sad story is essential. It must be uncomplicated by superfluous characters and any hints of African culture that might detract from the simple story of need. Thus, an important discrepancy arises between advertising and practice. All participants highlighted the complicated, multi-dimensional process of executing development projects in the field. In fact, even referring to these NGOs as "child sponsorship organizations" is almost a misnomer once their work is considered apart from the DRTV. The organizations market

themselves as if they were run on a one sponsor to one child system, when that is not the case.[1]

One participant went into great detail regarding the discrepancy between the messages in the ads and the actual development strategies of the organization. He explained that it is impossible, in his view, to be effective as a development organization without addressing the needs of communities in their entirety. That community approach was taken by all NGOs interviewed, and yet none of them used this type of message in their DRTV, because as one participant explained, "that one on one connection ... is what inspires people to get involved." (Kevin).

The community, and often the family of the child featured in the ads, remains, in large part, absent from the narrative despite their integral involvement in the development strategy of the NGO. One participant notes that this is due to the fact that,

> if you do DRTV with 'sponsor this community' it's not going to make people jump up and pick up the phone. (Kevin)

Thus, despite the fact that it would be more a more accurate illustration of the way in which the funds are spent, family and community members are usually omitted from the ads.

While all participants emphasized that it was the one on one connection that inspired action from the audience, they also reiterated several times each, the need for the story they told to be simple in order to elicit a response. Certainly a one on one connection could be promised to the viewer while also picturing the child's community and family, but then the amelioration of conditions for that child would be as a result of more than that donor alone.

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[1] World Vision was the only organization that believed that their DRTV messaging was completely in line with their approach to development. This project still maintains that there is a discrepancy between the two, and that the one-to-one (child to sponsor) messaging used is not entirely contrived, but rather an angle emphasized to generate a response.

In other words, a lone child in need of a donation from a viewer allows that viewer to be credited with the rescue of that child, and much of the language used in the ads paints the sponsor more as a hero than strictly as a donor. (See Chapter 4) An isolated or orphaned child against a remote rural backdrop sets the stage for a "self-performance on a grand scale" (Heron, 44) on the part of the sponsor.

Further, this heroic self-performance is not fleeting. It is reinforced every month when the sponsor makes his donation, every time she sends or receives a letter or a picture, etc. Thus, the viewer's perception of herself as hero is essential in keeping her committed over the long term resulting in continued funding for the organization.

Depicting a single child also allows the viewer to focus on a simple, solvable problem such as the child's lack of fresh drinking water, healthcare or education. The picture of need must be clearly depicted. Bill explains,

> You also have to be careful to keep the story simple and sometimes the more characters you introduce into a story, the more complicated it gets. If our goal really is to focus a story or a commercial on a child, ... if we can smoothly integrate family, either siblings or parents, then we often do. But if it starts to complicate things too much and it starts to take away from the child or the situation too much then it's not necessarily a good thing. (Bill)

As the process of building these ads is deconstructed, it becomes apparent that what is depicted in DRTV is not based on the work that the organization intends to do with the funds raised, or the complete reality of the featured child. But the organization is coupling the message of giving-up money with that of gaining a child, or changing a life.

The act of donating, or gift-giving, is twofold according to Mauss, paraphrased by Godelier,

> A freely given gift brings the giver closer to the receiver. But at the same time, the gift creates a debt, obligations for the receiver. Giving produces two things at once, then. It both reduces the distance and creates distance between the two parties. It creates a dissymmetry, a hierarchy between giver and receiver. (Godelier in Wyschogrod, 22)

When examining the donor-beneficiary relationship between a Canadian sponsor and her African sponsor child, it is clear that the donations serve to accentuate historical dissymetries while making the donor feel as if she has brought herself closer to a single child.

This approach to advertising is not without controversy, even within the organizations themselves. Most participants reported some friction between the fundraising branches of the organization and the development teams. The participants alluded to discontent amongst the development workers in response to the continual portrayal of need and desolation in the DRTV. Those on the development side of operations – the field workers and program staff – were often disappointed that their work was not being adequately showcased within the marketing and fundraising initiatives.[2]

The individuals with whom I spoke expressed sympathy toward the issue, but in the end, surmised that since the greatest perceived need generated the most funding, leaving the successes in the field out of the DRTV was in the best interest of the NGO in its entirety. World Vision was the only exception to this conflict, according to Mark. He felt that there

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[2] This observation was made only by the NGO participants, all of whom are on the communications and fundraising side of the organizations. The development workers were not consulted or interviewed on the matter. While it is clear that some initiative has been taken by the organizations to show the impact of development efforts in their advertising, the perceptions of the development workers of the DRTV remains an area for further study.

was no tension at World Vision, that their ads were well received and respected by all members of the organization.

The harmony expressed by Mark may be attributed in part to the fact that DRTV is only one part of their fundraising portfolio, leaving room for other methods of fundraising, which is, potentially, more conducive to the inclusion of a higher number of staff. It is also possible, however, that he was not comfortable being entirely forthright about the conflict, was not aware of any conflict, or felt that existing tensions were negligible. Given that all of the other participants noted that there was much discussion surrounding the images used in DRTV and fundraising in general, it is safe to assume that image selection is at times a controversial issue. As will be discussed in the following pages, ethical representation is a major point of contention both in the literature and in the organizations themselves.

The Cost of Africa Rising

The controversies that exist between ethical and non-ethical representation come generally in the form of a false juxtaposition between "before" and "after" images. That is to say that images that depict dire need are situated on one end of the ethical spectrum, and happy, well-fed depictions of children in classrooms for example, are found at the other end. The proponents of the former types of images are largely fundraisers and marketers who use them to generate funds. Development workers and human rights activists generally stand in opposition and advocate for ethical codes to regulate representation. Within the organizations themselves, Joe and Kevin both reported that development workers often felt their efforts were undermined by the images used for fundraising.

An attempt by the fundraisers at Plan to compromise resulted in the least successful ad they have ever aired. Kevin recounted the story,

> Last year we tried to get a more positive message out [Africa Rising]. It was a very positive look on Africa and it showed what Plan is doing, what communities are doing, and all the positive benefits for supporting an organization like Plan. But the thing bombed. We couldn't run it. We pulled it. (Kevin)

When I asked him why he thought this was, Kevin responded by saying what all participants noted at various points during the interviews: that "people need to connect with a child." (Kevin) It becomes apparent that the cohesion of the narrative lies with its ability to make the viewer perceive the greatest possible solvable need, and not necessarily the belief in the organization's ability to be effective in delivering their services.

While the organization seemed to have the Africa Rising DVD readily available, and easily provided me a copy, the ad was infamous for its failure. Without the well-designed perceived need, the ad could not be successful. In some instances, it left no room for the viewer to be a part of the narrative. The potential sponsor is as important a character in the narrative as any child or spokesperson on location. Without a role to fill, without a gap in which to fit, the viewer remains ineffectual. Mark explains,

> If you simply provide facts, a rational explanation of what's going on, people won't respond. … We're not asking people to be that detached observer. The idea about storytelling is about drawing people in so that they're a part of the story. (Mark)

Where telethons, for example, are also aired for the purposes of fundraising, the narrative element sets DRTV apart. Storytelling allows the viewer, through the organization, to act the role of the hero. It is the importance of the viewer that aids in the effectiveness of DRTV. This pivotal responsibility is what turns a "before" ad into an "after" ad. The sponsor is what changes a destitute situation in Africa into a success story of good education and clean drinking water. (See Chapter 4 for in-depth analysis and examples.)

DRTV serves not just as a way to solicit donations, but rather serves as a way for the viewer to become an agent of change. It creates a situation in which the viewer donates not only to the child he chooses to sponsor, but also for the experience of playing a continuing part in the narrative: one through which he is rewarded by an individual connection reinforcing his position as Good Samaritan. In part he responds to the ad as a way of reinforcing his own importance. The action of the viewer is a cornerstone of the DRTV narrative. Thus, while the DRTV defines the way in which Canadians see Africa, it also helps to define the way we see ourselves. Further, it reiterates the perceived dynamics of those relationships.

Ethics and Emotional Response

Bill views his success in DRTV as being a result of his ability to create, on camera, the greatest perceived need possible without offending the viewers' sensibilities. Bill went into great detail regarding the mechanics of "the sell." He explained that firstly, the ads must capture the attention of the viewer and be appealing on an emotional level:

> ...if I get you engaged in watching the story and you feel sad at the end of it, your heart's telling you to give money... (Bill)

In order to compel a viewer's "heart" to tell him to give, all of the participants expressed their readiness to show the images that best illustrated the greatest need in order to generate sadness in their audience. In the past, these organizations were accused of creating "pornography of the poor," or "pornography of poverty." These terms refers to the use of images of individuals who are suffering from disease and starvation. These images, according to Jørgen Lissner (1977), are pornographic because they expose something in human life as deeply personal as sexuality. (See also Coulter 1989) Further, these images

commoditize this suffering, resulting in a business of selling these images in exchange for funds.

While all organizations interviewed denied the fabrication of poverty for the purposes of fundraising, it was made clear that these ads are not created with the objective of giving a full or complete picture of the life of any child, family, village or country. Given the omission of numerous dimensions of the situations depicted, the poverty is in a sense being fabricated: not by what is included, but by that which has been omitted. (Said 1993, 66; Thiong'o, 45) The flatness of the narratives results in the oversimplification, exoticism and romanticism of the lives of the children and of Africa in general. Due to the extensive omissions, the images used become amplified and imply the completeness of a story that has been heavily edited.

The ways in which poverty is represented has undergone scrutiny by numerous organizations such as the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), a coalition of which all of three organizations are members. CCIC aims to put an end to images that exaggerate need or misrepresent fact in order to raise funds. Their code of conduct states that images used by NGOs should not fuel prejudice, nor should they depict the North as superior or the South as helpless. (CCIC, 35.3) The International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent has also established a code of ethics which states that "respect for the disaster victim as an equal partner in action should never be lost." (IFRC, 10) British Overseas NGOs for Development has a code of conduct as well, which echoes that of the other two.

Since Eagle-Com is not an international development NGO it is not a member of CCIC. However, in representing organizations, which do belong to the coalition Eagle-

Com does respect those standards. (Bill) Further, Eagle-Com is a member of the Association for Fundraising Professionals (AFP) (Appendix D). The AFP maintains a code of ethical principles and standards which requires them "to value the privacy, freedom of choice and interests of all those affected by their actions" as well as "foster cultural diversity and pluralistic values and treat all people with dignity and respect," among other standards clearly stated in the two-page document. (AFP 1)

While all of the organizations interviewed belonged to at least one governing body with ethical standards and codes of conduct none had read them recently or ever carried them to a shoot. When asked if he was aware of the ethical codes of the CCIC, Joe answered,

> Am I sitting there with all the ethical codes of conduct when I'm in the field? No, right? (Joe)

None of the other participants was especially well versed in the ethical codes either, save World Vision. While Mark did not cite the codes directly, he referenced the internal World Vision code several times. All other participants had only a vague understanding that they were unable to fundraise using representations of individuals that were untrue or had been exaggerated, but none could immediately recall the specifics of the codes, how they had been implemented, or what year they were established. In other words, none remembered having to change their marketing tactics based on ethical guidelines.

