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A Dollar a Day: Child Sponsorship and the Marketization of Human Development

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ABSTRACT

Child sponsorship as a method of international development offers child sponsors a personal connection to the process of alleviating poverty in the global South. As a form of human development, child sponsorship is constituted by neoliberal principles of marketization and social entrepreneurship. How does child sponsorship, in this context, require us to rethink the ethics of international development in light of ongoing debates about neoliberalism? In this research, I argue that child sponsorship reifies the binary of the "developed" and "undeveloped" worlds. Through undertaking a content analysis of three organizations (Compassion International, World Vision, and UNICEF) and applying post-structural critique to their marketing materials, clear distinctions can be made between multilateral approaches to human development and the strategies employed by non-profit child sponsorship agencies. A noticeable divergence can be found in the presence of a co-development framework in UNICEF programs which coincides with emerging critiques of conventional notions of humanitarian ethics and may complement potential alternatives to these established norms.

Introduction

The marketing slogans of child sponsorship campaigns saturate the collective psyche of those living in the affluent nations of the global North. Through media outlets, the ubiquitous line 'for a dollar a day…' is pumped in an effort to cultivate pity and encourage donation (Jefferess, 2002; Fieldston, 2014). Such an endeavor also offers in its package a glimpse at potential salvation; by changing the life of a child overseas, we are enabled to rediscover our own compassionate nature (O'Neill, 2013; Yuen, 2011). As sponsors write letters to their children overseas they are able to keep a personal connection to the children whom they assist. Yet through this process they are also able to keep them (and the realities they represent) at arm's length.

This research attempts to provide a theory of child sponsorship by situating it within the growing movement of market-based approaches to international development. This trend is further constituted by a neoliberal ideology that views the state, with its entanglements of bureaucracy and regulation, as an obstacle to be overcome (Turner, 2015; Barnett, 2010; Birch & Siemiatycki, 2015). How then does child sponsorship reinforce principles of neoliberalism in its execution? Additionally, how are we required to reframe the entire enterprise of global development in order to provide an explanation for the phenomenon of child sponsorship?

To answer these questions, I examine the marketing materials of three organizations working with children in poverty around the world. Two of these, Compassion International and World Vision, use child sponsorship as the primary vehicle to assist children in need. UNICEF, as a multilateral agency which specializes in providing humanitarian and emergency assistance to children, is likewise examined through a comprehensive content analysis. Using a post-

structural methodology, I discover semiotic patterns in these materials revealing certain assumptions about the task of development and the meanings it inscribes.

Prior to engaging in this analysis, I demonstrate how child sponsorship as a collection of practices is a discursive formation of neoliberalism. This requires an examination of the entrepreneurial heritage of child sponsorship and its evangelical origins, which I undertake in the literature review (O'Neill, 2013; Fieldston, 2014; Bornstein, 2001; Yuen, 2011). In the same section, I also examine trends within neoliberalism in an attempt to complicate the notion of neoliberalism as a monolithic ideology (Turner, 2015; Barnett, 2010; Birch & Siemiatycki, 2015). After discussing these tendencies, I position child sponsorship within emergent critiques of development in order to demonstrate how the phenomenon requires us to rethink ethics in the context of international development (Escobar, 1995; Benhabib, 2013; Plewes & Stuart, 2007).

This pressing task of imagining a "post-development" ethics is where my argument coalesces (Escobar, 1995). Through an examination of marketing materials and program evaluations, I demonstrate how multilateral approaches to working with children in poverty reveal an element of cooperation profoundly absent from child sponsorship frameworks. This element of "co-development" challenges the discursive binary of the developed and underdeveloped worlds through the active participation of beneficiaries in the definition and application of aid. Co-development further debunks racist stereotypes of laziness generated in development discourse by decentering categories of recipient and administrator (Fauser, 2014; Marabello, 2013; Plewes & Stuart, 2007). Co-development in this context may act as a potential bridge leading us towards post-development horizons.

Background

My inquiry into this research began with my professional involvement in a child sponsorship agency in 2016. Having studied sustainable development during the preceding year, and since child sponsorship is one of the most common forms of development that I had been aware of, it made sense for me to familiarize myself with this means of development at a deeper level. During my professional involvement with this organization, I began to feel a disconnect between the standards of the industry and what I had been learning about sustainable methods of development. Rather than simply asking whether or not child sponsorship was 'sustainable,' more complicated questions emerged.

The ethical basis of the industry of child sponsorship immediately came to mind. The ways in which images of starving children could be callously coordinated and framed for marketing purposes in television advertisements and other media made me question the ethical framework of such an endeavor, or if one even existed. Rather than questioning the ethics of child sponsorship, however, I see the practice as symptomatic of broader ideological forces themselves requiring interrogation. Among them is the notion of ethics itself, but ethics particularly in the context of international development. One pressing question which presents itself is whether or not such a conjunction is even possible. In other words, is the enterprise of development inherently unethical? How must we rethink the question of ethics given the exploitative forces at work in processes of globalization (Escobar, 1995)?

