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The Problematic Nature of Humanitarian Aid

Lorien Howe
Lorien.Howe@Colorado.EDU

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By Lorien Howe

Department of Humanities, University of Colorado at Boulder

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Thesis Advisor: Dr. Annjeanette Wiese, Department of Humanities

Honors Council Representative: Dr. Paul Gordon, Department of Humanities

Defense Committee: Dr. Cathy Comstock, Farrand Residential Academic Program

Dr. Myles Osborne, Department of History

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<u>Abstract</u>

The industry of humanitarian aid is often ineffective at best. A collision of factors occurs for those who try to help, often complicated by feelings of compassion or guilt, preventing efforts from being directed in the most effective ways. Further, humanitarian organizations often are not aware of their Western biases, and the ways in which they demean those whom they would aid. Literature and cinema are used to examine and illustrate the effects of creating people as a separate "other," and to look at the damage, loss of power, and misunderstanding it creates. Case studies of humanitarian organizations, using narrative analysis, demonstrate such biases and the effects that storytelling has on the treatment of human beings trapped in poverty. The case study analysis allows the public to be more consciously aware of their own biases, and suggests more effective ways of ameliorating the issues that are at play in poverty. Common misperceptions are broken down, and new ways of thinking are constructed. The practical benefit is that people will be able to apply this knowledge to their own research in order to develop more holistic, humanizing, and effective approaches to the eradication of poverty.

Introduction

In the United States, we are bombarded with pleas to help people less fortunate than we are - often in other parts of the world. Television pitches say things like, "For only fifty cents a day, you can save a child's life." With teary eyes, a spokesperson flashes through pictures of African children, removing all dignity as they become nothing more than images of poverty. Motivational appeals target both compassion and guilt. Viewers are left believing that if they make the suggested donation they will be an agent of compassionate change in the lives of poor and starving children, and with the subtle message that they should feel guilty if they don't. Poverty is an industry; those whom it is meant to benefit suffer, while others who claim to help stand to gain.

In the developed world today, it is common to view those in poverty as some sort of "other". Poverty makes us uncomfortable, and distances us from the humanity in people. What brings us closer together are stories, though sometimes, the other is still the prominent aspect. Culturally speaking, narrativity is necessary in order to understand situations in relation to our own context. However, it is necessary to be aware that this is a construction or ordering to meet an end, and will likely not give a full scope of the picture. The state of poverty is necessarily represented through narrative, but can be damaging if viewed singularly or ethnocentrically.

Narrative can be defined as a representation of a particular series of events in such a way that often reflects or conforms to an overarching set of aims or values. These aims or values are what need to be examined, determining who is speaking and what goals they have in relaying the stories. Rita Charon writes, "Literary scholars are of late greatly interested in the intersubjective

events of authorship, readership, interpretation, and influence" (51)[1]. She describes narratology then as analyzing "how stories are built, how they are told, and how they are received, the better to understand what they mean and how they exert their profound effect on us" (40). In analyzing narratives, it is important to be aware of the role of the teller and the listener. Is the story being told by the person it belongs to, or is it being constructed by someone else?

In the case of poverty, the tales are frequently told by outsiders who think they can understand and add perspective. This becomes problematic, though, as they view the stories through their own lens. The intentions are frequently noble, but it can be difficult to tell a story that they themselves see only from a distance. This is particularly the case when power structures come into play, bringing into question motives and possible end results. Humanitarian aid is a major component of this. Though it is good to extend a helping hand in times of need, it is detrimental when people become charity cases. Frequently resources are poured into them, taking away their need to work, to elevate themselves, and eventually to change their situation.

We must change the way we approach poverty, and the typical discourse of "power over" and "power under," or "haves" and "have-nots." That approach leaves real problems unseen, and, as a result, untouched and unchanged. Such culturally constructed binaries and the masterplots they imply problematize the situation even further. By telling people that they are powerless, that they cannot care for themselves, we create a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. If we are truly going to lift people out of poverty, we must change the way we look at the project. We must deconstruct our current paradigm in which we are saviors. We must evaluate our motives, break down our biases, and take care to humanize the ones we would help.

The organization Poverty Cure believes that, "having a heart for the poor isn't hard. Having a mind for the poor - that's the challenge." Many people want to help, and their

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[1] Rita Charon is a doctor. She writes about medicine and the role of narrative in diagnostics and prescriptions.

intentions are noble. Unfortunately, the narrative they have been given does not allow for equality on any level, whether as partners in commerce or even as fellow human beings. There are real, tangible solutions to help people. To discover them, we must first engage in meaningful communication. We must give those who are on the receiving end a voice rather than assume that we already know what will be helpful to them, and ultimately allow them to construct their own narratives. Imposing our own values on a situation we do not truly comprehend will likely produce more harm than good. We must allow those in poverty to propose solutions, and give them input into what they believe will best for their own stories.

In addition, we must identify and reject systems that push people further into poverty. In *The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli says that change doesn't happen because those who stand to lose from change have all the power, and those who stand to gain from change, have none. In the case of changing conditions that result in poverty, often corrupt and oppressive governments grow rich on Western philanthropy while their people continue to suffer. It is also the case that Western philanthropy has become a self-perpetuating industry, with non-profits often benefiting from donations, and little ending in the hands of those who are in need. A system in which wealthy people give handouts to the poor can itself be detrimental if we do not create opportunities for long term success. This demonstrates the importance of aims and values in driving the narrative of humanitarian aid.

In this thesis, I will address the issue of poverty by analyzing and deconstructing the current discourse and its system of handouts that dominates the aid world today. I will analyze selected charitable organizations and identify their strengths and weaknesses by examining their discourse and interactions with those they intend to help. My goal is to look at the narratives that are being told by the companies, and see if they are representative of the narratives that the

people they want to help would tell of themselves. This will be accomplished through a narrative analysis, taking care to examine not only the current discourse, but also the mission statements of the organizations and how they approach their work. I also intend to look at who is speaking and to whom, and what their goals are. I will be using theoretical approaches to this that will allow me to understand the language that is used and deconstruct the types and plots that are created as a result of this language, critically looking at what implications and unintended consequences this may create. Once I have done this, and based upon this analysis, I plan to reconstruct a healthier, more humanizing approach to poverty that will be more beneficial for all in the long term.

Problematized

As I write, I must take time to acknowledge that my own research is problematized. My own context is that of a white, middle-class American. I, too, am guilty of buying into paternalistic models. I have sponsored children and donated money to charities with the very sincere belief that I was helping.

Beyond that, I have not yet had as much hands-on experience out there in the world as I would like to. I have been to only a handful of countries, and my firsthand exposure to extreme forms of poverty has been very limited. Most of what I know has been garnered through research, but a full scope will never be gained through books and movies alone.

It is important to take time to recognize that the models I examine are being examined for their effectiveness and treatment of their subjects. I want to state that the heart of these companies is not being brought into question, as they all exist with the noblest intentions. Every one of these organizations has a mission and a heart for those in need, which is a beautiful thing.

This thesis is not intended to be an attack, as I know the intentions of the organizations and those who would partner with them are often noble. They come from a good place, seeing their own privilege and wanting to share it. My own heart, desire, passion, and compassion have led me to this subject, as I feel many of us are compelled to do something about the circumstances and even suffering that exist in the world. I applaud the desire. It is a beautiful thing to try to come alongside our fellow human beings and try to do what is best for them. People do so by perceiving a need they want to fulfill, often taking cues from their own context to guide them.

However, as we desire to help others, we should strive to do so in the most effective manner. The focus of this thesis is to take a critical look at current approaches through narrative

analysis to examine their effectiveness in addressing not only poverty but also the dignity and humanity of those they desire to affect. There are always ways to be more effective.

In this thesis, I intend to examine whose stories are being told, and by whom. This will allow insight into whether the approach comes from the people themselves, or if it is based more on the perceived needs of well-meaning Westerners. In approaching stories, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says, "[H]ow they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power" (*The Danger of A Single Story,* TEDGlobal 2009). The intention is generally not to keep power from the hands of people in poverty, but the unintended consequence of the way the stories are told makes this to be true. There must be a balance of power, in which those in poverty are empowered to see changes. This will require consciously constructing an identity of worth.

We must learn to value the people, and teach them to value themselves. This can be done through narrative analysis, because it recognizes the voices that are being shared. Narrative analysis sees the factors that are at play, and questions them. With this, it challenges current paradigms and allows for new, more holistic models to move in. It is a necessary framework, because it allows for a more objective look at the underlying stories that are being told and acted upon. Even from my own limited perspective, I can use this as a tool to gain knowledge and insight. The approach necessarily requires learning from each other. There is an unattributed quote that may say it best of all: "the best thing you can do for us is walk with us".

<u>Poverty</u>

People who are poor exist in every society, though in some they make up a much larger percentage than in others. Though poverty has existed over the millennia, there is something about it that makes those who are not in it uncomfortable. Frequently, those who are in poverty

are pushed aside and kept as separate as possible from mainstream society, minimizing both interaction and any chance at equality.

There is a common perception that people who are poor are somehow deserving of their poverty. That if they behaved in a certain manner, they would be able to change their situation. Yet in part because these beliefs are held, they are not presented with the same opportunity for advancement as their wealthier peers. It is frequently not their behavior, but their circumstances that determines their position. If they are constantly struggling just to survive, there is no room for upward movement for them.

In the aid world, the narrative shifts slightly. Those who want to help see poor people, but see themselves quite separate from them. They recognize that many of the factors leading to poverty are often outside of the people's control. By sharing their tools and resources, they believe they can help lift these people out of their circumstances. Or, more likely, they can help them get by and survive their present circumstances.