After being asked how ethical representation had impacted his production of videos, Bill was candid in his response:

> ... I guess they're new. I mean I've belonged to the AFP for a long time and CCIC's been around for a bit. I don't think we've necessarily changed. We still have to market this organization, we still have to market this program to the public. (Bill)

It was clear that all of the organizations felt an obligation to many of the ethical guidelines set forth by CCIC, internal policies, and/or the AFP, but none did so because of those coalitions. In response to my question regarding ethical representation, Joe remarked,

> We don't want to be dishonest or misrepresent anything that is going on in the field. So I'm not going to exaggerate a certain situation. ... Our commercials, they don't really, to the best of my knowledge, they don't showcase children that are on the verge of death. (Joe)

Mark also felt that graphic images of poverty were detrimental to the fundraising efforts of his organization:

> It's just an inappropriate and, quite frankly, an ineffective way of getting people to respond. They won't sympathize. The kind of emotion you'd be drawing out of that would be a disgust, rather than empathy and compassion. ... Pity is not enough. It's like these children are just like our children and I have a responsibility, I need to be doing something about this. That's what's critical here. (Mark)

Most participants felt that depicting graphic images of poverty and suffering was no longer an effective means of fundraising. However, Joe, Kevin, and Bill all felt that the images had been used successfully at one time. Mark stood in contrast to the other participants and denied the effectiveness of "pornographic" or exploitative images in the fundraising for World Vision. He was the only participant to do so. When asked whether he believed that the images were no longer eliciting a response from viewers he asserted that in the twenty years he has worked with World Vision, none of these types of images of children with, "distended bellies and flies in the eyes," (Mark) were used for the purposes of fundraising. He explained that this high level of sensitivity on the part of the organization was evidenced in the ethical codes of conduct both internal to the organization as well as those of CCIC, a coalition to which the organization belongs.

Since the parameters of this project include only the analysis of the DRTV aired over a recent six-month period, it is beyond its scope to include all historical data. However, child sponsorship has been referenced directly in the literature pertaining to pornography of the poor without citing World Vision as an exception (Bell and Carens, 2006): a notable one it would be since it is one of the largest in the world, and certainly the largest in Canada (Mark).

Mark also noted, as did the other participants, that due to the increasing number of channels, it has become less cost effective than it once was to use television as an advertising medium. World Vision now uses a more comprehensive approach to fundraising, which relies only in part on DRTV, while also using methods such as door-to-door canvassing as well as radio spots.

Because Mark's answers regarding graphic images seemed an anomaly, both in comparison to the answers of other participants, as well as to the literature, I conducted further research as to the video images used in other current aspects of World Vision's fundraising. The latest method used by the organization is an exhibition called the "One Life Experience" in which the public is invited to walk through a makeshift African village with an audio guide that describes the life of a single child. According to the promotional video displayed on their website, it allows the potential sponsor the opportunity to go beyond the implied experience of DRTV and interact in a tangible way with the story of a child. Upon completion of the twenty-minute tour, which involves the semblance of an HIV test and the chance to touch a water pump, the participant is asked to sponsor a child.

This exhibit, showcased at community events throughout the Greater Toronto Area during the spring and summer of 2008, is presented with a disclaimer which can be seen in

the promotional video on their website: "Parental discretion is advised for some audio, and photos may be graphic." (OLE Volunteer Training Video) This video then goes on to show a) children alone, crying: presumably mourning the loss of a parent to HIV, as implied by the voiceover, b) a hospital patient in her bed, and c) corpses being rolled into coffins, and graves being dug.

It is not the objective of this paper to become embroiled in the discourse concerning the morality behind ethical representation that has already been published in sources cited earlier, but rather to demonstrate that the types of graphic images that ethical codes of conduct are meant to protect against remain present without consequence to the organization. Without consequence, that is, save the funds they raise.

Thus, despite Mark's insistence that World Vision refuses to use sensational images to raise funds, and the denial that these images are or were effective, they are currently being used in the solicitation of funds for the organization, if not in DRTV. His adamant stance, and established expertise on the topic, point to the fact that Mark does not consider the depiction of corpses as graphic as those of a child with flies in her eyes. This example of the subjectivity to which ethical codes of conduct are susceptible is one way in which they remain inadequate in addressing inequity in the images portrayed in DRTV.

According to most other sources, an evolution of representation has taken place: where once the predominant images used for the recruitment of child sponsors were those of private suffering, and illness (often acute), ads now consist of less shocking depictions. Thus, while it is true that DRTV has evolved to show fewer distended African bellies, or faces covered in flies, the representation has gone, in most cases, from children being shown on the verge of death, to children whose circumstances are, or made to appear, (as

Bill expressed earlier) dire. The change, however minor, has not been as a result of the standards set out by any governing body. There clearly is a relationship between the codes and the evolving representation, but the nature of that relationship does not seem to be one in which the guidelines impacted the images. Rather, Bill goes so far as to credit the taste of Canadian viewers as the catalyst for change:

> I think that that's a bit more of a backlash thing than it is a code of ethics thing. ... I'm hired to help them raise money – do I have a problem with showing a child with a distended belly? No. Do I have a problem showing a child with flies in the eyes? No. You don't see it as much as you used to, but that's because people got sick of seeing it. (Bill)

Bill maintains that the changes in the representations of poverty in DRTV are not due to the standards put forth by any coalition or governing body, but are, instead, due to saturation of images of graphic suffering in the Canadian public. It is the viewers who respond in ways that shape the ads. Kevin also maintains that the ads are continually designed to reflect the tastes of the audience. He notes,

> ...[We] know exactly what works. If it doesn't work [we] yank it, [we] play with it, until [we] get it right. It's a science. (Kevin)

It is also unlikely that codes of conduct determined the DRTV content because while the standards are extensive and explicit (the two-page AFP ethical principles and standards document being an exception), there is no stated recourse for groups who ignore them.

Finally, situated at the farthest end of the spectrum from World Vision, Joe from CCFC had this to say about the effectiveness of graphic images in DRTV:

> ...but the only way Canadians are going to open their wallets is to see a kid who looks like they're going to die any second. And it's horrible, but it works. (Joe)

Thus, the perspectives regarding the graphic images of poverty and suffering held by the participants were rather varied. This study will show that these answers are, in fact, far more disparate than are the images the organizations actually choose to use. In fact, despite this difference in opinion, Kevin from Plan revealed that his organization was in the midst of a major overhaul of their DRTV strategy because they found that their sponsors easily forgot to which organization they were donating. Plan's communications team is determined to set their ads apart from the likes of World Vision and CCFC: organizations whose ads they see as extremely similar to their own.

"Organic" Storytelling

The concept of ethical portrayal is one that, as evidenced by the preceding discussion, has been long debated. Moreover, the literature and primary data collected through the interviews points to a top down approach to creating codes of ethics and "self-policing" policy by the Canadian (and head) office of the NGO. Thus, decisions concerning ethical portrayal remain in the hands of the sponsorship organization rather than in the hands of the featured communities. This control over the images used is also evidenced by the process, discussed earlier in this chapter, by which regions, countries, communities and children are selected for the shoot.

Further, the prevailing literature concerning the ethical portrayal of Africans in the DRTV and child-sponsorship arenas are largely Northern voices. The power dynamic remains one in which the Canadian organization retains control over the portrayal, and even the ethics of the portrayal, of the children in the ads.

All participants were asked directly whether the ads were scripted. The results were consistent as the interviewees explained that the ads are generally not scripted, however,

some scripting is present during the hard sell portion of the DRTV as well as in the voiceovers. But all participants agreed that the scripting was minimal. All of the participants either referred to the DRTV filming process as "organic" (Joe) or implied that they took an organic approach to telling the story of a child. By building a narrative in this way, organizations presume that they are taking a hands-off approach: relaying rather than constructing the story. Joe from CCFC shared the approach used by his organization,

> Our approach is - we don't want a script. We want ... the story of the child to come out organically. So that's why we spend two or three days with the child and say, 'Just forget that we're there and go about your day,' because the story of their life will come through. (Joe)

The organic model seems like a better choice than a scripted shoot where the organization might ask the child to compress his hardship into a few hours. But it is questionable whether, in fact, the final product is changed. While it may be more ethical, according to codes of conduct, to simply film the child going about his daily routine, the editing process ensures that all images that contribute to a sense of roughness, like the street kids mentioned by Bill, cleanliness, as mentioned by Kevin, or a sense of family or community security, as mentioned by many participants, are eliminated from the final product. The footage is distilled to portray concentrated need. Thus, whether a script exists in the initial planning stages or not, the organization builds the narrative that will generate the highest viewer response.

Bill asserted that the ads he produced used to be more scripted than they are currently. Again he discredits ethical codes by emphasizing changes in viewer response as the cause for a new model based on "reality."

> Television has changed. Particularly in the last decade so it's a lot more reality style: a lot more handheld camera work. And so real is now better than staged.... (Bill)

When he elaborated on the details of this reality-style he had the following to say,

> ...we'll follow them with our camera and Rod [spokesperson featured in the episode] and he'll engage with the children and the families and he'll walk with them to this horrible-looking dirty water hole and Rod will just react. So he's guided. We don't just get off the plane and Rod starts talking and we start filming, so it's not that real. (Bill)

Bill goes on to deem his DRTV "guided reality." It is not script-based, but certainly the objectives are clear. The lack of intent to misinterpret the child's story seemed to be equated by the participants to the impossibility of misinterpretation, as they repeatedly emphasized that there was "nothing fake about this." (Kevin)

While it is plausible that the filming captures actual events in the lives of these children, the way in which the events are pieced together is perceived by the participants to be organic: meaning that the stories are natural in some way. But several participants were clear about the fact that it wasn't the footage that dictated the construction of the narrative, but rather the plan for the narrative that accounted for selection of the clips used. Bill explained,

> Sometimes we don't come back with all of what we need to tell that story.... we still might have holes that need to be narrated. (Bill)

In one respect he refers to the story is as a real collection of data from the life of a child, or something he organically captures on film. On the other hand, however, despite the extensive filming abroad, there are holes in the story that he fills in with voiceover narration recorded in a Toronto studio (Bill). If the stories do not exist in completion on the twenty hours of tape filmed (Bill) when the crew returns from their destination, then where do they

exist? Despite the policies and procedures implemented by the participants, the reality of the ads is that they begin within the imaginations of the fundraising teams at the Canadian organizations. Like a blank template, elements are predefined and built from footage shot in the southern country, and then enhanced by music, graphics or voiceover recorded in Canada. Hugh Ridley explains,

> The essentials of the colonial encounter are pre-formed within the European psyche, pre-recorded in the deep waters of European life and merely waiting for actual faces and landscapes to take up pre-ordained roles. (Ridley in Heron, 149)

Starting with the selection of the region, followed by the selection of the community, the child and the spokesperson, all elements are designed to create a final picture of need easily understood by the Canadian audience. This template exists within our collective structuring structure or habitus and conforms to historical, social and cultural parameters. It is created by the minds of Canadians for Canadians. Thus, it is the contention of this project that the bias with which these ads are constructed is not entirely conscious nor entirely unconscious, but readily consumed as truth based on a socio-cultural agreement between the creators of the DRTV and the individuals who believe it.