These questions were the stuff of my everyday employment. On a typical morning after arriving at my desk, I might be asked to edit a "success story" of one child whose life was transformed through child sponsorship. Through editing these stories, I gained a hands-on view of how discourses of meritocracy and success simultaneously create and seek to resolve the

"problem of poverty". These processes are not particular to child sponsorship but are also endemic features of neoliberalism and development (Escobar, 1995).

A theory of child sponsorship must proceed from an analysis of these discourses. In placing child sponsorship within this set of practices, I demonstrate that child sponsorship frames the task of development in a classic modern fashion: "While 'they' in the South are undeveloped, or in the process of being developed, we in the North (it is implied) have already reached that coveted state" (Lewis & Gardner, 1996, p. 3). In lieu of growing criticisms of this now outdated ethic what are current alternatives to child sponsorship? How are these alternatives practiced and in what ways do they depart from the "tale of three worlds" (Chandhoke, 2007; Escobar, 1995)?

Literature Review

The heritage of child sponsorship

Over the past several decades, child sponsorship has assumed a prominent role in international development. Up to $400 million in the United States alone is contributed yearly to child sponsorship agencies in their avowed quest to end child poverty in the global South (Dellios, 1998). The phenomenon of child sponsorship has a historical trajectory and ideological heritage that we must understand in order to build a theory of it. The practice of child sponsorship is comprised of a marriage of evangelism and neoliberal principles in which development becomes a form of both discipline and salvation.

The evangelical origins of child sponsorship are an essential aspect of its design and implementation (O'Neill, 2013; Yuen, 2011; Bornstein, 2001). O'Neill's (2013) interpretation of child sponsorship looks at the underpinnings of kinship which are created in the process of child to sponsor correspondence, and how this in turn fosters a "salvific narrative" of intervention.

These written correspondences are a peculiar feature of child sponsorship in which a financial transaction becomes a personalized vehicle of compassion. A form of implicit discipline is cultivated through the exchanges as children are required to write expressions of gratitude for the sponsorship package they are granted (O'Neill, 2013). This arrangement can best be described as a form of prevention: "The intent, one might venture, is to assemble a subject amenable to the practice of prevention—one that is conveniently distant but appropriately intimate, reassuringly familiar but timelessly foreign, uncomfortably gauche but ultimately responsive" (O'Neill, 2013, p. 214). Written correspondences ensure that this "subject of prevention" is worthy of receiving the gift of sponsorship and the timely assistance it provides (O'Neill, 2013).

The detailed analysis O'Neill (2013) offers of the progression of evangelical aid from its origins to its boom in the 1980s shows us the coupling which occurred between evangelism and a personalized market-based form of humanitarian intervention. In this marriage, a new subjectivity emerged that attached importance to charitable giving in the process of improving the soul and building Christian character:

> There, in the early 1980s, middle class men and women framed their lives as distinct projects of self-cultivation... As the liberal gave way to the neoliberal, as Phil Donahue lost out to Oprah Winfrey…, cable and late-night television programming offered new occasions for subjective work, with a host of personalities equipping a new class of consumer to meet the demands of flexible accumulation. (O'Neill, 2013, p. 208).

Market-based interventions such as child sponsorship offer an appealing venue for this line of subjective improvement by providing a personalized medium of charity. This personalized approach is revealed through the powerful practice of written correspondence.

Bornstein (2001) offers a critical perspective of the "fictive kinships" fostered and maintained by child sponsorship correspondences (see Fieldston, 2014). Writing about World Vision in particular, Bornstein (2001) notes the irony of creating a spiritual connection between people of different cultural origins through the medium of a material exchange: "Discourses of evangelism build relationships of child sponsorship within World Vision, transmogrifying money in the form of monthly remittances—a generic and impersonal standard of value—into embodied human relationships with alive, unpredictable, and spontaneous others" (Bornstein, 2001, p. 597). This relationship simultaneously reinforces "otherness" while maintaining the fiction of familial bond. Sponsorship provides essential services as an act of compassion but does this through a financial transaction that constitutes the main purpose of the relationship. As Yuen (2011) describes, also in reference to World Vision:

> Another problematic issue with World Vision is the presence of money in a relationship that is idealized as existing through love. The prevailing view in Western discourses is that one cannot 'buy love' and that 'friends and money don't mix'. The commodification of friendship seems to sully the authenticity of a relationship…" (Yuen, 2011, p. 49).