The problem with this is that the poor themselves are often not considered in humanitarian solutions. Westerners come from a different context. They likely do not understand the government, climate, corruption, or other challenges the people may face. The solutions may seem prudent, but they are seen through the lens of Western ideals. There can be no one-size-fits-all approach. It must be tailored specifically to the people it is intended for.

Solutions often restrict recipients in what they can do. In one project to give computers to the poor, recipients were reprimanded for using them for anything other than job searching. The restrictions they placed on their contribution were not consistent with their own use of computers.

Often, solutions address only the most basic needs. Westerners work under the assumption that this is enough, and that the people will be satisfied merely with food in their stomachs or other utilitarian needs fulfilled. If donors were on the receiving end, they would want their lives to consist of more than just the basics.

When examining Maslow's hierarchy of needs, aid is often focused on only the basic physiological needs such as food and water. Sometimes the next level is addressed in terms of health, but rarely does aid extend to areas such as security of resources, employment, or property. If these came into play, it would be easier for people to move to the higher levels of the pyramid on their own. However, if they do not feel secure and must focus downward on fulfilling the most basic needs of human existence, there is no chance they will be able to focus on anything higher than that.

In Western societies, it is a common expectation and even a perceived right for people to live at the top of Maslow's hierarchy. The United States Declaration of Independence refers to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," as "unalienable rights." Often, people who are targeted for humanitarian aid are striving just to be able to maintain the first. Because Westerners are more likely to enjoy these rights, they are far more likely to reach their potential as human beings. This not only allows them to be satisfied, but allows them to be contributors to the greater common good. It allows them to be creative, and to be fulfilled.

These rights should be universal. It is true that the people the Western world tries to help often face challenges, such as war, corruption, and lack of resources. Solutions must be found for these issues. However, we should not withhold help that we can give because we are not in a position to solve the larger challenges that they face. We should not turn our backs on the

fullness of their rights as human beings just because we cannot conquer all of the forces arrayed against them.

Examining this pyramid, though, becomes another form of narrative. It gives structure to the story. It tells of an ascent from one level of needs to another. While this structure may provide beneficial framing for helping people climb out of poverty, it is yet another way Westerners may be unable to understand the challenges that others face. If they are starting from the top, it may be difficult for them to piece together what has to happen to get there.

There is also an unfortunate trend where these factors become the whole tale. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian author, describes her own story of coming to America, as she was becoming acquainted with her roommate. "She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity." Often the Westerners cannot personally identify with the narrative, which creates a slew of unintended consequences as they try to help. Frequently the single story of the developing world is one of catastrophe: tales of famine, disease and other sorts of out-of-control factors.

The way that these identities are created forms a large gap between insiders and outsiders. "In this single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals," explains Adichie. This becomes true through the representations of people in poverty. Often, what we see are the refugee camps, the huts, the flies, the swollen bellies. This is what is shown, and little more. It emphasizes the differences between people rather than the similarities, as these images are displayed to people watching them on TV from the comfort of their couch. "So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become"(Adichie).

How can we expect people to behave any differently if this is the only information they have at their fingertips? How can we expect them to develop a full story if no one is telling it? The work that is done becomes cyclical. It sees only poverty. The identity is so deeply embedded in our own minds, that it becomes an inescapable reality for the recipients of aid. They are poor, and that is all they are. If they are not treated more holistically, there will never be hope for breaking out of the cycle.

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem of stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story"(Adichie). In this quest, the goal is not to overlook the poverty and dire circumstances they certainly face. If these factors did not exist, then the representations that are given would not be present. They are there for a reason, but they do not tell everything about the people. There must also be tales of their hard work, of their creativity, their family, their history. It requires a balance of stories, to take people in all of their humanity.

Their poverty may exist, yes, but telling this story alone discounts their ambitions. To step in and try to provide for them may overlook that they would rather find a means of providing for themselves. Not only that, we expect them to be grateful after we have given them what we have decided they need. Many people would prefer to have opportunity over handouts, to feel that they themselves are capable of contributing. Rather than providing a meal, perhaps we can provide a purpose.

Taking time to discover the whole story allows us to come together as humans. Their stories become our stories, and the distance is significantly reduced. Learning more about people not only helps to recognize their humanity, it helps us to take ownership. We learn better the role that we can play, and the role that they can play. Often this does not follow the standard

model of paternalistic Westerners caring for people as though they are helpless children. Having a Western hero does not serve a larger purpose. Instead, allowing everyone to be a player reveals a much greater potential for partnership, allowing both parties to mutually benefit as they exchange and contribute.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie tells her own narrative and misconceptions. She did not fall into the stereotypes her roommate had pigeonholed her in, and recognized that they were similar more than they were different. Her own tale is of growing up in Nigeria, the child of professors. They were fairly well-off, and she had the opportunity to read and learn at a very young age. Her circumstances did not follow the dire portrayal they were expected to. Her narrative was a progressive one, telling the story of a smart young woman with a future. The tone she uses is mostly serious, challenging her audience to carefully examine their own perspectives.

Even though her childhood would be viewed as privileged by some, this does not tell the whole story. In a country that does not value education, she saw luxuries slowly slip away as her parents struggled with their work. She had a close friend die in a fire because there were no resources to put it out. She still faced hardship, and her hardship was very real. In this way, she grounds herself as having more to her own story. The way she introduces this makes her story more human. It is not a simple tale of privilege or hardship, but an intertwining of both.

As she expresses her frustration at only having a single story of herself told, she acknowledges that she herself has fallen prey to hearing a very limited tale of people. There was a boy who came to help her family when she was young. Her mother only spoke of his poverty, and claimed they should eat all of the food on their table and be grateful for it, as children such as that boy were not so fortunate. All she knew of him was his poverty, and she felt sorry for him. Adichie states that it was not until she went to his village with him and met his mother that

she realized their potential and ability to create. They were so much more than their poverty, but that was all that had been seen. She not only breaks down the untruth that was placed on her, but by introducing the young boy who worked for her family, she brings herself to the level of the audience. Adichie herself is guilty of viewing herself more highly. In her own world, the one we would view as less fortunate, she is in a more powerful and privileged position than someone else.

By reframing our viewpoints, everyone stands to gain. There does not have to be a tale in which one person has been the perpetual loser. We see stories, and we choose the meaning that we want to have. If we choose a more holistic approach, we approach the people rather than simply their circumstances. The goal of this writing is to reconcile the common model that exists with a path toward the future. Examining the stories that are told and considering the factors at play that are not often described will hopefully bring forth a sort of healing in the process. The goal of people giving is to help, and the goal of this thesis will be to examine more effective ways of doing so. Commonly, we can likely agree that we want better for people than the representations we are given. This will allow them to play a role in seeing this happen now, and for future generations as well. My hope would be that we eventually live in a world where aid is hardly necessary, because the people themselves are able to play a role in the global economy and contribute as they please. We can do all we can to give them a hand up, and find ways for them to help themselves. It is possible to change the story.

Some Historical Elements of Humanitarian Aid

Many of the places we distribute aid to today are former colonies. Prior to their colonization, these areas subsisted with little or no outside influence. As colonization developed, it brought with it a culture of dependency that would forever change the landscape of these countries and the way the rest of the world interacted with them. Africa and India are prime examples. In the case of Africa, imperialists came with the notion that Africans were not capable of governing themselves. They were believed to be static, primitive, and "traditional" (Parker). When colonizers realized the wealth the African continent held, they wanted to extract as much of it as they could as quickly as possible, and to use native Africans as a means to this end.

Stories and histories were created to suit the convenience of Westerners. The colonizers "invented tradition," a phrase coined by historian Eric Hobsbawm. This allowed the colonizers both to define and justify their roles in stepping into the countries (Ranger, 211). They defined the working models of the countries under their terms, with no effort to understand the systems that were already in place. "They set about to codify and promulgate these traditions, thereby transforming flexible custom into hard prescription" (Ranger, 212). The dominant narrative was that colonizers knew what was best. This brought into question the agency of native Africans, as they were forced to reconsider their power and identity. Even if colonies did their best to adapt, colonizers radically changed their culture and landscape (Parker).

Previously, the economies of the colonies were diversified and they were able to be self-sufficient. Many were skilled, hard workers and were sought by white settlers for such reasons (Parker). However, people who could take care of themselves were of little use to the colonizers. India is a prime example of this. If people were forced into monocultures, where they relied on others to complete the full circle of their livelihood, the colonizers could keep them subservient

and under their thumbs. This was convenient, as it made them suppliers to the colonizers as well as disadvantaged consumers, but never competitors (Dalton, 91).

When colonialism ended in the decades following World War II, it was done strategically to benefit colonizers. Sometimes it was met peacefully, and other times only through revolution. However it was accomplished, it was met with reluctance. In many African countries there was initial widespread optimism, which gradually faded as they realized their independence did not bring all they had hoped (Parker). The strategies that were employed were intentionally negligent and even harmful. Because colonies had been in existence for so long, there was no way that they could immediately move into self-sufficiency (Shaw). Rather than working with the colonies to ensure their best chance at a future, colonizers saw the benefit of immediate withdrawal. Though it appeared to be giving colonies freedom sooner, it really crippled them and caused them to depend all the more on the people who had once run their countries. The best interest the colonizers had in mind was their own.