"Nothing About Us Without Us"

The children and families featured in the DRTV ads are consulted by the organization and must consent to being filmed, "much in the same way you have done with me today" (Mark, in reference to our interview). But the consent is solely based on the featured child's participation in the video, and not in their representation in the final cut. In regards to whether or not the beneficiary communities ever gave feedback on the finished ad, Bill made these statements,

> How many times have the people seen their own story? I'm not sure. I don't know how many of those people have access to televisions and DVD players and that kind of thing. For the most part I think charities are pretty good at sending ... the finished material back but who sees it and who doesn't see it and do the actual children and families see it? I don't know. Probably some have and probably lots haven't. And there has been some backlash when they've seen what we've filmed. It hasn't always been received positively. Mostly it is, but sometimes we send stuff back that they don't want to see. You know, we don't always portray countries and communities the way that they would proudly like to be shown. We're not going to Ethiopia to ... work for Ethiopian tourism and tell a great story about Ethiopia. We're going to tell sad stories of children in need. So not always do people love what they see when they get it. (Bill)

The ethical codes then are constructed in a way that promotes consent and rights-based practices in so far as they pertain to the idea of shooting a video for a given organization: not as they are applied to the advertisement aired. In other words, the family of the featured child is only involved in the preliminary stages of a process whose outcome is determined without their input or agreement. Whether the communities are pleased or outraged with their portrayal is currently irrelevant to the construction of the DRTV.[3]

The issue of the exclusion of the beneficiaries from the editing stages of DRTV must be addressed in the discussion of ethical practices as it may come at a cost to the individuals being portrayed and those individuals have few, if any, avenues for recourse. Further, any action on the part of these featured individuals, their families or communities could come at the expense of the development projects from which they may benefit, or be dependent. These, however, are only considerations for those who have seen the DRTV, a practice not

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[3] It remains unclear how much the field staff's input on the final cut is taken into account and whether their power over the content of the DRTV goes beyond their compilation of a list of potential feature children.

undertaken with any regularity. Not to mention the fact that those who do have access to the videos gain it only after the editing is complete.

Numerous writers, largely from the global South, and published mostly in the popular media, call for increased dialogue between Northern organizations and Southern partners. Firoze Manji titled a 2005 article "Never About Us Without Us" (echoed in Abdul-Raheem as "Nothing About Us Without Us" 2005), in direct response to Bob Geldof's staging of Live 8. The article expresses his resentment at the lack of African involvement in the initiative and is critical of the way in which the organizers assumed authority over the cause without consulting Africans themselves or the Diaspora. Nick Kaufman and Sharmila Shewprasad (2006) acknowledge the need to increase awareness surrounding North/South issues as well as issues of race, but caution against reproducing stereotypes in order to do so. Finally, Omega Bula (2002), Selome Araya (2007) and Nakala Gunawardene (2005) all call for reform in the images used by NGOs by incorporating input from the South.

This project argues that the cost of this lack of southern feedback and involvement is high, because the devaluation of the opinions of DRTV beneficiaries comes through in numerous ways, many of which will be addressed in Chapter 4. I also argue, however, based on the analysis of the construction of these videos to this point, that the cost of including the feedback of the beneficiary communities could be high for the child-sponsorship NGOs as well. If these individuals were included in the decisions concerning their own representation, the message to potential sponsors might become less effective in terms of raising funds. It would also, however, be of tremendous benefit to Canadians and Africans alike, as it would necessarily result in the subversion of power structures kept in tact by these practices.

Summary

DRTV has been extremely successful due to the ability of the production teams to construct a simple story of need, easily understood by a Canadian audience. When a viewer watches a well-made ad he is easily drawn into the narrative and clearly sees a way to solve the problems of poverty depicted.

In order to create a simple story about the complex issues of the poverty of African children, certain facts and realities must be excluded from the final cut of the ad. These exclusions may include the family and/or community of the featured child. Also, the DRTV production team is particular about the children selected: the appearance of that child is of paramount importance. The child's appearance must convey innocence and vulnerability. A child who displays strength, aggression, who lives in an urban setting, or appears to be well kempt, is less appealing to viewers, in spite of her socioeconomic status.

While all organizations maintain that they respect codes of ethics, those codes leave room for subjective interpretation and images are not policed by the coalitions that created them. Further, the ethical codes pertain mainly to the initial stages of production and do not ensure that these NGOs get feedback from the people they include in the videos. Thus, they remain largely ineffectual, as all decisions, including the final cut of the DRTV, are entirely in the hands of the Canadian office. The southern participants are not consulted when editing takes place, which perpetuates a cycle of subordination.

While it may be the case that there is "nothing fake" about these ads, it is also true that omissions, suggestions, and assumptions, on both the part of the production teams and on the part of the Canadian audience, play a major role in their success. In Chapter 4 these ads will be deconstructed at length to reveal instances in which these strategies are used to

at once paint the featured individuals as helpless, while simultaneously drawing the viewer into the ad in the role of hero.

Chapter 4 – Imaginary Children: Myth in DRTV

Introduction

The sample selected for this video analysis consists of ten DRTV programs: four hour-long programs aired within the last six months by World Vision Canada, three hour-long programs, two of which have been aired within the last six months by Plan Canada, and three two-minute DRTV spots aired within the past six months for CCFC. (Table 1) While this project focuses on the most current DRTV aired by World Vision, Plan Canada and CCFC one outlying video is included in the list above. This video has been analyzed due to data gleaned from the Marketing, Communications and Production professionals interviewed (see Chapter 3).

The outlying video is Africa Rising, which has not been aired in the last six months, but remains an important source of data because it was (as addressed in Chapter 3) the least successful DRTV program ever aired by Plan Canada. The video will be important for comparison when addressing the appeal of child-sponsorship DRTV.

Table 1: Summary of DRTV Programs

Organization	#	Title	Duration (h:mm)
World Vision (WV)	1	Africa's Children: In Their Own Words	1:00
	2	Africa's Children: A Special Report	1:00
	3	What a Day	1:00
	4	One Village	1:00
Plan Canada (Plan)	1	Destination Hope	1:00
	2	The Heart of a Child	1:00
	3	Africa Rising	1:00
Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC)	1	Hyatt	0:02
	2	Rosa	0:02
	3	Not Your Child	0:02

For clarity the videos have been numbered (see Table 1). Thus, from this point forward, videos will be referenced using the name of the organization followed by the video number. For example, The Heart of a Child will be referred to as Plan2.

Each hour-long program consists of several segments. Some segments are "before segments" or images because they are the stories told about a featured child before sponsorship occurs. They are defined by their portrayal of need in an African village. These segments are interspersed with "after segments." The after segments are stories of beneficiary children who have been sponsored for several years and consist of images of happy, healthy children, as well as feature a sponsor family whose lives, they explain, have been forever changed by their choice to sponsor. The hour-long DRTV programs also feature a sales pitch. The pitch lasts about 2 minutes and is repeated at different points throughout the hour. Its purpose is to close the sell by displaying the organization's phone number and website.

Semiotic Deconstruction and the Sign

Each of the segments will be deconstructed alone, and also as a part of the program to which it belongs. The videos will be analyzed through content analysis consisting of semiotic deconstruction following the example of Roland Barthes in *Mythologies* (1972).

This systematic dismantling is possible using Barthes' techniques of deconstruction of the sign. The sign consists of two parts: the signifier and the signified (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Sign According to Barthes (Spencer, 14)

Signifier (denotation) e.g. a single red rose (in words or as an image)	**Signified** (connotation) e.g. chivalry, romance, etc.
Sign	

Expressed in a less technical way, the semiotic deconstruction in this chapter aims to separate the language and images used in the videos into denotations and connotations: the denotation being what is shown or said, and the connotation being what is meant or implied. Because it relies on the viewer's understanding of the context, the connotation may change from one context to the next, or from one day to the next. For example, in Chapter 3 Bill noted that referencing Rwanda in DRTV now carries a greater connotation of perceived need for Canadians than it did before the 1994 genocide: Rwanda's denotation has not changed, but its connotation has.

Thus, signs change based on their context and are also dependent on the context of the audience. What Canadians understand when they hear the word Rwanda depends not simply on what has taken place in that country, but also on the portrayal of Rwanda in the news media in Canada, documentaries, international travel etc.. In this way it can be said that signs are constantly in flux, as terms and images are always in the process of being defined and redefined to fit into both the collective and the individual habituses.

For Barthes, and for the purposes of this project, when signs appear in groups as with a photograph or a story, what emerges will be referred to as a myth. Since signs are prone to change based on the contexts in which we perceive them, it is important that they be considered critically, especially when, as is the case in DRTV they are being used explicitly

for the purpose of raising funds. When the signs within DRTV are thoroughly deconstructed it becomes apparent that viewers' assumptions, along with generalizations, unsound logic and fundraising motives are playing active roles in maintaining and reproducing misrepresentations of Africa, blackness, poverty and need. In so doing, long-held beliefs regarding Canada, whiteness, wealth and excess are also greatly impacted.

DRTV acts as a myth, or several myths, which are comprised of signs. By arranging the signs in very specific and deliberate ways, the creators are able to lead the viewer to believe, and/or believe in, an idea or concept of their choosing. Thus, as discussed in Chapter 3, there exists a difference between need and perceived need. The creators of DRTV are able to create the impression of need on camera, whether or not it exists objectively. In this chapter, these ads will be deconstructed to show how images and language are presented in a way that relies on the assumptions of the audience in order to recruit child sponsors.

Henry and Tator explain that semiotic deconstruction is required to uncover the various levels of meaning in a text. They also express that this type of deconstruction is becoming ever more important as a research technique in relation to the portrayal of race in Canada due to the "democratic" nature of that portrayal. (2002, 35) Sarah White also echoes the need for such deconstruction as she refers to the discussion of race in development as being "a bit like breaking a code" (White, 408). White's work points out the "hiddenness" of race in the discourse of development. She explains that other words, such as "ethnicity" and, most predominantly, "culture" are often used as stand-ins when race is the topic of discussion. White's article speaks to the complexity of race as a social construct while also challenging the "colour-blind stance of development" (White, 418).

When asked about whether shooting DRTV in Africa increased the perceived need (and therefore the effectiveness) of the ad, Bill responded that, "Africa [in] general…is perceived to be more needy than Central or South America." When asked whether he filmed differently, or used different types of music for DRTV in Africa, he responded in the negative. When asked specifically, during the course of our discussion, whether he believed that the increased perceived need was due in part to the colour of the child's skin, Bill responded, "Pretty much. Yeah."

Of the videos used for this study, only three segments were not shot in Africa. That is to say of the seven hours and six minutes of DRTV analyzed, only approximately 15 minutes focused on South America, Central America or Asia. Thus, Africa remains, in the minds of Canadians, a place of great need, worthy of much charity. Black skin, in the context of child-sponsorship DRTV shot in Africa, is one sign that is exploited for the purposes of raising funds, as illustrated by Bill.

This chapter will neither make a case for nor against child sponsorship, but rather, it will show, using a systematic semiotic methodology, that DRTV for child sponsorship does not adequately a) demonstrate the objective need of the children featured, or b) present logical resolutions to the perceived need they construct.

Measuring Myth

Several specific signs will be used as indicators of the accuracy of the myths created in the ads. I will look closely at the connotations and denotations of the following concepts: need, helplessness, loneliness, silence, and connectedness. These signs will be examined in both the images and language chosen for the ads. They will be deconstructed individually and also understood relative to each other as parts of a whole. The arrangement of the

signs, as evidenced by the narrative they create, is determined by choices made by DRTV producers. To analyse the construction of myth and emerging patterns, I will examine the ways in which these signs are strung together using fundamental flaws in logic, oversimplification, appeals to authority and evocation of the imaginary. Acting as sinews between signs, these techniques go undetected by the audience and, to a lesser extent, by their creators. The result is a myth built on the mutual assumptions of the producers and viewers, which engages the Canadian audience and inspires them to action.