The notion that this exchange also infringes on the basic Christian moral principle that one cannot 'serve two masters' is yet another common theme undergirding this fundamental contradiction within child sponsorship. This coupling of a personalized market-based delivery of aid with evangelism creates a synergistic relationship between the two in which the visibility of both forces become erased. Child sponsorship becomes the means for material and spiritual transformation, with both aspects becoming intimately intertwined. While the spiritual component of evangelism inherent in child sponsorship is a critical aspect of its operation, the material component is likewise an essential feature that merits its own particular examination.

In order to examine this secular feature of child sponsorship, it is necessary to examine research defending this approach in order to understand how market-based principles of intervention are implied in child sponsorship program designs. Attempts to shield child sponsorship from criticism have of necessity taken pro-free market positions on the ability to alleviate poverty. Such positions have a long history in debates about international development, where rhetoric about the potentials of "inclusive capitalism" to address underdevelopment and cycles of poverty are commonplace (Prahalad & Hart, 2002; Schwittay, 2011). Those who vow for its efficacy often rely upon quantitative metrics to prove the soundness of child sponsorship from both a financial perspective and in terms of program design (Wydick, 2013; Wydick, Rutledge, Chu, 2009; Wydick, Glewwe, Rutledge, 2013; Bahng, 2009; Peralta et al., 2013). An absence of social scientific theories and qualitative methodologies from such research is an indicator of a bias in favor of an econometric and statistical approach to understanding how child sponsorship works on the ground.

This critical absence reveals a distinguishing feature about child sponsorship itself in the work of Evans et al. (2009). The authors provide an enlightening example of the state-evading tendencies of child sponsorship in noting how a policy requirement for school uniforms in Kenya is enacted precisely to discourage poor students from attending school. That a child sponsorship agency intervened and provided children with uniforms (selectively) is none the less treated as a victory for child sponsorship by the authors, whose research, like that of most child sponsorship advocates, relies solely upon statistical metrics (Evans, Kremer, & Ngatia, 2009; Wydick, 2013; Wydick, Rutledge, Chu, 2009; Wydick, Glewwe, Rutledge, 2013; Bahng, 2009; Ruvinsky, 2013). How this intervention neglects and even perpetuates the form of wealth-based discipline created by the uniform policy is not given further consideration by the authors.

Marketing materials of child sponsorship organizations likewise tout market-based principles as non-problematic and even innovative ways to resolve the "problem of poverty" (see Jefferess, 2002; Escobar, 1995). Despite being premised on a financial transaction, in this arrangement the child sponsor is a salvific figure who has the real potential to change a life. The financial remittances entailed in child sponsorship build upon themes of responsibility and intervention found in international development discourses, imbuing money with an almost magical potential to connect people around the world (Jefferess, 2002; Yuen, 2011; Escobar, 1995). The synergy of evangelism and free-market ideology within child sponsorship creates a pretension of universalism that ignores local cultural customs in the regions it operates.

The research on World Vision's Zimbabwe program conducted by Bornstein (2001) demonstrates the manner in which responsibility can be shirked on the pretenses of universalism that the evangelic narrative of sponsorship implies. In her words; "the very humanitarian and evangelical narratives that portend to transcend geographic and cultural distance through community development both elide and reinforce differences of poverty and wealth between sponsors and recipients and within local communities," (Bornstein, 2001, p. 606). These perturbations are premised on an absence of local cultural knowledge which has dire consequences. Bornstein (2001) cites multiple examples of witchcraft accusations brought upon by feelings of jealousy when certain children received extra gifts through the sponsorship program. These accusations further aroused divisions and hostilities within the community rather than promoting the spirit of global fellowship promoted in discourses of evangelic aid (Bornstein, 2001; Ruvinsky, 2013).

The evasion of state actors and the denial of cultural variations and norms is not only evident in child sponsorship but is also a prominent feature of neoliberalism (Barnett, 2010;

Turner, 2015). These tendencies necessitate a fundamental shift in our understanding of culture in the context of globalization (Hall, 1995). What role does child sponsorship play in a globalized conception of culture? How does the project of child sponsorship force us to complicate and re-envision neoliberalism as a set of practices, theories, and ideologies? In the next section, I examine the globalized context in which child sponsorship operates. Marketization, neoliberalism, and the state

Placing child sponsorship within the context of globalization helps us understand their mutual relationship. Globalization challenges and stretches conventional definitions of culture and the state to encompass a sense of global community (Hall, 1995; Sassen, 1999). Free-market principles derived from neoliberal ideologies amplify processes of globalization by allocating responsibilities to the market (Birch & Siemiatycki, 2015; Turner, 2015; Barnett, 2010). Child sponsorship occurs concomitantly with globalization and can best be described as a product of neoliberal ideology (Fieldston, 2014).