Colonization created cultures so entrenched in dependence and subservience that the people who were its victims no longer had fully functioning societies on their own. Colonizers forced them to pay exorbitant prices to import their goods, while the oppressed people had no chance at competitive market wages (Dalton). Colonizers got to claim they had washed their hands of former practices while they stood to gain from the messes they had already made. Colonialism cast a long shadow, the darkness of which is still across the land today.

Many would argue that neo-colonialism persists today, with part of its influence the money that is used in humanitarian aid. The industry of humanitarian aid has existed for decades, as people have been drawn to the idea of helping those less fortunate than themselves. Although it is often undertaken with good intentions, the structures that led to its necessity are

not always recognized. Some $2.3 trillion has been given in foreign aid over the last 50 years

and there is little, if anything, to show for it (Easterly). Such a vast amount of money, if used

effectively, should surely have eradicated poverty in its most extreme forms, had it been done in

a way that promoted sustainability. Pouring money into problems without looking at how to

effectively address them will ensure that, no matter how much money is given, it will never bear

enduring fruit.

The United Nations set up its Millennium Development Goals in 2000 to be met in 2015,

nobly believing that they were capable of eradicating extreme poverty and other such world

issues. These goals were as follows:

> Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender
> equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat
> HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global
> partnership for development.

They set out to reach these goals with little tangible plan and involvement from the people it

concerns, almost as if they were simply hoping the issues would correct themselves. Now, in

2015, the unmet goals are quietly dismissed as a new set of ambitious goals are touted. The new

Sustainable Development Goals are said to be more action-oriented, and have a goal of being

met by the year 2030. The goals include:

> End poverty, end hunger, [encourage] well-being, quality education, gender equality, water and
> sanitation for all, affordable and sustainable energy, decent work for all, technology to benefit all,
> reduce inequality, safe cities and communities, responsible consumption by all, stop climate
> change, protect the ocean, take care of the Earth, and live in peace.

These are lofty goals, and it makes sense that many countries would agree to them. The UN

wants to hold countries accountable for meeting these goals as well. However, it is very difficult

to discover information that identifies tangible steps to achieve them. The only suggestions are

that policy decisions made by countries should be respected, and that individuals and organizations who are experts in the given fields should be engaged. The new goals suggest that developing countries should allocate their own resources toward solving these problems, and developed countries should come alongside and support the achievement of these goals.

We often recite the motto, "Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime." The problem is that we do not live by this in the world of humanitarian aid.   We constantly give people fish. Not only do we not give them an opportunity to catch one on their own, we do not give them a chance to sell it at a fair market price, either.

The Creation of the Other in Cinema and Literature

Throughout history, stories have been told that separate people into categories of "us" and "them." When we create people as an "other," what we are often doing is silencing a person or a group. We may not even consciously realize that we are doing so. Frequently, it occurs at levels that are considered so acceptable, they are not even given a second thought. Suddenly, their voices do not matter as we begin to tell our perspective on what their stories must be. This othering is often what is ultimately the most damaging. If they do not have their own voices, they cannot share their ideas or what they know is best. In this section, I will look at three examples in which this othering is prominent. I will use narrative analysis to gain insight into the otherness that is created, the damage that is done, and any attempts within the story to repair it and create a more equal environment.

Good Morning, Vietnam

No matter what the intentions are, regarding someone as separate from ourselves can be damaging and dehumanizing. It creates a distance, keeping us from being able to see ourselves in their shoes. If we cannot see shared contexts or characteristics, but view others as some form of alien, this removes any chance at a level playing field.

This can be seen in the tense cross-cultural relationships depicted in *Good Morning, Vietnam*. Adrian Cronauer, an American military radio host, is fairly successful at cultivating relationships with everyone, because he treats them all as his fellow human beings. This paves a path to discover their commonalities as well as to celebrate their differences, both of which are imperative to develop a healthy view or relationship of any kind.

However, this is rudely interrupted when other American soldiers enter the picture. As a young Vietnamese man named Tuan casually sits with Adrian's group, the men break into the situation to proclaim that the "gook" has no place among them. Never mind that the men are squatting on the land of the Vietnamese, and with a different perspective they would easily be considered the outsiders. This example shows a gross separation of groups based on race that entirely discounts the individual. The men came in with assumptions, and they let these assumptions rule their judgment. They were only able to consider the situation from their own biased lenses and missed the reality.

In the movie, the establishment the Americans get their libations in is owned and run by one of these "gooks" as well. Jimmy Wah, the owner of the establishment, was found to be in an acceptable position, though. This is because it is separate and of unequal status. They just do not want to have this "other" anywhere near the same level as them.

Later in the movie, this perspective is challenged. It is revealed just how much damage this "othering" has caused. Adrian learns that Tuan is responsible for bombing Jimmy Wah's, as an attack on the Americans. He confronts him, saying "I fought to get you into that bar! And then you blow the fucking place up! Listen... I gave you my friendship... and my trust! And now they tell me that my best friend is the goddamn enemy!" Because Adrian has become a trusted person in the Vietnamese community, he believes himself to be on a similar level to them. He teaches them English, plays sports with them, and even participates in some cultural exchange when he visits their local market and eats with them. He does not realize, though, the inequalities that still exist. His context is that of an American, which challenges his recognition of the whole picture. Tuan responds "ENEMY? What is enemy? You claim our people miles from your home. We not the enemy! You the enemy! . . . Big fucking deal! My brother is dead.

And my other brother, who be 29 years old, he dead! Shot by Americans! My neighbor, dead! His wife, dead. WHY? Because we're not human to them!"

This reframing is earth-shattering to Adrian. Adrian had been afforded the luxury of not having to be aware, whereas the Vietnamese people constantly lived with this awareness. He had not considered his people to be the bad guys, and as such had not seen the destruction they brought with them. Though he himself has taken the time to make friends with the local people, that does not change the fact that Americans are occupying Vietnam and killing the people who live there. He lives in a more gracious context where he tries to give each individual a fair chance, but there is still a greater reality at play. This helps him to recognize the hardship that Tuan and his people have faced, humanizing him further and bringing them even closer together.

Regardless of how Adrian personally acts, the larger factors must be acknowledged. He must fully immerse himself in the other side of the story, hearing their voices and taking the full spectrum into account, if their narrative is going to gain the perspective and respect that it deserves. Fortunately for Adrian, his openness allows this to happen as his own mind is changed. His story shifts to see the hardships faced by both sides, which allows for a fuller perspective. In doing so, he is no longer trapped in the single story.

The Color Purple

In *The Color Purple* movie and book, the main character Celie is put in a subservient position from the start. She is an uneducated black woman who knows nothing but the sexual abuse and violence of her father, followed by her husband. She is further weakened as the children she has through rape are given away by her father. As such, her identity becomes that

of a victim. Any power she could possibly have is stripped from her. Celie is constantly told how ugly she is, and quickly learns that she is better off if she tries to become quiet and invisible. She has no narrative voice at all, except for the one she discovers through her talks with God. She does not fight back, because there is nothing that shows her she can. Celie is extremely isolated, disallowed any outside influence coming forth to empower her. With the circumstances she has been dealt, Celie becomes an "other" separate in every way from the rest of the world.

Celie accepts this identity of inequality and takes it on, because it is all she has ever been shown. As far as she knows, there can be no other reality and her current abuse is all there is. She has been shown this reality by those who should be in positions of trust. With no glimpse of hope and change, this is what shapes her narrative as she lives it and subsequently any actions she may or may not take. She accepts her mistreatment and inferiority because she has never been taught that life can be any other way. It is incredibly damaging, but no one has offered her any other kind of truth.

Even with physical abuse, imprisonment of the mind provides the greatest power discrepancy between victimizer and victimized. Another female character, Sofia, is constantly being beaten in an attempt to force her into submission. However, she is able to defy this by never allowing her will to be broken. Celie sees this example and the one set by Shug, a female she grows quite close to, and realizes that she does not have to accept the abuse she has been dealt. These women refuse to allow themselves to be dominated, and they will not allow the imposition of an identity to deter them. It is not until she sees that things can be different that she fights to make them so, though. She finally has people to protect her and demonstrate her value to her. If she knows better, she can have better. This knowledge alone changes her perspective and begins to give her power and a voice.

Shug especially works to humanize Celie. She shows her the power of love, and demonstrates what it is like to have someone care rather than just use and abuse. Tremendous encouragement comes when she helps Celie uncover the letters her sister Nettie had written to her over the years that had been hidden by her husband. Having access to these letters shows Celie that she does have a connection, and that she has worth to someone she holds in high regard. The letters give her power, and they give her strength. As her sister has been educated, it allows Celie a glimpse into how life could be different. The influence of these other characters allows Celie the opportunity to see that she does not have to accept the reality she has been given as an other.

Previously lacking self-worth, Celie finds the strength to change her narrative. Having people come alongside her helps her to find the voice she needs. She can fight the identity she has been given and never questioned. This not only allows for emancipation from her shackles, but in a sense a sort of salvation from her circumstances as well. No matter what happens, she has power. They can no longer make her feel inferior, because she knows better.

Celie is able to find strength in independence, taking charge by starting a sewing business. She takes a task that is typically viewed as a chore and makes it an outlet to express herself and make a profit in doing so. This simple reframing of a duty changes sewing from a chore into something she may have to do for others, and turns it into something she can do for herself as a means of mental and financial liberation.

One of the most damaging aspects of Celie's marriage is that her husband has treated her as no more than an object. As Celie finds her voice, she is able to stand up to him and confront all the ways he has wronged her. Ironically, Celie finding her voice causes him to reevaluate the way he has crafted his own identity. Whereas before he was a bully bent on doing everything he

could to quash Celie, he later recognizes that they are much better off if he does not dominate but emphasizes equality. Although he desires to reconcile with her and reapproach their marriage with mutual respect, by this point she has gained enough self-worth to decline his offer.