Lucia – Language, Image, Sound and Perceived Need

Each before ad revolves around a single, simple, solvable problem. The focus of these ads is to convince the viewer that her support is urgently needed and that after it is pledged a child's life will, without question, be changed or saved. Statements such as the following, are repeated at regular intervals by a concerned spokesperson:

> …Plan was there helping to provide the one thing that they couldn't live without – clean water. Every time I come here I see how simple it is… (Plan3, 21:25)

The problems around which the narratives revolve fall mainly under the following themes: education, malnutrition, drought or lack of access to water, and orphanhood. During the course of 4 or 5 minutes, one problem defines the entire existence of the featured child. Every line must reinforce the one thing he needs that the viewer, in partnership with the organization, can give him. Every task he performs, expression he makes, or word he speaks must demonstrate that need.

Given the complexity of life, however, this is a difficult task for the DRTV producer. He must rely on desperation in the voice of the narrator, or a moving soundtrack, should the images of the child's daily routine come across as anything but tragic. As discussed in

Chapter 3, the actual need of the child featured is not what is being depicted. Rather, the ad works to create the illusion of need in a way that appeals to the emotions of Canadians.

One such example is found in a before advertisement (WV2) where the host escorts a young Mozambican girl, Lucia, to the communal water pump. The host expresses the misfortune of this girl who must walk two hours to reach the pump:

> Lucia and I are on our way to the well. It's a two-hour walk. And she does this at least once a day, sometimes two, maybe three times a day. And each time she goes, she fills up this big bucket for the neighbor, and she gets ten cents. So, in a day, she may make anywhere from ten to thirty cents. They [Lucia and her brother] pool their money together, the two of them a couple of bucks in a week. And they have to buy food. It's a means of survival here. (WV2, 31:10)

This quotation, spoken by the host on location in Mozambique, begins with a walk to the well and ends with a message of imminent starvation and a struggle to survive as the host attempts to convey a message of vulnerability and hardship. As the statements are closely examined, the construction of perceived need becomes apparent and begins to stand in stark opposition to Lucia's reality.

Firstly, hardship and struggle are overtly emphasized in the language of the host. It is implied that this young lady can walk to a well, which takes 4 hours round-trip. In order for this to be true, she must be capable and healthy. Despite the host's assertion that she may make the trip up to 3 times a day, it remains unclear whether or why that is in fact true.

In the next sentence, which explains that Lucia is paid each time, there is a momentary conflict. The language of the ad must explain whether Lucia's journeys to the well are beneficial because they ensure her self-sufficiency, or detrimental because they are grueling. Her earnings are expressed as a maximum of thirty Canadian cents per day, highlighting in the eyes of the viewer, the futility of her efforts, despite her hard work.

This scene closes with the host explaining that Lucia and her brother buy food with the earnings, which is a "means of survival [t]here." It is not clear whether the host is implying that Lucia's survival is dependent on food, or on the work she undertakes in order to earn money to buy food. What is made clear is the fact that Lucia's life is far more difficult than that of the viewer.

It is not the objective of this project to pass judgment on the quality of Lucia's, or any other child's life, but rather to attempt an analysis of the argument given by the DRTV as a reason to sponsor a child. The facts put forth as the basis of the verbal argument do not make it clear that Lucia is needy, but rather the only thing we have learned is that she is employed.

Given the real risk that the viewer might not understand that he is needed to play a heroic role in Lucia's life – that he is meant to see that her daily routine is one of tedious hardship – the expression on the host's face in the foreground of the red dirt and the sun-scorched African landscape helps make the expectation of pity evident.

Figure 2: Lucia's Walk to the Well (WV2, 31:10-15)

Lucia is wearing stained clothing and well-worn sandals and she rarely looks into the camera as the host gestures toward the "big bucket" Lucia will soon fill with water. During

the host's narration of Lucia's life, soft guitar strums can be heard on the soundtrack in an attempt to evoke sadness and despair in the viewer.

Upon arriving at the pump Lucia fills up the container she has brought and the host attempts to lift it. As she does, the host explains,

> ...to even lift this bucket – just to lift it like this is hard enough, I can't imagine getting this up and over my head. I couldn't do it. (WV2, 31:20)

But with the help of other women at the pump, the young girl manages to raise the container, set it on her head and she begins to walk. "Good girl," (WV2, 31:28) calls out the host, in an attempt to offer approval, and perhaps even to save face.

The language used in this scene evokes pity in the viewer, despite the reality of the actions depicted. In other words, this example is one of many throughout the body of data analyzed of a scene that resulted in creating a perceived need without having demonstrated an objective one. The reality of the sequence of events was that the host exposed her own physical weakness and could not perform a task undertaken regularly by Lucia. And still, the advertisement takes pity on the girl who has proved herself capable.

Rose and Esther – The Impossible Reversal

The incongruence of using the capable or strong African child to paint a picture of need is a device used several times throughout the before ads. In Plan3, a very similar scenario arises, this time the host is male and he escorts two young girls, Rose and Esther, to the river: their one-time water source. Their current source of water, the viewer learns, is a tank that has recently been provided by Plan. To demonstrate the previous hardship of the girls, the host asks them to show him how they previously collected water.

The following quote is the transcript from the latter half of the scene where the host finds himself at the river and attempts to bring a bucket full of water up the embankment to the village. Note that the voiceover (VO) lines have been scripted, while the host improvises the others.

Host VO: Filling the containers seemed simple enough, I figured maybe even I could do that, but then -- you've got to lift the thing, once it's full. That's the hard part.
[Host gets help from Rose]

Host VO: Even with Rose to help me I was struggling and I found myself thinking these girls couldn't do this by themselves.

Host: Okay. You did this every day. Oh my goodness.

Host VO: And if I thought coming down was hard, going up was almost impossible.

Host: You've got to be kidding me.

Host VO: I wasn't even sure I could do it really.

Host: I think I'm gonna need a pain reliever after this.

Host VO: I considered giving the whole thing up but then I remembered these girls used to do this in the heat of the day, sometimes three times a day. Often after dark. There was no way I was giving up. At least my pathetic attempt was entertaining for the girls.

Host: You guys okay. You all right there? Good. Just want to make sure you're okay. [In a sarcastic tone.] Well I think I now know why Kenya produces all these great marathon runners.

Host: I'm flabbergasted, and yet they have to do this. And you factor in that they're bringing water back that's potentially deadly water. I am shocked. Shocked. I don't even know what to say. I am shocked. (Plan3, 20:37)

What the viewer is presented with here is the incapability of the Canadian host to carry water. The host, however, recovers quickly after his near-failure (and need for a pain reliever) to ask the audience to sponsor a needy child: the same child whose help he has just implored. Further, he implies that the high-level of fitness required to be successful at

fetching water is comparable to what would be needed to run a marathon. Again, reiterating the strength and capability and athleticism of the girls. Nevertheless, the host remains undeterred from looking into the camera and asking the viewer to come to the aid of children like them:

> For Rose and Esther that treacherous journey is now a thing of the past. And when you become a Foster Parents Plan sponsor you too can change a life… (Plan3, 21:07)

Along with this direct contradiction of a strong child in need, the voiceover script is littered with dissonant statements such as, "…these girls used to do this in the heat of the day, sometimes three times a day. Often after dark," (Plan3, 19:46) indicating the seemingly endless water-fetching. In this case a string of disparaging statements is used, each indicating more treacherous circumstances than the last.

Because of its ability to sell this illogical reversal, DRTV provides a very effective means of fundraising. When an organization attempts to solicit donations over the radio they must rely entirely on being aurally appealing. When they use direct mailing in search of sponsors, they rely on text, complimented by still images. However, using television allows an organization to use action, motion, sound, speech, and a story to keep the viewer engaged.

Given so many methods of reaching the viewer, the reasoning of the dialogue need not be logical. Any confusion is quickly glossed over using other signs and sounds. These audio effects are added upon the production crew's return to the Canadian studio.

After his trying hike up the hill with Florence, the soft piano music over the host's last lines encourages the viewer to perceive the girls as having been saved from this trek by Plan:

> I'm flabbergasted, and yet they have to do this and you factor in that they're bringing water back that's potentially deadly

water. I am shocked. Shocked. I don't even know what to say. I am shocked. (Plan3, 21:24)

Interspersed in his reaction to the challenge of carrying water are the words "deadly" and "shock." The viewer is then lead to realize that these girls carried water prior to having a tank close to home and that water was potentially deadly. The video implies that the viewer should be shocked at the extent of the hardship. Also, in lieu of the word "embarrassed," as a technique used to save face, the host uses the word shocked. It is not unlike the "Good girl," comment spoken to Lucia after that host's failed attempt to carry water.

Figure 3: Plan Host Carries Water (Plan3, 20:25-35)

Mark, Andrew, and Justin – Unsound Logic

One after another, the lives of the Africans featured in the ads is contorted and distorted to create the appearance of need and lack where it does not necessarily exist. In a before segment in WV1, the logic used to plead the need for sponsorship of three boys begins with faulty assumptions. It is then on the foundation of these assumptions that the rest of the story teeters. The host begins the story:

> Mark, Andrew and Justin's home is just a few meters behind us. And as you make your way from behind their home over this ridge the first sound you hear is the sound of children playing in the schoolyard, which is awesome because they're a short walk to school. But the bad news is that already over a dozen times Mark and Andrew have been sent back home because they don't have school uniforms. That's unbelievable

> to me as a parent, the possibilities that lay here literally just meters away from their home can be kept from them for something as small as the cost of a school uniform. (WV1, 52:26)

Here the viewer is presented with the problem they are meant to solve: the boys do not have uniforms, therefore they cannot attend school. The solution, the host will come to explain, is precisely the same as the solution to Esther and Rose's problem, as well as to the problems of Lucia and her long walk to water: the viewer's dollars, which in this case, are to be spent buying the children school uniforms. The focus is redirected from the fact that the school is turning away children who cannot afford uniforms, in favour of the logic that the donor should provide funding for uniforms.

Swiftly, the scene changes and a local World Vision worker appears on screen to explain that children who do not receive an education will be relegated to menial work in their adulthood, which will lead to a lack of education for their own children in the future. Upon momentary reflection it becomes apparent that the boys featured, along with all of their plain-clothed peers, would not be faced with this problem if either uniforms were not compulsory, or the school made an exception. Surprisingly, it does not concern the organization, the host or the viewers calling in that the donations received are used to support a school and a policy that clearly marginalizes these members of the community.

However, the host of this segment appears once again to explain that,

> They can make it, they just need a little bit of help – and that's where you come in. With one action you can make a huge difference in the lives these children and other children just like them. Don't wait. Please make that call now and begin to change the life of a child. (WV1, 53:45)

Florence – The Problem of Privacy

When analyzing the body of DRTV in its entirety, it becomes amply clear that a problem can be constructed in any African environment. The bulk of the problems generally pertain to issues of malnutrition, disease, education, or loneliness, as in the case of Lucia – an earlier example to which I briefly return. In reference to Lucia's living situation with her brother, the host explains that,

> They go to bed every night alone and wake up every morning just with each other. (WV2, 33:10)

There is confusion in the language around the definition of the word "alone" in this segment, however, it is clear that the host is attempting to relay Lucia's loneliness and isolation to the viewer despite the fact that she lives with her brother. The fact that the host is constructing Lucia's loneliness becomes further evident when the host begins to cry upon entering Lucia's home and says the following into the camera,

> And you know what? She has nobody. I'm like probably her sister right now… (WV2, 32:30)

Lucia's story is an example of how, while the viewer is introduced to Lucia's grown brother during the narrative, he is also willing to believe that she is lonely to the point of somehow accepting the host as her sister by virtue of their proximity.

A contrasting example reveals that an opposite scenario, a lack of privacy, is also a devastating one. In WV1, Florence and her sister are, like Lucia and her brother, coping with the loss of their parents. However, they are not suffering from loneliness, but rather are not afforded the time to grieve due to the presence of community members.

Florence's story begins by her recounting her daily search for firewood, which the viewer learns is a way in which she earns money. The cameras follow her on her uphill

march. In lieu of the host's voiceover, this segment features the child speaking her mother tongue while the English transcript appears on the screen. The transcript reads:

> When I go to the mountain to find wood, I am very afraid…
> Girls who are alone are often attacked. (WV1, 33:36)

This narrative seems to present the viewer with a simple, solvable problem: in order to earn money, Florence must risk her life. However, by the end of Florence's story, we discover that that is a secondary problem in relation to her lack of privacy to mourn. When explaining to the audience that her parents have recently died, Florence also tells the viewer that because she and her siblings are young, other members of the community accompany them to the burial site to grieve. The scene shows the children surrounded by adults as they sorrowfully bow their heads. One of the children – either Florence or one of her siblings, it is not made clear – laments:

> There's never any private time just for us. But there's nothing
> we can do about it. (WV1, 33:46)

If the viewer were not already certain that the children needed her help, she might pause a moment to wonder toward which problem it is that she is being asked to donate: Florence's work as an unaccompanied firewood collector, or the constant presence of her community? The host then appears on camera to clarify with dramatic flourish,

> These children deserve better. It's not their fault their parents
> died…. To lose your parents and not be able to really grieve
> and cry? It must be just…. [She trails off as she begins to
> cry.] I can't even imagine… But they just keep on going
> because otherwise they're going to starve. I couldn't imagine
> my kids being able to survive. (WV1, 36:50)

Again the strength of the African children becomes a weakness. Florence and her siblings are confronted with obstacles that the host believes to be insurmountable for her own children. The host is able to, in only a few lines, convey a deep need to the viewer. She

does this despite the contradictions at the centre of the problem she presents, and a further lack of logic in the conclusion. None of these flaws in reasoning seems to hurt the effectiveness of DRTV at all. When a viewer is presented with a Western host against an African backdrop holding a black child, there is little more convincing that needs to be done.

To Every Problem There is a Donation

One common thread throughout these ads is that the solution is always a donation. No matter the problem, a donation is the answer. The ads present one story after another. Despite each one being seemingly unique, the solution is always the same, and it is never the cause of the problem itself. For example, the solution to a child who cannot attend school due to his lack of uniform is a donation that promises to produce the money for a uniform, not a change in policy at the school or at a higher level of government. If the problem is "deadly water" from a polluted stream, the solution is a donation that promises a tank to collect rainwater instead of an effort to trace and treat the source of the pollution. If the tragedy is HIV/AIDS then the solution to the epidemic is the provision of ARVs instead of addressing the host of economic, political and social issues surrounding the spread of the infection. Each story depends on the incompetence of the government of the African country, or the African's lack of ability to govern himself. No ad asks why the problem exists, because Africa's perceived need amongst Canadians is assumed.

Nevertheless, the producers of DRTV are aware of trends in Canadian thinking and Canadian language and are able to deftly circumvent any semblance of the notion that what they are promoting is an "unsustainable" or "band-aid" solution. Often, when these words are used in the ads, they are said more slowly than other words in the sentence to emphasize

their importance and acknowledge the savvy nature of the viewer. Despite never examining the causes of the problems they portray, World Vision uses the following statement when they make their hard sales pitch, which is played numerous times during each hour of programming:

> World Vision works hand in hand with the community to help people help themselves. (WV2, 34:14)

Plan also cleverly conveys their commitment to long-term change with their call for pledges, which reads as follows,

> ...these children don't need a band-aid. They need a plan. A plan to build desperately needed health clinics and schools. A plan to respond to humanitarian emergencies like floods and other natural disasters by distributing essential supplies like food, medicine, blankets and mosquito nets. A plan to work with communities to rebuild their homes and their livelihoods. That's the extraordinary work Plan does. (Plan2, 15:20)

DRTV is very effective at convincing the viewer that what they are proposing is a resolution to the cause of the problem, when in fact they have only framed it as such. A discerning viewer ought to suspect that that there is more to the situation than meets the eye, but the viewers, who fall into a well educated demographic, are readily calling in to sponsor.

Defining the Sign – The African Smile as Change

The DRTV after ad is one in which a sponsor family is the focus. Instead of the ad being filmed wholly in the beneficiary community, approximately half of the scenes take place at a middle-class home in Canada. The purpose of the ad is to portray the average sponsor family to the viewer. These families are asked by an off-camera interviewer, questions pertaining to the process, impacts, and level of satisfaction of sponsorship. They

generally portray families with two parents and children, though single parents, a single woman, and grandparents with their grandchildren are also featured.

The after ads and their characters are as similar to each other as are the before ads. They are all testimonials to the emotional benefits of sponsorship. Each features individuals who are grateful for the experience, whose lives have changed because of it, and who are overcome with emotion when presented with a personalized video and update of their sponsor child. The personalized video is usually complimented by a gift or letter exchange.

The after ad, unlike the before ad, is not an attempt to convince the viewer of the need in Africa, but rather it is a testament to the fact that for "about a dollar a day" it is indeed possible to "transform life." (WV1) The before and after ads support each other, with the after ads used as proof that the stories of need are true, treatable through donations, and source of great pride for sponsors. The ads begin by bridging a story of an African child with their sponsor family to demonstrate how their problems were solved.

A critical analysis of these ads reveals a sinister subtext of misappropriation of signs. Instead of contorting the message to construct need, the ad bends the events on screen to depict gratitude.

> It's hard to imagine the difference your support makes as a child sponsor, but it's very very real. And I keep on seeing it village after village we meet in Malawi. This is especially true for girls like Pilarani. She lost her dad about 10 years ago, leaving her mom with four kids alone with virtually no source of income. But today at 14 years old, [she] virtually beams with gratitude every time the names of her sponsors are mentioned. (WV2, 10:43)

Despite Pilarani's silence, the host explains that her smile is one of gratitude. In essence, the host takes ownership of the smile: claims it in the name of Pilarani's sponsor family. In

DRTV for child sponsorship, there is no other reason for an African child to smile. Several of the before ads include hosts, at their African posts, searching for this seemingly elusive smile. In one sequence, the voiceover of the host tells the audience,

> I could not get him to smile no matter what I tried. He was as determined as I was – but I was not about to give up. (Plan2, 18:46)

The host (or rather the script writer) seems to have taken on a mission to find the boy's smile. Finding a smile in Africa is a sign of encouragement for the Canadian, and assurance that the host and the sponsor are engaging in a worthwhile endeavour. When the host's mission is accomplished, the viewer rests assured that change is possible.

> Later on as we played with a Frisbee I felt was making headway – and finally had a breakthrough with Shaaban. I managed to find the smile I was after. The language barrier had been broken! (Plan2, 19:00)

Strangely, though Shaaban does not speak to the host, the smile breaks the language barrier. It is as if the host has heard him say "thank you" simply by seeing him smile: as if it were his gift to her in exchange for the Frisbee. She understands all of these things despite him not having said a word.

In a different program, also aired by Plan, a similar situation is recounted:

Host VO: When I heard about Veronica, I wanted to reach out to her. I wanted to tell her, in her own language...that she was beautiful. And to my delight – she understood me. But I still had not uncovered her smile; until I produced the gift I had brought her.

Host: This is a little bear from Canada... [Veronica smiles.]

Host VO: Finally I began to see the child within emerge and I knew there was hope for this little 9-year-old… These moments are precious in my memory. We discovered this lonely and traumatized little girl still knew how to laugh and smile…. And her smile was my reward. (Plan3, 47:05)

The smile in DRTV, a primary focus of the after ad, is an important symbol, understood by Canadians, as one of change. The assumption made by the viewer is that he has the power to change a child's circumstances, and the smile is a very efficient and effective way that that can be depicted.

As she watches the video of her sponsor child with the World Vision cameras at her home, one sponsor exclaims, "Oh look his smile is amazing!" (WV1, 32:00) This remark and others like it are followed by statements of pride such as,

> I feel blessed to be able to do this. Our small action changes this little child's life. (WV3, 29:22)
>
> I look at those beautiful eyes and I see, 'Thank you.' I really get a great sense of satisfaction from helping. (WV3, 44:34)

The after ads are full of smiling children, which may lead a viewer, or an academic such as Patrice Palmer, to interpret the after ads as "positive," and by contrast, the before ads as "negative." To understand these ads in that way is a misconstruction. The child, and by extension the featured African community, remains at the mercy of the Canadian viewer and the organization as these dominant forces appropriate the smile as an accomplishment on their part.

Silence and the Sign

It is partly the silence of the featured children, the omission of their voices, that makes it possible for this appropriation to take place. The meaning of the smile, for example, would certainly be less ambiguous if the child were to speak. But the children and other featured African individuals rarely speak. In all of the selected videos, the beneficiary children and their families only spoke for one of three reasons: 1) to repeat a word or

phrase spoken first by the host, 2) to ask for help, or 3) to express gratitude to the organization or their sponsor family.

The only programming in which there appears to be an exception is in WV1, Africa's Children: In Their Own Words. As the title suggests, the children relay their own stories to the audience. However, the children speak in their mother tongues and a translation appears on the screen creating a buffer, which fulfills many of the same roles as a host. The translation allows the organization to bend or edit the child's words to suit its purpose. Also, what the child tells the viewer about her life is no different from what the host would normally say except that it is in first person. Thus, a host might say,

> George has no crops to plant, so he weaves grass together to make roofing material to sell. But there aren't any buyers. The family has absolutely nothing. (WV2, 8:21)

However, a child telling his own stories would say something such as,

> We pray every night for food and protection. It is very cold at night. All we have is our clothes to cover ourselves. Our mother's wall paintings remind us she is gone. I wish she was still alive to help us. (WV1, 36:00)

While it is true that the children speak far more in Africa's Children: In Their Own Words than in other DRTV, the translation is done in simple, stunted sentences, complete with grammatical errors and a limited vocabulary. Despite featuring the voice of the child in an aural sense, the editing and translation ensure that the message of need is portrayed. Also, in the end, the child is always asking for help.

It is far simpler to manipulate the meaning of a smile, or tear, action, or expression of a child who is essentially mute. Omitting her voice leaves room for the ad to use her as a signifier whose signified it defines.

Chico – The Soccer Ball Exchange

The way in which the connotation of a smile can be defined by the host, the organization, the sponsor family or the viewer in DRTV is an example of a symbolic appropriation. It is a way in which the ad explicitly defines what is signified by the child's smile (the signifier). In one of the after videos, the appropriation is more literal.

Chico is a Zambian child featured in an after segment in WV3. The family in the segment is filmed in their own home where they are asked about the rewards of sponsorship. The husband explains that his experience with World Vision, "Makes me feel worthwhile, to do something nice in a selfish world" (WV3, 16:11).

After speaking with Chico's sponsor family about the joys of sponsorship, World Vision presents the family with a video of Chico in Zambia. The video they are shown features a host who gives the family an update on Chico's progress, which has, predictably, been considerable since his involvement with World Vision. Chico does not speak, but his smile is ample assurance for the family that he is doing well and they have made the right choice.

Toward the end of the video, the family watches as Chico playing a lively game of soccer with a ball made from discarded plastic bags wrapped tightly with string. The host then produces a new, inflatable soccer ball, which she has brought with her.

"Take it!" (WV3, 16:41) The family shouts from the couch as they watch the imminent exchange on their television. There is no translator in the shot. After Chico takes the ball, she takes the ball that these children have made entirely from recycled materials and leaves him with the inflatable one. "It's a good trade buddy," the husband echoes, his eyes red and full of tears.