The juxtaposition between the characters of Nettie and Celie offers a view into the reality of how circumstances can dictate lives. Because Nettie was young and pretty, she was offered more opportunities. The fact that she was given an education and not married off or abused changes her entire narrative. She instead is given the opportunity to work alongside a missionary family, and even gets a look into the reality that oppression exists universally. She sees that everywhere in the world there is persecution of women by men, blacks by whites, and even blacks by blacks. Celie experiences her own oppression at home, experiencing everyday the issues of racism and sexism. Even though they were born into the same family, Celie's reality is nothing like her sister's. She is abused and broken down, told she is ugly, handed off, and deprived of any form of education to further herself. If they had been given the same opportunities, this drastic discrepancy in equality would not exist. As such, Celie is left to live her life without ever reaching her potential.

Almost as important as having a voice is having an audience to share it with. This is accomplished by Celie through her letters to God, and by Nettie with her letters to Celie. Even if the audience does not respond, the expression itself provides a level of catharsis. Still, if the audience does not hear, the voice is effectively silenced. Having the other characters enter into her narrative and interact with her does then allow Celie the forum she needs to find change. A voice means more when people are willing to listen.

In this story, Celie is dramatically disempowered because of the identity that has been imposed on her. She is separate and isolated as an other. Finding camaraderie, a voice, and

people who listen and care helps to give her the strength she needs to overcome the

circumstances that have been given to her. Recognizing the potential for change leads her to her

own self-actualization. The author Alice Walker states:

> I am an expression of the divine, just like a peach is, just like a fish is. I have a right to be this
> way...I can't apologize for that, nor can I change it, nor do I want to... We will never have to be
> other than who we are in order to be successful...We realize that we are as ourselves unlimited and
> our experiences valid. It is for the rest of the world to recognize this, if they choose.(Walker)

Madonna of Excelsior

The novel *Madonnna of Excelsior* describes a case of black women being charged for

sleeping with white men in South Africa, and is based on a true story in the 1970s. The story

involves the Immorality Act, a law that prohibited the sexual relations of people from different

races. Not only are the people separated by color, they are separated by economic status as well.

The black women become the indecent "other," with laws literally creating them to be

segregated into a lower position. These women are separated by their differences in every way

except with the lust of the bedroom.

Both in the book's depiction and the reality of the time, the laws of Apartheid South

Africa expressly forbade any mixing of whites with blacks. When the white men in the story

pursue relations with black women, the dynamics become exceedingly complicated. Because of

the power structures in play, there is no way that the relationships can be consensual. The men

impose their will on the women, and the women are left vulnerable with very little they can do.

However, the little bit of fun the men believe they are having turns disastrous as the women

become pregnant.

With the evidence clear, the men and women are brought to trial to face their acts. From

the start, they are treated unequally. The men are offered bail, while the women are forced to sit

pregnant in jail, with many giving birth there. The men easily displace their own feelings of guilt as the trials ensue. Some even blame the women for having made them give in to temptation. Even with all of the excuses, the women did not get pregnant on their own. The men had to have acted in order for such conditions to exist.

The children that the women bear present a problem, as they are not legally allowed to exist. The separation created by the law makes them an enigma. Niki, the mother who is profiled in this story, is troubled by the reality of the child she has as a result of her encounter with a white man. Her worry is not because she does not love her, but more because of the trials that lay ahead for both of them. This leads her to shave the head of her daughter, Popi, and to try to brown her over the fire. She wants to change her into something she is not in an attempt to protect her from the hardships they will surely face. Though Popi is legally classified as colored, she is ironically only "colored" as her body changes over the fire. Zakes Mda uses this in his writing to point out just how ridiculous such a classification of human beings is.

As Popi is mixed race, she is in a different class from either one of her parents. She is perceived as lower than her father, but higher than her mother. Her mother who bore her is not allowed the same rights because of this discrepancy. Popi is essentially doomed to face rejection from both white and black communities, as she does not fit in with either. She is viewed as neither white nor black, though she is both.

In the story, Niki is viewed as the mother of three different children. Not only is she mother to Popi, she has a black son with the man she is married to, and she sees herself as a mother to a young white child whom she cares for. Niki's motherly love overcomes the barriers of race that are imposed on her. This connection provides a crucial movement towards empathy and comprehension for all, recognizing that there is strength in diversity.

This story provides a prime example of the absurdity of distinguishing human beings as distinctly different from other human beings. The differences that have been defined are ones that have been created, and they are purely arbitrary. They are unnatural and forced, which becomes clear with the interactions between Niki and her young children. The narratives were placed on them at birth, automatically changing their equality and power, though they have no say in the positions they have been given. To place such burdens on a child is what reveals this story to be especially cruel. Mda makes this especially evident in his poignant writing. People look so hard for reasons to separate themselves, when if they just stood back, they would realize the common thread of humanity runs through all. Anyone who spends time with people from another group will soon come to realize that there are many more similarities than differences. This helps to tear down any prejudices that come along with the single story, and brings the realization that any destruction that occurs was never necessary in the first place.

<u>Methods</u>

People are storytellers by nature. The stories that are told, by people themselves or by others, have a tremendous influence on their subjects. They become identities, both in content and in form. The conveyance and interpretation of these stories is something that must be approached with extreme sensitivity, also keeping in mind the role of emotion on behalf of the listener. My goal is to examine the life stories, and discover the narrative truth.

Narrative analysis is so important because narratives exist in everything. They help to contribute to the way people define their lives, whether by their own definitions or by definitions that already exist or are imposed by the world around them. Margaret R. Somers addresses this in her paper entitled, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Construction of Identity":

> Recently, [...] research is showing us that stories guide action; that people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories, that "experience" is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and what is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available, social, public, and cultural narratives. (Somers, 315-16)

If identities are constructed through the way stories are told, and if stories guide people to act in a particular way, it is absolutely imperative that the narratives that are told cover as much ground as possible. Nowhere is this more important than in the aid world. As the work that is being done is shaping the very lives of people, it must be considered with care. For this reason, I will be examining the narratives that are told by various organizations in order to reveal their best and worst practices.

In the field of narratology, there is an important relationship between the listener and the teller. I would like to examine the following criteria in these case studies: contents, structure, style of speech, affective characteristics, motives, attitudes, beliefs of the narrator, and their cognitive level. I recognize that these narratives are also influenced by interaction between parties and other contextual factors. It is important to take into account biases that may exist, and to look at other factors that can influence the stories that are told. I will examine the place of hypotheses in narrative storytelling. Some of the stories are polyphonic and include many voices, while others are more limited. The selection of those who are interviewed may also influence the results. Gender, age, economic situations, motivation, and other factors play a part. In her book on narrative research, Amia Lieblich states that "[a]n interpretation is always personal, partial, and dynamic" (Lieblich, 10).

In this study, it is also my intention to participate in dialogical listening; considering the voice of the narrator, the theoretical framework, and a self-awareness of the decision process of drawing conclusions from the material. Constructing identity through autobiographical story and the process of theory building by empirical research parallel each other. I will use both holistic and categorical approaches, reading for important information.

I will be reading for emergent patterns and themes, looking for relationships and worldviews; exploring whether they are optimistic and pessimistic and what effect that has. In my readings, it is important to see where the focus lies, looking for clues of responsibility and blame. I will look for principal sentences with main ideas, and will examine their effect on the story overall. I want to look at how information is presented and determine whether the narratives are progressive, regressive, or stable. In my examination of organizations, I will also

look at their presentation of short-term and long-term goals. I will note what is present and absent in their narrative.

Close readings require looking at speakers, their tone, and the way this affects the way the information is read. It is important to notice how people are introduced, because this gives insight into the way they are viewed by the speaker. I will not only consider how details in the narrative affect meaning, but what implications they have and why they are important.

In these close readings, I will also look at what is problematic in each narrative. What are its shortcomings? Does it merely establish a collective identity, or does it see the importance of the individual? I want to look at the attitudes and expectations in each story, noting assumptions that are made in the process. I will note generalizations about people as well as generalizations about law. There may be conflicts and contradictions which must be brought to light. Lastly, I will look at the concordance between an organization's methods and goals to determine if they work effectively in fulfilling its mission.

In a larger picture, my goal is to bring to light the most effectual ways of presenting poverty narratives. This type of analysis will offer critical insight into how people in the developing world are treated, and the effect this has on their lives and stories. In fact, these close readings may be one of the most necessary ways to determine the effectiveness of organizations and whether they are meeting needs that people have identified for themselves, or they are simply acting on what their Western lenses lead them to see.

Case Studies

In this section, I will apply the methodology outlined above to a number of organizations that aim to help lift people in developing countries out of poverty. I will examine TOMS Shoes, a for-profit US-based company, and the Gates Foundation, a private foundation that provides grants to people pursuing projects in the developing world. I will also look at Compassion International, a faith-based organization, UNICEF, an organization with a close government association, and International Development Enterprises, a nonprofit with headquarters in the US with bases of operation around the world. By choosing a wide variety of organizations, I will be able to demonstrate how each sector of society chooses to address the issue of poverty. My hope is that by doing so, I will be able to uncover not only which organizations are most effective, but also find better ways of addressing the matter as a whole.