The family cheers, and the implication is that Chico, despite his not understanding the interaction prior to its occurrence, and his not being properly asked for his own ball, should be grateful for what he was given. The host looks into the camera after the soccer ball exchange and speaks directly to the sponsor family; "We're bringing this home for you." (WV3, 16:57) The daughter of the family is then seen clutching the ball to her chest as she closes her eyes tightly and begins to cry.

Despite the fact that Chico's was a more ecological, more durable, and more creative ball, the family cheers to reinforce for the viewers, and each other, that the newer ball was a better choice. Again, despite the innovation Chico demonstrates, his efforts are easily undermined. Also, the sponsor family's enthusiasm glosses over the glaring issue of the fact that, whether they agree or not, Chico's ball was taken from him without evidence of consent.

While the soccer ball exchange is a literal example, it is not unlike the way in which Canadians have symbolically appropriated the smiles of the featured children. It brings the viewer a "sense of satisfaction," and makes her feel "worth while." As Jan Arden explains in WV1,

> If you want to do one great, fantastic, adventurous,
> wonderful, heartwarming thing, for *yourself* [emphasis hers],
> sponsor a child through WV. (WV1, 56:00)

After extensive analysis, the true beneficiary of the sponsor-child relationship seems, in fact, to be the sponsor. They can "wake up every morning knowing [they] made a difference" (WV3, 28:05) while continuing to reproduce historical patterns of dominance that reinforce their righteousness.

The DRTV Disconnect

These organizations, through their DRTV, reinforce the idea that the audience has two choices when it comes to poverty in Africa: 1) they can act to affect positive change though donations or 2) they can choose to have no effect at all. The idea that these choices are the only ones reinforces the idea that there is no connection between Canada and Africa save the one the Canadian viewer chooses to make though sponsorship.

Since African and the Western nations have continued to engage in an imperialist relationship, which originated during colonialism, countries such as Canada and the United States continue to impact African nations by perpetuating,

> ...economic (and social) relations of dependency and control [to] ensure both captive labour as well as markets for [Western] industry as well as goods. (Loomba 6)

These sponsor families are therefore already deeply connected to African nations. The advertisements, however, reinforce the Canadian public's disconnect between the Western lifestyle and any potential consequences it may have on these countries.

Members of one sponsor family vocalize this disconnect through the following observations regarding their sponsorship experience:

> When we became sponsors ... I had no idea that there would be this kind of connection. It makes the world come very close to us. (WV2, 52:33)

Another family member adds,

> It's just nice to know that we're connected with another part of the world and our kids, we wanted them to know that these are real people that don't have the luxuries that we have here and don't have life the way we have it here. (WV2, 53:00)

At no point does this family ask why there is such a major difference between the living standards in African nations and those of Canada; why "they struggle to survive" and "we"

live comfortably with abundant food. Of course, it is not the objective or function of the advertisement to open discussion on this topic, but the way in which it normalizes this inequality is problematic. Economic inferiority, like the biological inferiority that scientists attempted to prove in the 18th and 19th centuries (Jahoda, 131), serves to legitimate racial inequality.

The Appeal to Authority

One way in which DRTV manages to foster belief in their ads is by appealing to the viewer's respect for authority. Since most Canadians have not had a chance to travel to an African country they may be apt to assume that the hosts or other spokespeople who endorse the efforts of the organization are authorities on Africa or international development by virtue of their being filmed on location. The producers of DRTV are well aware of their ability to convince viewers based on the testimony of individuals they present as having authority.

World Vision is particularly skilled at using this strategy, though all three organizations do employ it to some extent. Statements such as, "I've seen first hand what a difference you have made," (WV3, 15:33) are spoken by hosts and used by DRTV producers to lend unproven credibility to the organization. These statements are powerful tools, as the host presents himself as being the vicarious eyes of the viewer, thereby convincing the audience that they too would "see the difference" if only they could be there.

The host's role is extremely important in DRTV. He or she is the bridge by which the Canadian viewer can presume to understand the events taking place in an African context. He must be able to convince the viewer through his tone, expressions and reactions that he believes genuinely in what he is saying.

In WV2 one of the hosts explains to his co-host that,

> This is my second trip to Africa and let me tell you, the World Vision staff, they really now what they're doing. (WV1, 40:45)

The preceding quote was spoken by a man who is, by profession, a sportscaster. He explains that the viewer should believe in the work done by World Vision because he has traveled to Africa twice with World Vision. He, in fact, is not an expert at all. Because of his ability to relate to the audience and his position "on the ground" in an African country the viewer easily forgives him his lack of expertise, and overlooks the fact that both of his trips have been funded and made possible by World Vision, which also calls into question his objectivity. More importantly, his only evidence that World Vision is a credible organization is that he's traveled to Africa twice and witnessed the "warm welcome" the staff received upon arrival in the villages to which he was escorted. Thus, his "authority" has been entirely constructed by World Vision itself.

The appeal to authority becomes somewhat more complicated and manipulative when a professional lends his likeness to the cause. Stephen Lewis appears on camera in support of World Vision. Because he is a public figure, having held the post of UN Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, his face immediately connotes knowledge and reliability on the subject of development in Africa. But again, his appearance in the ad, which lasts mere seconds, attempts to convince the viewer without evidence, that sponsoring a child is a worthwhile investment. Lewis' statements read as follows:

> My experience is [that] World Vision does exceptional work on the ground: that wherever there is a desperate human dilemma induced by AIDS you'll almost always find some World Vision staff member dealing with it. (WV1, 10:00)

Lewis' regular presence in the Canadian media positions him as a leading voice on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Reinforced by his charisma, self-assuredness and eloquence, Stephen Lewis endorses World Vision whole-heartedly, leaving little room for the Canadian viewer to question the validity of the ad. Questioning him would require a mainstream Canadian to challenge the views of an established professional in the field of international development.

In this ad, Lewis also comments on the lack of complexity involved in the sponsorship process. Several seconds after his initial endorsement, Lewis explains to the viewer that, "It doesn't take much. You can transform life with a few dollars," (WV1, 10:30) thereby reinforcing that the crisis can be resolved through solutions that purport, but are not proven, to eliminate its cause.

Having a well-known public figure, or a figure perceived by the viewer as credible, vouch for the organization is one way in which potential sponsors are deterred from being critical of the organization or the narratives presented in the DRTV programming. Thus, despite faulty logic DRTV remains effective.

Imagination

Numerous tactics are used in the production of DRTV to keep the stories simple and the viewer engaged in the hopes of convincing her of their message. These tactics take two distinct but complimentary forms: the first is the distortion of signs in an effort to capitalize on the assumptions present in the Canadian habitus in an attempt to increase perceived need. A second tactic is the strategy by which the ad actively takes precautions against any questioning of those distortions.

By casting familiar and credible spokespeople, soliciting support from the occasional expert (e.g. Stephen Lewis), featuring sponsor testimony, shooting on location, and being adamant and repetitive in their messaging, these ads are designed to ensure that the viewer suspends her criticism. In order for the viewer to be moved to the point of action by the stories of these children, she must passively consume the messages she is being sent.

The most prominent example of the way in which the ads are successful in this respect is their tireless evocation of the imaginary. The social imaginary is defined by Charles Taylor who explains that it consists of,

> ...the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows.... (Taylor, 23)

Thus, evoking the imaginary in these ads helps to steer focus away from the inaccuracies in the story, the impossible reversals, and the lack of evidence and expertise on the part of the "authorities."

A World Vision host looks into the camera and asks the viewer the following, to which the answer is always inevitably be "yes,"

> Can you imagine what it's meant for a child like Jonathan to have the care, protection and support of child sponsorship? To have access to medical care to have decent clothing, an education? To know that someone out there cares for your family... Can you imagine making that sort of a difference in a child's life? (WV1, 30:53)

Evoking the imaginary urges the viewer to rely passively on that which he already knows, or thinks he knows, about Africa, and the featured children. It urges him to make assumptions and not to question faulty logic or imperceptible need. Evoking the imaginary allows the habitus of the viewer to structure the messages in the ads in a way that is familiar. Taking comfort in the imaginary is essential to maintaining the habitus, because the nature of the

imaginary is to convince one of the objectivity of his own subjective socio-cultural beliefs (see Chapter 2).

Thus, the viewer must rely on that which he already knows in order to forgive, or make sense of, the endless argumentative errors present in the ads. According to Taylor, the "social imaginary is that common understanding which makes possible common practices, and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (Taylor, 23). Further, the imaginary is "carried in images, stories and legends" (Taylor 23), making DRTV an effective way in which exploit the habitus.

The DRTV for child sponsorship is dependent on the viewer believing that everything she sees is happening somewhere far away, in a place she cannot fully understand. But this perception is not new. Africa has for centuries captured the imaginations of the Westerner as a place of savagery, romance, deviance and backwardness. (Jahoda, 131; Mudimbé 1988, 13) While Jahoda and Mudimbé discuss these perceptions as they arise in art, history and culture, Edward Said makes a similar argument about the academe. (Find in-depth discussion in Chapter 2)

Two separate, but equally serious issues have arisen from the examples to this point: the first is that the solution for the children featured is always disparate from the cause of their perceived problem. Secondly, in order to believe the unsound logic, the viewer must perceive the African world on screen as being foreign, and exotic enough to defy logic. There seems to be no other reason that an entire continent can be constantly plagued with a host of simple problems. Having that single school uniform, for example, according to the ad, could ensure the education of generations to come.

The DRTV Formula

Effective DRTV programming works (as established in Chapter 3) by eliciting an emotional response and balancing that with sparse facts and figures about the transparency and reliability of the organization that appeal to the viewer's sense of reason and practicality. In other words, in order to donate, the viewer must be at once moved to action as well as convinced he is making a good investment. In the practice of DRTV production, these elements are embodied and implicit.

Figure 4: DRTV Trinity for Child Sponsorship

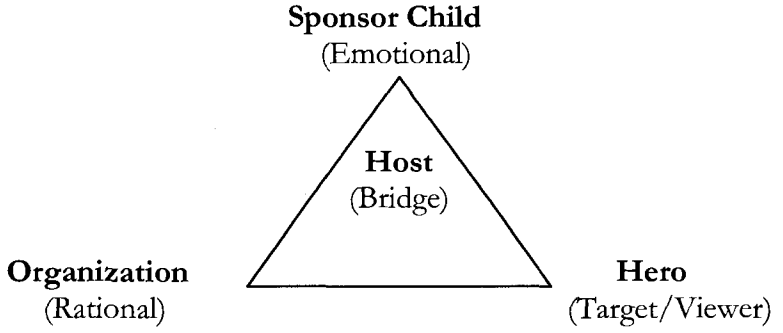

Figure 4 shows the primary components for successful DRTV as established by the findings of this project. This model is a visual construction of the data collected through the interviews merged with the data gleaned through the content and relational analyses of the videos. In brackets are the theoretical essentials that come together in DRTV to raise funds, while the elements outside of the brackets indicate the actual elements used in the instance of child sponsorship.

In the case of child sponsorship, if the host is able to relay an urgent emotional plea to the viewer while also vouching for the legitimacy of the organization, the ad will result in funds raised. If however, the emotional hook lacks poignancy because of the choice of

child, story, or the host's ability to relay the message, the viewer may not be engaged and the response may suffer. Due to the numerous contradictions present in the DRTV between actual and perceived need, it is clear that the host, whose role it is to convey a constructed need, is potentially the most important variable in the DRTV equation.