Toms Shoes

The TOMS website opens with a pop-up window appealing to pathos: "I love companies that give back and use business to improve lives. I agree/I disagree." Upon clicking "I agree", they take you to a page saying, "so do we. With every product you purchase, TOMS will help a person in need. One for one." It then asks for your email. This immediately draws on the emotion of the reader, as the mission seems noble. It is hard to deny an appeal to save lives, and it is vague enough to sound purposeful without revealing methodology.

Then I opened the "One for One" section. In twelve sentences, it describes people "in need" five times. In this same section it says "help" five times, "giving" twice, and uses other words like "provide." Each tab begins with "the gift of." The overall tone of the website is very

optimistic. It appeals to an affluent Western audience, encouraging them to feel like they can help eradicate poverty by purchasing items from TOMS that they would probably buy anyway, and might purchase somewhere else.

However, the voices in this narrative are Western, and the values are ethnocentric. Those who are "in need" are presented as passive subjects. They are not depicted as capable people, but as recipients of Western generosity. The story is one-sided, influenced by the beliefs of the narrator. Many of the pictures reveal children as an additional appeal. This suggests innocence and helplessness. Young children are incapable of changing their own situation. It may also project a sense of hope, that if we step in, they might be given a future. However, the implication is that this future will only be possible at the hands of Westerners who purchase items from a generous, humanitarian corporation.

To their credit, TOMS does attempt to involve the people they seek to help. On a page about local industry, we see glimpses of them. When the people are asked what they need, they respond with "jobs." Finally, their voices are being heard! But are they really? Ironically, though their answer is jobs, TOMS' reply has been primarily shoes. Still, TOMS is trying to move into a healthier realm with providing opportunity rather than mere handouts. Common themes on this page are giving, opportunity, life, jobs, and children.

There is little description of research goals and methods, and is therefore difficult to discern whether there is a correlation between them. Under their product development page, they state that they identify needs by studying statistics. Their "What We Give" page lists things such as economic opportunity, gender equality, access to education, improved health, and restored independence. While all of these sound good, and they boast large numbers of people

they have helped in these areas, I could not find anything that substantiated these results or how they were able to achieve them.

The narration of the website is first person, and commonly utilizes the pronoun "we" to describe the speaker(s). The cognitive level of the narrator is perhaps average, and the site is written in a basically comprehensible manner. The audience is expected to take everything at face value, and trust that TOMS knows what is best.

For the most part, stories of people focus on challenges they face and how TOMS helped them. The stories are usually one-dimensional, with an implied narrative that does not utilize the voices of the people themselves. However, there is a noteworthy exception. On September 23, 2014, a blog entitled "In Ethiopia, a Mother and Her Family Celebrate Sight" begins:

> Imagine opening your eyes finding everything blurry. For Ansha Ali — a 65-year-old mother of five and grandmother to 17 in Ethiopia — and others that suffer from visual impairment, the loss of vision can be devastating, preventing them from taking part in daily activities like work, school or tending to a home.

The story includes this woman's voice:

> "When I lost my sight [in] both of my eyes, I was very depressed…because I thought the life of a blind and old woman is worthless," Ansha explained. "I didn't want to be a burden for my children, especially my last born son. Since I lost my sight he misses market days where he could sell his crops."

The story shows how her lack of vision affected her family's ability to generate income. TOMS provided Ansha with cataract surgery to restore her sight, and she describes how much happier she is being able to see again. In this example, the woman had a need addressed, and it was one she herself identified. Still, there is a question of whether this primarily suits the goals TOMS has already outlined, and whether addressing this problem has much effect on lifting her family out of poverty.

On the whole, TOMS seems to believe that fixing a single problem will make a long-term difference. Providing something like a pair of shoes will take people off a path of poverty (when it actually undermines local industry by giving away goods manufactured in other places).

The selection of those who are interviewed on the site is actually quite broad in terms of age and gender, though their economic situations are not discernable aside from the general idea that they are poor. All of the people who are interviewed seem to fit perfectly within the parameters the company has already defined with needs they are going to fix. While there is diversity in demographics, there is little diversity in the needs and solutions that are presented, regardless of what other life factors might be in play.

While the individual is sometimes brought into view, it is done so in a way that does not recognize them for their individuality. They are part of a broad collective with little differentiation. Too many generalizations make actual solutions problematic. Populations that are actually quite diverse are reduced to a sea of sameness.

Another interesting aspect of the TOMS model is that they refer to the United States population as "customers." They are agents involved in a solution. People in poverty don't get this status. They are mere recipients. There is an inherent dehumanization in this. It does not allow people to act as agents, or to be participants in the creation and shaping of their story.

TOMS focuses on handouts: donations from those who are more fortunate to those who are less so. The idea is framed positively. TOMS perceives a deficiency, and tries to remedy it. It is all done with good intentions. And, no doubt, some people are helped in some ways. However, the values come with an ethnocentric bias. The voices that are shared are almost exclusively from outsiders. People whose stories are being told do not get much input of their own. They cannot express their own needs, their own desires, their own narratives. No matter

how positively it is framed, this will always become problematic. Westerners are the ones who hold the power, while those in the developing world are presented as helpless and needy. Until this narrative shifts to include their own perspectives, even an optimistic Western voice will provide a destructive identity.

Compassion International

Compassion International is a faith-based Christian organization with an emphasis on eliminating childhood poverty in the developing world by finding Western sponsors to pair with children. They describe their methodology with many bullet points and words in bold to emphasize key points. They provide a lot of information, but present it in an engaging way, with a large emphasis on their ethos. Their emphasis is on partnerships between the developed and developing world.

The primary focus of the website is the people Compassion International wants to help. There is, however, a very clear acknowledgement that their beliefs and values are involved in their mission. The assumption is that both speaker and audience share these commitments (which, we should note, are Western). They make it very clear that while their mission is to care for impoverished children, their motivation is to imbue Christian beliefs in the people they are seeking to help. My purpose here is not to critique this, but to note how it plays out in the narratives of the organization. A Buddhist organization might accomplish the same objectives with a different set of beliefs and values.

The tone of the site has a largely optimistic focus, exploring what can be done to come alongside those who are in need to alleviate their poverty, and specifically to find hope in Christianity. The site makes clear their intention to create long-term partnerships and lifelong

investment in the futures of the chosen children. One of the major features in Compassion's program is the exchange of letters between children and their sponsors, creating a connection between dollars, donors, and recipients. Their attitude is hopeful, as though they are certain they hold the keys to solving the problems they see.

The ethos of the site is engaging. A prominent component is an emphasis on education, trying to bring the reader closer to the situation they would be affecting. Under the "Rescue Babies & Mothers" tab, the site features a help center and describes the challenges the people in that area face. "Develop a Future Leader" shows a program that provides a university education as well as Christian leadership training. "Meet Critical Needs" allows the potential donor to give a one-time financial sum, described as a gift, that functions primarily as emergency disaster relief.

The site shows some hands-on interaction between parties in the developed and the developing world, as people visit and work in the field to see their mission accomplished. The primary base of interaction, though, is through letter exchange. This allows for some communication between groups, but no face-to-face interaction.

One thing that they believe sets them apart is their commitment to a "holistic" approach. They recognize that poverty is more than just a physical state. It affects the whole person and must be addressed as such. They look at spiritual, economic, physical, and social poverty each as factors, which they believe gives them a much higher success rate. Compassion outlines for their partners what the monthly donation goes to including medical checkups, nutritious food, health and hygiene training, educational assistance, access to special services like surgeries and disaster relief, mentoring, and "most important of all" it will allow them to hear about Jesus.

Whether one agrees with their beliefs, it appears that there is a concordance between their goals and their methods.

While many organizations focus on the community, Compassion's emphasis is clearly on the individual. Every child is connected with a sponsor, allowing for some level of shared experience. The picture and story of each child is shared with the sponsor. Compassion is opposed to nameless, faceless transactions.

A primary focus is providing access to resources that may not otherwise exist, whether to material goods or to the gospel they share. One story they tell belongs to a young man named Satish, who became involved in the Leadership Development Program to gain access to an education he could not otherwise afford. In a statement video on their "Develop A Future Leader" page, he states "I know my sponsors are proud of me. That is so amazing and loving, because I wanted someone to come up to me and say, 'Satish I love you, I care for you'. And my sponsors did that."

The presentation of the website is intended to appeal to the average American. It is not dumbed down, but rather relatively thorough. It includes a moderate amount of statistics but focuses more on emotion and storytelling to convey their results. The reader is told that if they choose to sponsor a child, their own lives will be changed in the process.

While the focus is on people receiving the service, it is difficult to tell whether their voices were present in the creation of the program. There are "testimonies," but the bulk of the website is written by Westerners, for Westerners. One of the testimonies, entitled "A Sickle Cell Survival Story," under the "Rescue Babies and Mothers" section of the site, tells the story of Edith:

> "When my child is sick, I am able to take her to the program located at the Kirongero Church and they refer her to a health center for treatment," says Edith with a tear in her eye. "They take the trouble to look after her. They put her on special nutrition for six months and taught me how to feed her with nutritious foods."

This story shows the difference the program makes in the lives of people on the ground, and the treatment they receive. However, it fits in with the narrative Compassion has already outlined as being one they are going to address and may not truly give her a voice. Many of the stories focus on the change in attitudes that come about by the services provided more than anything. Compassion seems to believe that the way people feel is most important in their development and success.

Compassion's main focus is on their sponsorship. Once sponsors are involved in the program, they are able to have direct contact and interaction with the people they are giving to. This adds a polyphonic dimension to the stories. Even as the voices of the people are included, however, they sound heavily influenced by Western values.

The testimonies on the site are primarily from young people, or those who began the program when they were very young. Although the program cannot be faulted for this, since it is their focus, it does impact the narratives that are offered. There is a transfer of wealth and services from people who are more economically advantaged to people who are economically disadvantaged. There does not seem to be a gender bias in any of the sections except the one specifically targeting mothers, which may allow them to address a wider variety of people.

Even with a largely positive focus, their approach is still problematic. It is the model of the white man savior, giving children heroes and role models they will likely never meet, rather than lifting them up in their own communities. The heroes are not in their midst. They are far away in a better world. This could lead to problems such as a "brain drain." Children could be led to believe the opportunities are elsewhere, and not at home.

The donor-driven model can be problematic. As a whole, Compassion seems to effectively reach their stated goals. With a longstanding reputation, they are fortunate to have success stories of children who have made it out of poverty. Still, hearing the narratives of the children themselves shows that they feel they owe everything to a Westerner they have never met. If they do not believe the potential for empowerment lies in their own community, they may well leave to seek a better opportunity. This could allow the cycle of poverty to continue if they do not teach the communities to care for themselves.

International Development Enterprises

IDE is a non-profit dedicated to helping people emerge from poverty by helping them gain access to tools and knowledge to increase their income. Since subsistence farmers constitute the majority of the poorest people in the world, they focus on improving the lives of rural households. They speak of simple solutions over sophisticated ones, and emphasize the people in their world rather than people from a Western perspective. "It's a respect issue. Rather than deciding for them what they need, we allow our customers to decide whether our offerings have value for them or not," says a slide in their mission statement. Their commitment to this is consistent throughout the website.

The structure of the website is fairly simple, with just one paragraph on a page at any given time. It seems to mimic their approach of being uncomplicated but effective. It does not target the audience with emotions. It is straightforward in describing the organization's approach and results. It speaks with authority but is accessible to the average reader.

The motivation of the speaker is drawn from the organization's beneficiaries, with the focus almost entirely on the people they work with. The attitudes and beliefs are drawn directly

from the thousands of interviews that have been conducted with the people they work with. It does not appear that there is a heavy Western influence. Projects and products are shaped by the people they work with. The level of interaction between parties is quite high and has developed over the course of more than thirty years. No doubt there are still biases and Western premises. IDE is a Western organization and cannot help but be shaped by that in some ways.

Contextually, those who are interviewed are among the poorest people in the world. While difficult to tell the age range of the people they work with, it appears that the bulk of them are adults of both genders who make up the workforce as primary wage earners. This allows them to focus on the population that will be most affected by their work.

While the website is written by a Western author and intended for a Western audience, there is a great concern to allow the people who are being helped to express their needs. "Only when we listen to the men and women we work with do we discover what they need in order to increase their incomes," their mission statement declares. This explicit statement shows that they work alongside people with the intention of discovering what they see as their needs, which is shown in the blog as stories are quite individualized. The cognitive level of the narrator is average to high and is relatively accessible. The speaker communicates with a clear sense of authority, demonstrating a strong belief in their commitment to find the best methods.

They take a progressive approach to helping people help themselves. They map out short-term goals first, which allows them to accomplish the necessary steps toward their long-term goals as well. In his novel, *Out of Poverty*, founder Paul Polak talks about the necessity of approaching goals in a way that enables people to attain them themselves. They utilize small steps that are achievable to make successive approximations towards a goal.

Though there are some direct quotes, their website is strong on implied narrative. They include many personal stories, some in depth and some to demonstrate the variety their services offer. In a blog titled "A Small Loan Makes All The Difference in Bangladesh" dated March 6, 2015, they write:

> Hasina Begum was part of a women's group. She expanded her homestead gardening using techniques learned from the iDE training sessions. She used the loan to lease land and started cultivating vegetables on a larger scale, which she then sold to nearby markets. The profits she earned were used to repair her house. Most importantly, she can now afford three meals a day, instead of struggling to even provide one. Now that's life changing!

Later on in that same blog they tell two more similar stories to demonstrate that their methods can be customized. Though each woman underwent training in business and money management, what they did with the tools they had been given was unique to each. This demonstrates the ability to tailor resources to the needs of individuals as well as communities, as the people have different results to their own individual stories.

An important aspect of this organization is the language they use to shape their work. While most organizations view people in poverty as mere recipients of a good or service, IDE instead portrays them as customers. This simple change allows them to be players in the game, offering a valuable contribution and making the work transactional rather than one-way. This is a much more humanizing approach, which matches their tagline of "cultivating potential." Their website states their intention to empower and provide opportunity, implying forward motion that people themselves can bring about. They state that their work is sustainable, transformative, and even country-specific. They focus on individuals who can then bring change to their community. They help people to help themselves and equip them to do so, rather than making them reliant on

donor dollars. Their market-based approach allows people to play a part in writing their own stories.

Gates Foundation

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was established to fund meaningful projects, investing in very specific causes. "We listen and learn so we can identify pressing problems that get too little attention," they state in their "How We Work" section. Listening is an important part of their success as a foundation. It shows their commitment to involving the other parties, shifting the focus of the narrative to their subjects while also involving themselves. Each part, then, becomes active in the way the story plays out. This becomes apparent in reading the rest of their website as well.

The main body of the site is written in first-person and is gender ambiguous. Their voice is very much a part of the action. Not surprisingly, the site is being narrated by Bill and Melinda Gates. The voice is clearly present in every aspect. This adds an interesting aspect, as the Gates are widely known for their wealth and prestige. Hearing their voices lends to their credibility, and makes the site engaging and on a level that is easily respected by a Western audience. There is some intermingling of the voices of the people they help, and there is an entirely separate section that allows for blogs and voices of people who have benefitted from receiving grants in their work. However, the primary voices clearly belong to the Gates, as many of the quotes are also directly attributed to them.

It should be noted that the Gates Foundation does not give to individuals - even individuals in need. They give to organizations who, in turn, may work with individuals. This gives a corporate air to their website. The intended audiences are the Western public and those

who are interested in pursuing a grant. The tone of the website is informative. This is

manifested in sections describing their work, methodology, beliefs, etc. Having an informative

tone is key for several reasons. Not only does it address their past projects and successes, it

allows them to give voice to their hopes for the future. The site is clearly geared towards a

Western audience with a fairly high level of education.

The layout of the site alternates between the voices of the foundation and the voices of

those they help. This presentation helps the reader to understand that there is an emphasis on

partnership and co-developing solutions. "We cannot succeed alone, but together we can work

for a world where all can thrive." The groups work together and promote an underlying sense of

equality, which is evident in the interwoven format of the site as the paragraphs alternate

between the foundation and those who benefit from it.

The tone of the website seems to be slightly positive, though its main function is to be

informative. It could certainly be described as didactic, with its focus on educating, learning,

and refining processes. "We see individuals, not issues. We are inspired by passion, and

compassion for the wellbeing of people. Our methods are based on logic, driven by rigor,

results, issues, and outcomes," they say. Though "we" can be construed as representing the

foundation, in this case it seems very inclusive, including those they help. The language is

holistic, and takes into account that the issues they face are multi-faceted. "...[O]ur effectiveness

is based in the aggregate power of our initiatives to impact holistic change."

Throughout their site, the Gates Foundation makes it clear that their priority is to affirm

the equality of all people, regardless of their income or economic status.   "We see equal value in

all lives." This is important, because it diminishes the otherness that can exist when Westerners

get involved in development work. It becomes more inclusive and allows people to become

players, giving the story input from more than one side.

On their site, dated March 4, 2015, there is a Twitter link to a YouTube video entitled

"The Cycle of Prosperity." The video talks about family planning as a tool in allowing women

to choose when they are ready to get pregnant. At the beginning of the video, it states "people

talk a lot about the vicious cycle of poverty. They talk a lot less about the fact that it works in

reverse. That there is also a virtuous cycle of prosperity, and there are things we can do to help

trigger that cycle."

They describe themselves as impatient optimists. Contrary to many charities that seem to

run on good intentions, the Gates Foundation explicitly states, "progress happens when smart,

dedicated people translate good intentions into concrete realities." There is an understanding that

while intentions may be noble, they must be translated into real, helpful results. Intentions alone

do not rescue people from poverty. This is why the Gates Foundation repeatedly emphasizes the

need for solutions tailored to each situation, which they focus on through their highly selective

grants.

A foundation run by the richest man in the world, who happens to be a white American,

would seem to have the fingerprints of privilege all over it. To the extent that that is true, it is

also true that Mr. Gates knows how to manage money well. His attitude is entrepreneurial and

he expects the projects he takes on to have the greatest possible chance at success. The end goal

is not their own advancement, but "a world where all can thrive."

The cognitive level of the narrator, not surprisingly, is high. This has the effect of

ensuring that anyone who wishes to pursue a grant is knowledgeable and professional. It is still

fairly accessible to an average Western audience though, providing a balance between being

welcoming and intimidating. It certainly conveys their high standards. The only trouble with this is that if there is a person much closer to the situation with a lower educational level who has a desire to help, they may not necessarily be able to approach the grant-writing process to begin with. Their grant process requires a description of the ideas and innovations, as well as a testing model that requires proposed data generation, future planning, and working within a budget. Their methods engage audiences and largely draw in the crowds they are searching for.