As has been discussed in this chapter, the story is easily constructed, but must include the viewer as a character, and testimonials and experts supply the rational appeal. During my interviews with the DRTV production professionals, I asked about the process of selecting a host: all of the participants used the word "trustworthiness." They placed trustworthiness above celebrity, appearance, demographic and attractiveness as it pertained to the host's effectiveness. After having analyzed the data, it is now clear why that is the case: the host must appear to reconcile the irreconcilable. In other words, he must be entirely believable.

Africa Rising – Breaking the Mold

Using the DRTV formula, it is possible to assess why Africa Rising, a program aired briefly by Plan was so unsuccessful. According to Kevin from Plan, the program was an attempt to address criticism from some development workers within the organization who felt that Plan's DRTV strategy failed to adequately demonstrate the accomplishments of the organization. While it remains very similar to all of the other DRTV analyzed for this project, some moments set Africa Rising apart. At several points, it breaks the rules of effective child-sponsorship DRTV.

Firstly, it strays from the tried-and-true before/after ad model to include a sort of after ad devoid of testimony. Thus, instead of filming a sponsor family in their home being overcome with emotion while witnessing "the difference their donation has made," Africa

Rising features a segment featuring a deaf child to whom Plan has provided a hearing aid. That particular effort spends precious minutes demonstrating the effectiveness of Plan's work, but in so doing alienates the viewer as hero. Had they, for instance, filmed the child's sponsor family at home watching the story and becoming emotional, it is plausible that the segment could have come closer to being successful.

Further, as this project has demonstrated, it is very difficult to tell the story of a child who seems either too self-sufficient or, on the other hand, whose need seems too great to alleviate. The first segment in Africa Rising, a before ad, features a child, Sarah, who is physically and mentally challenged – a difficult story to tell in almost any circumstance. However, Africa Rising makes the story even less accessible to the viewer by introducing education as the solution to the plight of the young girl featured:

> Disability and poverty form a vicious cycle – but an education can stop that cycle in its tracks … striking at a root cause of poverty. One of the best things we could do for Sarah and her brothers is to help them find a way to get to school. (Plan3, 5:22)

Unfortunately, the connection the ad attempts to make may be too tenuous even for the uncritical viewer. The story's complexity begins to grow. It is clear by her appearance that the child is challenged, which is problem enough for her. In this case, Plan could have chosen wheelchairs, or the procurement of leg braces, to demonstrate a simpler more immediate need. In other words, since the best way to help these children is for them to "find a way to get to school," the ad could have focused on just that – a mode of transportation – rather than special education classes in an environment where the dominant Canadian perception is that no education exists at all. Maintaining the perception

of having an immediate solution is something Plan could not afford to overlook, having already broken the mold by choosing to cast a child against type.

Perhaps the biggest difference between Africa Rising and other child-sponsorship DRTV is that instead of having each segment hosted by individuals who are professionals in front of the camera, parts of Africa Rising are hosted by Plan's CEO. While she is knowledgeable and comes across as friendly and kind-hearted, she simply lacks the presence, flair and showmanship needed to sell the stories.

Summary

This chapter shows that these ideas, which have long been present in the mind and culture of the Westerner remain in tact, though elusive due to the current democratic nature of racism (Henry and Tator 2003), in the mainstream Canadian habitus. For this reason, Canadians are apt to believe an advertisement that explains through faulty logic that an African child needs help. The assumption that that is a consistent reality registers to mainstream Canada as objective truth, and goes unquestioned because of deeply ingrained prejudice at times imperceptible to those who carry it. Paul Gilroy explains,

> For critics and other brave souls prepared to navigate the roughest waters of contemporary cultural politics, that half-forgotten imperial history is still present and potent, though it remains latent, mostly unseen, like a big rock beneath the surface of the sea. (Gilroy 2000, 245)

DRTV exploits these prejudices and the producers of these ads have a thorough understanding of how to do so. It is not clear, however, that they are aware of the historical or cultural reasons the ads have been so successful as evidenced in the misstep taken by Plan in the production of Africa Rising. The same can be said of the Canadian mainstream: we are moved in a real way for reasons upon which we have not introspected. The

combination of these two realities makes for a powerful cycle of knowledge production and consumption that results in false dichotomies and the repetition of historical dynamics of dominance. As information becomes more accessible and the world shrinks through the processes of globalization we are presented with a new opportunity and obligation to redefine ourselves.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

Critical Consumption

This project has demonstrated that within the minds of Canadians lies the possibility for a deep shift in race relations. These imperial patterns of thought, which have for so long helped define our identities, are just beneath the surface of our consciousness. This study presents an opportunity to all Canadians, because it presumes to put us all in conflict with ourselves: to pit logic, reason, and reality against collective socio-cultural norms. It aims to remove the passivity with which Canadians "pick up the phone and call now:" to challenge the roots of our assumption that Africa is synonymous with need, and propose that critical thought step in to take its place. As a deconstruction of the DRTV has shown, there is little contained within them that warrants action from the audience, but plenty that warrants questioning.

DRTV for child sponsorship has evolved since its conception, and it will almost certainly continue to evolve in response to the palate of the audience. If the discourse around the images used for the purposes of fundraising continues to focus on the minutia of ethical codes of conduct the same issues raised in this study will undoubtedly be present in the future. As long as we fail to think critically about the messages we are receiving, and instead concern ourselves with whether or not this or that African child is adequately clothed and not overly emaciated, we will continue only to represent these children according to our own tastes. The bodies of the children featured in DRTV are being offered up as objects to a Canadian population, and ethical codes serve to ensure that we are comfortable consuming them.

> The overriding fear is that cultural, ethnic, and racial differences will be continually commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate - that the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten. (hooks, 39)

Areas for Further Research

While this project has drawn numerous conclusions and offered a new perspective on DRTV for child sponsorship, it has also raised new questions. This topic would benefit from further studies, which focus on elements of DRTV that go beyond the scope of this thesis.

The response from the featured communities themselves is a natural next step for this topic. Having the insight from the communities could greatly impact their production. Literature which includes the response of Africans to any type of NGO fundraising in which images of Africa are used are severely lacking in the academic discourse. Since the only existing literature on the subject comes from the news media in Africa a project containing a response from individuals featured, or to be featured, would be valuable.

Since it is evident that the hosts of the DRTV are at a unique crossroads between Canadian culture and the African context, interviews with these individuals would be warranted. Understanding how they speak on behalf of the constructed need when confronted with a reality that includes individuals who are self-sufficient, for example, would be a worthwhile endeavour. It would be beneficial to know how they feel about reading illogical scripts or failing at a task, such as carrying water, on camera. While the hosts are not compensated financially, it would also be interesting to determine whether their careers – especially those of the celebrities – benefit from their appearance in the ads and if that results in the motivation necessary to participate in the construction of need in Africa.

Further, interviewing other individuals who appear on camera in the DRTV would certainly result in new perspectives on the same ads. For example, the in-field workers of the child sponsorship organizations may have further insight on the way in which they are approached pre-production, the expectations placed upon them during production, and whether or not they have any involvement at all post-production. Also, the development staff at these organizations in Canada might have a very different perspective than their marketing and communications colleagues, as evidenced by the rift articulated by participants in Chapter 3.

Other broader concepts could be applied to the research in this project. For example, while this project did not find a noteworthy distinction between the DRTV for the secular and non-secular organizations, religion is one historical thread for which this project did not have space. Certainly one of the things being purchased by the sponsor is redemption and the chance to figuratively be born anew.

Also, to glean further insight into the Canadian identity and psyche, studies could be undertaken to compare DRTV across cultures and countries. World Vision Canada, for example, produces forms of DRTV for both the Francophone and Chinese communities in Canada. Further, it would be valuable to compare the history of DRTV for child sponsorship in Canada with that of the United States to determine why, according to some of the interviewees who participated in this study, it has been present in Canada longer and had more success than in the United States.

A study on the demographics of the individuals and families most likely to respond to the programming would perhaps be telling. If, for example, the individuals most likely to sponsor a child are white and middle-class, as is depicted as standard in the ads, then to find

sponsors from other demographics may lead to a discovery of how and why these demographics are beginning to identify to a greater or lesser degree as heroes.

Poetic Differences

This project was born out of my perception that perhaps Franz Fanon's colonial writings as to the Manichean nature of black and white were applicable to contemporary society and culture: that these same dynamics were present in Canada beneath a cold layer of political correctness and ethical codes of conduct.

The reality of contemporary global society is that the idea of standing black in opposition to white is a false dichotomy:

> It is not an issue of 'us' and 'them.' The issue is really one of standpoint. From what political perspective do we dream, look, create, and take action? (hooks, 4)

Thus, where "us" and "them" were once, for Fanon, necessarily black and white, that is no longer true. That is not to say that our political standpoint is not determined in part by our race, but that that relationship is infinitely more complicated. For the most part, DRTV for child sponsorship depends on an antiquated opposition between the West and Africa in order to appeal to a demographic of Canadians who regard Africa as the antithesis of the West. As evidenced by the success of DRTV, these individuals are neither few nor far between. The effectiveness of these ads is symptomatic of nostalgic tendencies in a country which views the world as one built of nation states, as opposed to one that is rapidly becoming a quaint global village.

We continue to be tempted by the idea that complicated problems have simple solutions and that it is possible to generalize about entire populations and even a continent.

Arthur Nortje, a scholar, poet and "coloured," Oxford-educated, South African immigrant to Canada in the late 1960s, wrote of his immigration experience:

> ...A maple leaf in my pocket.
> X-rayed, doctored at Immigration
> weighed in at the Embassy
> measured as to passport, smallpox, visa
> at last the efficient official informs me
> I am an acceptable soldier of fortune, don't
> tell the Commissioner
> I have Oxford poetry in the satchel
> ... (Nortje, 92)

Nortje tells the reader that he is not what we perceive him to be. The idea of a satchel is an apt metaphor to illustrate the difference between political connotation of race, and its reality. No individual conforms precisely to the way in which he is politically or socio-culturally defined: each has something hidden in a satchel that sets him apart. The gross oversimplifications of DRTV and their evocation of the imaginary, serve to reinforce the idea that political definitions are reliable ones.

Ways Forward

The only way forward is to break historical colonial cycles of dominance through fundamental changes in our perceptions and patterns of thought. Canadians must be groomed, when they see need in Africa, not simply to assume it is our duty to take immediate action, but rather to ask questions as to the roots of its existence.

There is an immediate need for us, as a society, to conquer the fear that perhaps in some way we have contributed to the imbalance. For as we begin to recognize the forces of globalization it becomes increasingly difficult to believe that the real turmoil in Africa and Canadian wealth are independent of each other. Our collective habitus is being challenged,

perhaps more than ever before: and the DRTV for child sponsorship is evidence that we are reluctant to update our views.

The importance of the changes that need to be made cannot be understated, as they do not only affect Canada's external relations, but also affect its internal ones simultaneously. Clarke, for example, asks whether the hyphen in African-Canadian could be replaced by an ampersand or whether it acts as a "double-edged minus sign:" whether "Canadian" is "merely a convenience referring to our geographic residency, or whether it hints at an identity." (Clarke 2002, 40)

The issues raised by Clarke and others command the attention of the Canadian academic community, but this literature continues to expose the resistance of the Canadian mainstream. M. Nourbese Philip explains,

> [Belonging]... that is, in fact, what we are speaking about –
> how to belong – not only in the legal and civic sense ... , but
> also in another sense of feeling at 'home.' (Philip, 16)

Clarke and Philip both make it clear that Canadians continue to be alienated or included based on the symbolic and political value attributed to their races. Thus, the following common Canadian statements cannot be true:

> I am not a racist.
> She/he is not a racist.
> This is not a racist institution.
> Canada is not a racist society,
> (Henry and Tator 2006, 5)

Such vantage points contradict the findings of this project as well as most black Canadian literature. Further, they are not a plausible way forward. This "colour blindness" is counterproductive in a country whose exclamations and actions run contrary to each other.