While the foundation encompasses a variety of voices, ranging from the foundation itself to grant recipients and the populations being engaged, the voices are most often channelled through the foundation's perspective. Reasonably, this may be done because of the sense of authority they are able to bring to the endeavor. The founding members of the foundation are easily among the most powerful and influential people in the world, so their words carry weight. The way they speak regarding the subject seems to consider the perspectives of all those they work with, and commands an authority that appears to reveal extensive research and thoughtfulness. With this, it could be said that there is an implied narrative that is focalized occasionally through the views of those that are being impacted by the grants. To some degree, this pairs the knowledge and expertise of the foundation garnered through meticulous research of the foundation with the day-to-day, on-the-ground experiences lived out by the people whose lives stand to be affected. While this does provide some comfort, it does not engage the voices directly as much as it could to show the firsthand knowledge and the influence the foundation has on those it works with.

When it includes the people they work with, it shares glimpses of their hopes and successes. "As a dad, I work to protect my kids...For my daughter, I want everything. I want her to grow strong and healthy," one story reads. The problem is, these stories really are nothing

more than glimpses. The site gives the sense that the narrators have listened to the whole stories, which does add to their level of credibility. Still, how can we know? The site would be more effective if it allowed for a fuller first person perspective from the people themselves, rather than just the application of it. The stories may be implied, but if the words themselves are not there, it is difficult to say for sure whether they allow a high level of input.

The Foundation works under the premise that money can solve problems. In many cases, this is true. However, the money must be used effectively if the solutions are to last long term. In the case of the Gates Foundation, they are very choosy about which projects they will enter into. Their methodology is laid out in a clearly calculated way, which hopefully leads them into projects that have much higher success rates. They desire a presentation of goals that includes measurable steps for both the short and long term. These requirements are necessary for the large volume of inquiries they get, especially if they desire to see their funds used well. However, it is quite possible that having such regimented requirements may close them to significant possibilities. If an initiative has greater plans toward improving important traits such as self-confidence and safety, it may be equally as useful but still not be chosen the way something that generates income would be. They do their best to address all of the projects they deem worthy, but it is possible that the emphasis on money and measurable goals could lead to some good proposals falling through the cracks. In this way, some stories may be heard and deemed worthy at the detriment of others.

Within the site, emergent patterns and themes that appear are quite positive and hopeful. There is a great emphasis on equality for all, and allowing people to have control in their own lives. "Our efforts on education help ensure that individuals have the tools they need to achieve the promise in their own lives," they say. In every sector they work in, something similar is

stated. It talks about moving people out of poverty, and doing so through proven, measurable

methodology. Even if there is failure, they know they can learn from it and use it to move

forward. With this, they display a pattern of commitment to always moving forward, though

they do so within a possibly limited story arc and type.

The Gates Foundation believes that poverty can be eradicated, and that they have the

tools to see this happen. In March 2015, their front page linked to a site called

www.globalcitizen.org that carried the headline, "[t]his year, for the first time in history the end

of extreme poverty is within our reach." This fits the views of the Gates Foundation. If all

players are willing to work together, change is possible. As affluent white Americans, this

displays some bias on their part. They have never personally lived in extreme poverty. Since the

majority of their grants are given to tax-exempt organizations in the United States, this

perspective could very easily lead to a single story. Do people in poverty see the problems and

solutions in the same way? Even if they want help, do they want the world that the Gates

Foundation wants to create for them?

"The world won't get better by itself. We must set big goals and hold ourselves

accountable every step of the way." What constitutes "better"? Who is the arbiter? "Better"

suggests quality, but the Gates Foundation seems driven and controlled by numbers and

measurements. True, they give a head-nod to something beyond this: "We are focused on

results. Those that can be measured. And those measured in ways beyond numbers." They

provide no guidance on measuring without numbers. Is a well-run corporation the paradigm for

a better world? Is it a world that people in developing countries would want to live in?

The Gates Foundation is oriented towards specific, measurable results. Their grant

application requires not only immediate plans, but a projection of future results. There is no

funding without a clear demonstration of these things. This protects their investments, but it may also limit the types of stories they create. What about their own statements about measurement "beyond numbers?"

At least on a theoretical level, this website acknowledges the importance of individuals and groups. "Our focus on economic empowerment unlocks possibility on the individual and communal level," they state. "The problems we seek to solve are complex and demand the coordination and focus of many -- leaders, governments, communities, and individuals around the world." Ignoring one component while treating another will not lead to long-term success. If the group is acknowledged but not the individual, the individual cannot thrive. If the individual alone is recognized not as part of the group, their context is lost. Addressing each circle of people holistically and within their own context is ultimately what will see any initiative through to the greatest chance of long-term success, as it helps form a connection and diminish the otherness. It creates a narrative of togetherness, which is necessary to portray the best story.

Though the site succeeds in many ways, like everything else, it still has its shortcomings. Because the Foundation operates at a "macro-level," it does not engage the voices of the people they help within their own stories. These are included and are most certainly implied, but they are anything but extensive.

UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is a United Nations program that focuses on providing assistance to children and mothers in developing countries. Their emphasis is on community-level services, with most of their work taking place in the field in places they hope to impact. They are currently present and active in 191 countries around the world.

The narrator of the website is a collective first-person narrator who is involved in the action of the story. The audience is Western, expected to fall into the average population. The cognitive level of the narrator follows suit with easy-to-comprehend language. This makes the site more widely accessible to a variety of people. As UNICEF is dependent on donations from governments and the private sector, this accessibility is key in helping them to advance their goals. The narrative they put forth is progressive, looking towards the future. It is optimistic, though it comes with the assumption that people in the developing context need the help of people in the Western world if they are to see themselves in a brighter future.

The tone of the site is positive, in an attempt to display their successes in overcoming adversity. In their "Who We Are" section, they state "[w]e act so that all children are immunized against common childhood diseases, and are well nourished, because it is wrong for a child to suffer or die from a preventable illness." By framing it in this way, it acts to persuade the audience that UNICEF is fighting an injustice that occurs around the world in developing contexts. Stated this way, readers are almost forced to agree with them. After all, nobody would subject a child to disease. Fighting injustice makes their work seem necessary. The ethos of their site constantly underscores this point.

The patterns and themes of the site range from championing the rights of children around the world to showcasing the ambassadors who are said to be changing the world. Although children are always in the picture, the organization has a very large emphasis on themselves.

Perhaps most prominently on the media for UNICEF is their discourse on the "Convention on the Rights of the Child," as outlined in a video under their "Who We Are" section. They state that "every child is born with inalienable human rights." They then go on to define these rights by saying:

> People in every country, every culture, every religion are working to ensure that each of the world's 2.2 billion children realizes their right to survival, health, an education, a caring family environment, play, their culture, protection from exploitation and abuse of all kinds, to have his or her voice heard and opinions taken into account. Children's rights are central to creating a world of peace, fairness, security, and respect for the environment. We owe our children the best we have to give them. Join us, and help create a better world . . . UNICEF. United for Children.

These words are set to music, as pictures of children from around the world flash by behind them. The music has no lyrics, but packs a powerful emotional punch as strong male and female voices come together to hit notes in a major key that are known for evoking a sense of duty. The words in the video are spaced out with additional pictures, allowing the viewer to take time to dwell on what they are seeing. Similar to a prolonged vocal pause, this again is used to tug at the heartstrings of anyone watching. The chance to ponder words in front of them makes them more likely to be drawn into the cause and to participate in it. The addition of a trumpet sound in the last thirty seconds adds a sense of hope and triumph, subliminally signaling to the person watching that these issues are in fact ones that can be overcome together, with their help (and monetary donations).

The human rights that they state do not all automatically come to mind in a discourse on rights, but they seem obvious once they are listed. Their appeal requires teamwork, which involves the audience as they ask them to "join." It seems that their work is inclusive and all-encompassing. Their call-to-duty is clear as they tell the audience they "owe" it to the children to act. It is framed not so much as a request but as more of an obligation.

UNICEF asks people to take ownership of the issue. On their blurb entitled *The State of the World's Children 2015: Reimagine the future*, they state: "[D]on't think of this as UNICEF's report. Think of it as yours." The idea seems to be that if anything is going to change, it must involve people around the world stepping up. The title of the piece itself indicates that people have it within their power to make this change, with the notion that if we believe it will be better

and act in such a way to try to make it so, then it will be. This could become problematic, however, if the actions that are taken result in a mere projection of a Western narrative.

One of the ways they are able to be most effective is by engaging people on multiple levels of society, as well as approaching a variety of sectors. Their "Who We Are" section states "We have the global authority to influence decision-makers, and the variety of partners at grassroots level to turn the most innovative ideas into reality. That makes us unique among world organizations, and unique among those working with the young." In order to have the greatest impact on the level they hope to engage, it is necessary for them to find and be a connection between the people on the ground and those in power. Being in the middle allows them to be closer to the issues and the people themselves while still holding pull to bring the voices of the people to the ears of those who can do something about it. This allows them a greater opportunity at making effective change than if they were grassroots or government only.

What may be problematic on the UNICEF site is that under their "Who We Are" section, sentence after sentence uses the word "we" to describe their work. It is clear that the "we" describes UNICEF, and does not encompass the people they work with. There is some mention of inclusion, such as stating that their purpose is "to work with others to overcome the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease and discrimination place in a child's path. We believe that we can, together, advance the cause of humanity." Still, the narrative in this instance has a heavy emphasis on the organization and what they are doing "for" the people. This way of framing the situation, even though it addresses working together to some degree, still creates a separation between "us" and "them." While they claim to have a middle position - which is key in connecting people in leadership positions with the grassroots - this seems to remove the bridge they could make by separating them from the people their organization is focused on helping.

This is troubling, as any level of separation denotes a degree of inequality. It seems to focus on the idea that we as Westerners have it in our power to do something about the situations of those in developing contexts. This discounts the notion that if they were given the opportunity, they could change things for themselves. It brings in an undertone of the "white man savior". To some degree, this can accompany a sense of guilt that Westerners often have as they compare their situation to the rest of the world.