Instead, we as Canadians cannot be afraid to confront a habitus whose construction was completed largely without our conscious consent – but confront it we must. And thus,

> ...accountability for the ways in which we are implicated in perpetuating relations of power cannot be attained in an ahistoric fashion. (Heron, 155)

As Canadians, we have the power to change our racial dynamics. bell hooks proposes a way forward,

> Mutual recognition of racism, its impact both on those who are dominated and those who dominate, is the only standpoint that makes possible an encounter between races that is not based on denial and fantasy. (hooks, 28)

DRTV does a disservice to the Canadian public both as citizens of this nation and citizens of the world as they mislead their audience through omissions, suggestions, assumptions and the construction of perceived need. This project maintains that, since the habitus, an internal, psychological structuring structure is the production-consumption site of this historical racial hierarchy, it is a difficult cycle to identify, and more difficult still to break.

It is necessary for us to make an effort to more comprehensively incorporate the views of all stakeholders into the theory and practice of our lives: and we must do so in an arena where there is mutual recognition of the relations of dominance that exist,

> We must...read...the entire archive of modern and pre-modern European and American culture, with an effort to draw out, extend, and give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented... (Said 1993, 66)

It is not only a matter of looking back, as expressed by Said, but also looking forward: being aware of our histories and moving consciously away from patterns that limit our understanding of each other.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. What are the objectives of the televised advertisements aired by your organization?
2. Are they an effective way in which to meet these objectives? Why or why not?
3. Do you use other methods of advertising?
4. If the answer to question 3 is yes, are these other methods of advertising as effective as the televised advertisements?
5. How is a location chosen for a shoot?
6. How and when are the local participants chosen?
7. How is the host chosen?
8. Is he or she paid?
9. If no to question 8, are there expenses incurred by this individual? If so, who is responsible for them?
10. Do budgetary constraints affect the location, host, or local participants featured in the televised advertisements? How?
11. Are the advertisements scripted?
12. If yes to question 11, to what extent are they scripted?

Appendix B

Permission for Use of Images: World Vision

Hi Jennifer,

You have permission to use the stills as you've outlined in your note. I appreciate you asking. Good luck on your academic project.

Best,

Pete.

Peter Ward Senior Vice President | Supporter Engagement
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To peter_ward@worldvision.ca
cc Graciella_Frutiger@worldvision.ca
Subject Permission for Use of DRTV Stills

Dear Mr. Ward,

I am writing to request permission to use stills from World Vision Canada's DRTV programming in my Master's thesis. The images will be referred to as a part of the analysis of DRTV programming for child sponsorship, and when necessary will appear along with the appropriate transcripts only. The stills will not be taken out of context or used for any purpose beyond my academic project.

The stills I would like to use will be taken from all or some of the following programs:

Africa's Children: In Their Own Words
Africa's Children: A Special Report
What a Day
One Village

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and your ongoing support. I appreciate it very much. If you have any further questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Gurbin, University of Ottawa

Appendix C

Permission for Use of Images: Plan Canada

Hi J, I just spoke with Alex, who works on our DRTV channel. He is fine with you using stills taken from the show as long as the context is correct. Also, if you want scripts please let us know which part of what show and we can track them down.

steve

Steven Theobald
Media and Public Relations Manager
Plan Canada
Direct: 416-920-1659 ext 211
Cell: 416-568-6525
Email/BlackBerry: stheobald@plancanada.ca

From: Jennifer Gurbin [mailto:j
Sent: August 17, 2008 5:53 PM
To: Theobald, Steve
Subject: Transcripts and Images

Hello Steve,

I am still in the process of finishing the project and was wondering whether you might be able to help with a couple of things:

1. Are the transcripts of any of the DRTV programs available? If so, I would very much appreciate copies - if that's possible. Also, if there's someone else I should contact, please let me know.

2. Is it possible for me to use stills of the DRTV in my project? Is it possible to gain permission to do so?

Thanks for your time and continued help, Steve.

Jennifer

Appendix D

AFP Code of Ethical Principles and Standards

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES
Adopted 1964; amended Sept. 2007

The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) exists to foster the development and growth of fundraising professionals and the profession, to promote high ethical behavior in the fundraising profession and to preserve and enhance philanthropy and volunteerism.

Members of AFP are motivated by an inner drive to improve the quality of life through the causes they serve. They serve the ideal of philanthropy, are committed to the preservation and enhancement of volunteerism; and hold stewardship of these concepts as the overriding direction of their professional life. They recognize their responsibility to ensure that needed resources are vigorously and ethically sought and that the intent of the donor is honestly fulfilled.

To these ends, AFP members, both individual and business, embrace certain values that they strive to uphold in performing their responsibilities for generating philanthropic support. AFP business members strive to promote and protect the work and mission of their client organizations.

AFP members both individual and business aspire to:

- practice their profession with integrity, honesty, truthfulness and adherence to the absolute obligation to safeguard the public trust
- act according to the highest goals and visions of their organizations, professions, clients and consciences
- put philanthropic mission above personal gain;
- inspire others through their own sense of dedication and high purpose
- improve their professional knowledge and skills, so that their performance will better serve others
- demonstrate concern for the interests and well-being of individuals affected by their actions
- value the privacy, freedom of choice and interests of all those affected by their actions
- foster cultural diversity and pluralistic values and treat all people with dignity and respect
- affirm, through personal giving, a commitment to philanthropy and its role in society
- adhere to the spirit as well as the letter of all applicable laws and regulations
- advocate within their organizations adherence to all applicable laws and regulations
- avoid even the appearance of any criminal offense or professional misconduct
- bring credit to the fundraising profession by their public demeanor
- encourage colleagues to embrace and practice these ethical principles and standards
- be aware of the codes of ethics promulgated by other professional organizations that serve philanthropy

ETHICAL STANDARDS
Furthermore, while striving to act according to the above values, AFP members, both individual and business, agree to abide (and to ensure, to the best of their ability, that all members of their staff abide) by the AFP standards. Violation of the standards may subject the member to disciplinary sanctions, including expulsion, as provided in the AFP Ethics Enforcement Procedures.

Member Obligations
1. Members shall not engage in activities that harm the members' organizations, clients or profession.
2. Members shall not engage in activities that conflict with their fiduciary, ethical and legal obligations to their organizations, clients or profession.
3. Members shall effectively disclose all potential and actual conflicts of interest; such disclosure does not preclude or imply ethical impropriety.
4. Members shall not exploit any relationship with a donor, prospect, volunteer, client or employee for the benefit of the members or the members' organizations.
5. Members shall comply with all applicable local, state, provincial and federal civil and criminal laws.

6. Members recognize their individual boundaries of competence and are forthcoming and truthful about their professional experience and qualifications and will represent their achievements accurately and without exaggeration.
7. Members shall present and supply products and/or services honestly and without misrepresentation and will clearly identify the details of those products, such as availability of the products and/or services and other factors that may affect the suitability of the products and/or services for donors, clients or nonprofit organizations.
8. Members shall establish the nature and purpose of any contractual relationship at the outset and will be responsive and available to organizations and their employing organizations before, during and after any sale of materials and/or services. Members will comply with all fair and reasonable obligations created by the contract.
9. Members shall refrain from knowingly infringing the intellectual property rights of other parties at all times. Members shall address and rectify any inadvertent infringement that may occur.
10. Members shall protect the confidentiality of all privileged information relating to the provider/client relationships.
11. Members shall refrain from any activity designed to disparage competitors untruthfully.

Solicitation and Use of Philanthropic Funds
12. Members shall take care to ensure that all solicitation and communication materials are accurate and correctly reflect their organizations' mission and use of solicited funds.
13. Members shall take care to ensure that donors receive informed, accurate and ethical advice about the value and tax implications of contributions.
14. Members shall take care to ensure that contributions are used in accordance with donors' intentions.
15. Members shall take care to ensure proper stewardship of all revenue sources, including timely reports on the use and management of such funds.
16. Members shall obtain explicit consent by donors before altering the conditions of financial transactions.

Presentation of Information
17. Members shall not disclose privileged or confidential information to unauthorized parties.
18. Members shall adhere to the principle that all donor and prospect information created by, or on behalf of, an organization or a client is the property of that organization or client and shall not be transferred or utilized except on behalf of that organization or client.
19. Members shall give donors and clients the opportunity to have their names removed from lists that are sold to, rented to or exchanged with other organizations.
20. Members shall, when stating fundraising results, use accurate and consistent accounting methods that conform to the appropriate guidelines adopted by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA)* for the type of organization involved. (* In countries outside of the United States, comparable authority should be utilized.)

Compensation and Contracts
21. Members shall not accept compensation or enter into a contract that is based on a percentage of contributions; nor shall members accept finder's fees or contingent fees. Business members must refrain from receiving compensation from third parties derived from products or services for a client without disclosing that third-party compensation to the client (for example, volume rebates from vendors to business members).
22. Members may accept performance-based compensation, such as bonuses, provided such bonuses are in accord with prevailing practices within the members' own organizations and are not based on a percentage of contributions.
23. Members shall neither offer nor accept payments or special considerations for the purpose of influencing the selection of products or services.
24. Members shall not pay finder's fees, commissions or percentage compensation based on contributions, and shall take care to discourage their organizations from making such payments.
25. Any member receiving funds on behalf of a donor or client must meet the legal requirements for the disbursement of those funds. Any interest or income earned on the funds should be fully disclosed.

AFP
Association of Fundraising Professionals

Appendix E

Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa
Service de subventions de recherche et déontologie Research Grants and Ethics Services

April 22, 2008

Abdoulaye Gueye
Department of Sociology and
Anthropology
University of Ottawa
55 Laurier Avenue East, room 8101
K1N 6N5

Jennifer Gurbin

Object: **(Mis) Placing Race: Deconstructing Myth in Televised Advertisements for Three Child Sponsorship NGOs (File #02-08-23)**

Dear Professor Gueye and Ms. Gurbin,

You will find enclosed the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee ethical clearance for the abovementioned study.

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms may not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must also promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

This certificate of ethical clearance is valid until April 21, 2009. Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer in April 2009 to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at: http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp.

A copy of this approval will be sent to research services, if necessary.

If you have any questions, you may contact the undersigned at the number (613) 562-5800 ext. 1783.

Sincerely yours,

Leslie-Anne Barber
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Peter Beyer, Chair of the Social Sciences and Humanities REB

Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa
Service de subventions de recherche et déontologie Research Grants and Ethics Services

HEALTH SCIENCES AND SCIENCE RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This is to certify that the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee has examined the application for ethical approval of the research project entitled **(Mis) Placing Race: Deconstructing Myth in Televised Advertisements for Three Child Sponsorship NGOs (File #02-08-23)** submitted by Jennifer Gurbin and supervised by Abdoulaye Gueye from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the University of Ottawa. The Board found that this research project met appropriate ethical standards as outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement and in the Procedures of the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Boards, and accordingly gave it a Category 1a (approval). This certification is valid one year from the date indicated below.

April 22, 2008
Date

Leslie-Anne Barber
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Peter Beyer, Chair of the Social
Sciences and Humanities REB

550, rue Cumberland 550 Cumberland Street
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

(613) 562-5841 • Téléc. Fax (613) 562-5338
http://www.uottawa.ca/services/researchgrants/index.html

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