UNICEF has been in existence since 1946, quickly following the turmoil of World War II as Westerners tried to fix the world as they saw fit. This gives them the opportunity to stake their claim as a long-standing organization, which tends to automatically come with the connotation of being reliable and reputable. There seems to be an air that is present that they know best and there is very little if anything left to learn. The approach seems to be more formulaic than evolution-based.

Part of the success of UNICEF's plea lies in the fact that their focus is on children. Society tends to see children as innocent, so the fact that UNICEF can bring them to the forefront plays a powerful role in bringing people to join them in their cause. Children are also frequently viewed as helpless, and if they are viewed as victims of their circumstances with no say of their own, this also works to play into the idea of getting them the help that they need.

To discover the voices UNICEF shares, there is a section called "UNICEF People" that shares direct links to all of the major sectors involved in their work. Very first, they list "Goodwill Ambassadors and Advocates," which details the celebrities they work with. This is part of what they use as their influence, and to get the word out about their cause.

However, further reading into their resources shows that the narratives they offer are quite problematic in their presentation. In an article updated on January 19, 2015 entitled

"Shakira and Gerard Piqué host World Baby Shower to support UNICEF's work for children," there is not a single sentence that shows the voice of the people receiving the goods and services. Their voices are entirely lacking on the page. Instead, the focus is largely on Shakira and the way having her own child has made her feel about other children in the world. She urges mothers to consider purchasing a gift for a child in need as they have baby showers for their own infants. There is no indication that the solutions that are being provided have had life breathed into them by the voices of the people themselves, but focuses specifically on "gifts" and "saving", suggesting that this is a solution that appeals to the Westerners. On the side of the page was a little note that said "[C]hildren in West Africa need your help. Please donate what you can today," followed by a red "DONATE NOW" button. The suggestion that this offers limits the people in developing countries as players and makes them mere recipients.

This is just one of many examples that can be found on the page, as the voices of the celebrities very clearly outshine the voices of the people they want to help. There are articles about celebrities receiving awards for their work, and having their name spread in association with the project. In some instances, it feels like the title could be used to make the celebrities look better. Though their hearts may be in the right place, their approach unfortunately seems to leave the stories they tell devoid of any voices but their own.

Their next section is called "Supporters": "UNICEF's supporters include ordinary individuals, eminent personalities and children and young people themselves." The newsfeed here is much smaller, and their most recent headline was updated February 3, 2006 and features Miss Universe, who many people would not consider ordinary. In this article, it says "[H]er year-long reign began with a highly publicized trip to South Africa where she took an HIV test in

public, in order to raise awareness of the disease and demonstrate the importance of testing." This unfortunately only considers her Western perspective of what needs to be done about the issue and once again entirely misses any voice from people living in the situation. It seems to be for show more than anything. This section, which claims to involve ordinary people, does not include ordinary voices. The closest thing that can be found is an article entitled "Blogs Can Harness Collective Power to Change the World," which is written by an expert to encourage people to use a separate platform to express their voice in hopes of an approach that is closer to the grassroots. Still, it encourages people to do so and to find connections while promoting one another. After all, he says "what is stronger than people acting together in common purpose?" This helps to give the sense that ordinary people have power in their numbers, though this feeling may be more constructed than tangible.

In the "Young Leaders" section, there was some disappointment that the first article featured Ronan Farrow, child of actress Mia Farrow who is also not quite ordinary, and that it dated back to December 20, 2005. To his credit, though, he does mention "lending a voice to people who are otherwise voiceless." Though is does not explicitly use any of their voices, there is a small degree of implied narration as he says "[A]ll across Darfur I talked to people, heard their stories and of course I felt the pressing need to try to do something".   Still, the focus is prominently on him. However, of the few other stories that are included in the rest of the young leaders section, there are some that belong to children in the communities themselves and therefore show some sense of a voice that has been listened to.

Another article entitled "Abigail's Special Connection With Street Children" says "she was compelled by curiosity - she realized she had never known any children who lived or

worked on the street. But the curiosity was almost immediately replaced by an emotional

connection." The girl herself comes from an affluent background, but she took the time to

understand and recognize the humanity of the people she wanted to work with; she met them

where they were and saw them for who they are. As this section mentions a few times, children

make up a very sizeable portion of the population; as such, their voices should certainly be heard.

Even so, this section is not able to fully accomplish this.

The "Staff" section mentions the duties of people who work for the organization, though

the maintenance of this page is also sorely lacking. The most recent article is from 2005, and

details the convenience the employees will now have with the launch of an online airline

booking system. The main page does mention that the staff interviews people about their

experiences such as being a child soldier. In an article called "Another Side of UNICEF's

Support In Zimbabwe," there is a section that tells the story of a nine-year-old-boy who was

forced to stop going to school after his home was destroyed and he was relocated to a "transit

camp." This demonstrates the on-the-ground impact the organization has through a personal

story in which the boy receives help to be able to attend school. To back up their claims, this

article is accompanied by a series of links to Zimbabwe evictions.

The final section in "UNICEF People" is the "Voices of Youth Digital Diaries." The title

itself is promising, as it includes the idea of giving a voice. It, too, is about six years behind in

publication, but the publication history is much more extensive than many of the previous

sections, leading to some sense that it matters to the people who keep the site up. This is where

some of the stories can be seen, and it incorporates them with the UNICEF partnerships that

exist. One girl from Ghana states, "'I was coming to school late every day because of the time

that it took to finish my housework and come to school,' said Rahinatu, 15, one of the beneficiaries of the programme. 'So the bicycle helped me to come to school early.'" UNICEF provided her with a bicycle as a tool to help aid in education. In this section, they do seem to consider the specific situations of the people they provide services to.

Though there is an attempt to focus on individuals in the featured stories about the "UNICEF People," even on those pages the only individuals that are shown are the people doing the work. Of five sections, only one is used to really highlight the voices at all - the Voices of Youth Video Diaries. The title of the narrative should be an indicator that it may not incorporate all of the necessary voices to develop the fullest picture. There seems to be very little recognition of the individuals within the groups that they desire to help. Rather, there are gross generalizations present that assume all the people in a given context have the same needs and desires as any other person in their general area. They seem to be grouped by region at best, rather by any of the other factors that are vital in their lives and livelihoods. Although people may deserve the same, general set of rights, having a "one-size-fits-all" model will never be the most effective. Unfortunately, the individual is ignored in favor of the appeal of the collective as their stories suffer from massive generalizations.

I had a difficult time finding much on the long- and short-term goals of UNICEF. Their math is focused on statistics and monitoring, giving the facts rather than concrete ways of changing the realities. These facts are necessary in discovering the problem, but it would be useful to see more steps toward a solution.

One short-term-leading-to-long-term goal that was highlighted on their main page in March of 2015 is their partnership with the LEGO Group. LEGO recognizes their wide

influence around the world and wants to lend this influence to help make change happen. The

approach they take is more holistic, and recognizes that the rights of the child are often unmet

because their parents as workers are not treated in a fair manner. They say that:

> The business operations of companies impact children on a daily basis. By providing fair wages
> for parents that enable them to pay for their children's education, by providing safe working
> conditions that ensure their caregivers return home, and by combating child labour, corporations
> can contribute to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality.

By recognizing these factors, they are taking huge strides into recognizing the greater levels of

the issues that are faced. Although something like business operations may seem like a surface

problem, it actually has deep roots in many places and must be treated as such.

Overall, UNICEF seems to be a mixed bag. There is a discourse on rights and some

incorporation of stories. The intentions are good, but often even the implied narrative is not

quite clear. The site itself seems to ethnocentrically focused on Western values and perceptions,

that those in the developing world suffer from not even having their voices shared in the stories

and solutions. Unfortunately, the organization seems almost more about branding and name

recognition than truly helping, with their major emphasis on celebrities rather than the people

themselves. This may not be conscious, but by only addressing perceived needs, there is no way

they can make the impact they need to make long term. The narrative is somewhat effective, but

it would require some major work if it is to encompass all that it needs to. Speaking to rights and

incorporating some voices from the developing world would help their work, but if these are the

afterthought they seem to be, it will make little difference in the final story that is created.

Reshaping/Conclusion

Using narrative analysis to examine organizations can give us insight into which organizations are most likely to truly help people, based upon holistic approaches that include the voices that matter most. It allows us to step back from our own ethnocentric biases, which impose values that may not serve other populations in the best way. While many organizations appeal to compassion or guilt, critical analysis of the narratives allows us to look at things more objectively.

There are many implications and unintended consequences when we assume we know what is best rather than considering other perspectives. Once we realize this, it is easy to become discouraged and cynical about being able to help at all. Should we leave our voices out? By no means! Analysis helps bridge the gap between blind optimism and an unhealthy cynicism, moving towards a recognition that all voices can play a role in moving forward. Doing so, though, calls for people to be addressed as fellow humans and equals. There must be a commitment to enter into partnerships together.

It is difficult to be critical of organizations whose desire is to help; however, there is always room for improvement. As is shown through the case studies, some organizations barely consider the voices of those they are helping. Certainly they do not give them prominence. They effectively create the disadvantaged as a separate "other," which is ultimately harmful not only to them but to us because we miss all they have to offer. With the methods that have been used in this thesis, we can learn how to engage in interactions that are not just shallowly veiled, preconceived notions. If we take these into account and allow them to guide us, it will lead to a better future for people in the developed and developing world alike.

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