The complex effects of globalization upon culture, and upon consensus definitions of culture, is disruptive (Hall, 1995). As Hall (1995) notes, "With its accelerated flow of goods, peoples, ideas, and images, the 'stretching' of social relations, its time and space convergences, its migrating movements of people and cultures, globalization is calculated to disturb culture's settled contours" (Hall, 1995, p. 176). As with globalization, practices of evangelic aid have a distorting effect upon our conception of culture. Rhetoric of the capability for child sponsorship to create global familial bonds through Christian fellowship compliments and occurs in tandem with these ostensibly secular features of globalization (Bornstein, 2001; Fieldston, 2014).

Hall (1995) emphasizes the relationship between the notion of 'place' and culture (Hall 1995). "Place" according to Hall "establishes symbolic boundaries around a culture," letting us

know who 'belongs' and who doesn't (Hall, 1995, p. 179). In the globalized Christian ethos of child sponsorship and other practices of evangelic aid, 'place' in the 'developing world' invokes a host of connotations of poverty and helplessness that necessitate intervention (Jefferess, 2002; Plewes & Stuart, 2007).

Globalization has a similarly disruptive effect upon the state and conventional definitions of nationhood (Sassen, 1999; Hall, 1995). In Sassen's (1999) analysis, globalization cannot be confined to merely economic processes:

> Economic globalization represents a major transformation, not only in the territorial organization of economic activity, but also in the organization of political power, notably sovereignty as we have known it. Today the major dynamics at work in the global economy have the capacity to undo the intersection of sovereignty and territory embedded in the modern state… (Sassen, 1999, p. 469).

The emerging status of NGOs and international courts allows them to assume new responsibilities challenging this modern sense of national sovereignty. Child sponsorship NGOs provide a prime example of this tendency on the global stage in which responsibility becomes power. Under this globalized ethos, evasion of the state becomes necessary in order to introduce children in poverty to the emerging Christian fellowship connecting people from around the world (Evans, Kremer, & Ngatia, 2009; Fieldston, 2014).

As our conceptions of both culture and the state become complicated by globalization, an examination of the neoliberal foundation of globalization demonstrates their co-dependence. Neoliberalism is a complex series of processes which are not only economic but also social and political (Birch & Siemiatycki, 2015; Turner, 2015; Barnett, 2010). Neoliberalism is commonly

associated with a late revival of free-market principles challenging the conventional responsibilities of the state. In the words of Barnett (2010); "Neoliberalism displaces established models of welfare provision and state regulation through policies of privatization and deregulation," (Barnett, 2010, p. 270). These principles which are enacted through policy frameworks have profound and often disruptive effects on our social lives, challenging conventional definitions of culture already under threat by globalization. By looking at the social and cultural fabric which "the philosophy of neoliberalism etches itself into…" Turner (2015) similarly notes common trends in how neoliberal processes have been at work in institutions like the prison, the school, and in the market (Turner, 2015, p. 8). These patterns are equally at play in current trends in international development (Schwittay, 2011; Escobar, 1995).

The term marketization describes this process by which the state surrenders conventional responsibilities and cedes them to the market (Schwittay, 2011; Birch & Siemiatycki, 2015). The processes of marketization entailed in neoliberal frameworks place new responsibilities upon the market that challenge conventional beliefs of the purview of state jurisdiction. With its disruptive effect on culture and the state in the name of free-market principles, neoliberalism provides the ideological fuel for processes of globalization to be mobilized in real time. Marketization and the reallocation of responsibilities it entails further accelerates these processes.

Child sponsorship is an active example of a mobilization of neoliberal principles with regard to its vision of the state. Fieldston (2014) notes a connection to the state-evading tendencies of neoliberalism and child sponsorship. Fieldston (2014) argues that the foundations of child sponsorship can be found rooted in Cold War geo-political strategy, with child sponsorship offering an effective means of demonstrating the supposed efficacy of capitalist intervention in resolving poverty as opposed to the more centralized strategies of socialist states

(Fieldston, 2014). From the outset, child sponsorship was *designed* to circumvent the state apparatus during the Cold War:

> Many advocates of child sponsorship described relationships cultivated across the globe, particularly those involving impressionable children, as molding young minds and laying the foundations of international kinship that would bolster America's political alliances overseas. Child sponsorship programs promoted a new understanding of world affairs that transformed foreign relations from the realm of politicians and diplomats into the province of ordinary men, women, and children (Fieldston, 2014, p. 240).

The children who became sponsored in communist-bloc or communist leaning nations became pawns in a larger political and economic contest on the world stage, leading Fieldston (2014) to describe them as "little cold warriors" (Fieldston, 2014). In this ad hoc relationship, child sponsorship and the correspondences it entails became the means for transmitting capitalist principles. In this arrangement, development is a responsibility of those from wealthy backgrounds, and child sponsorship provides a means to facilitate the meeting of this responsibility.

With its assumption of responsibility in providing global welfare to children through a market-based medium in the form of international NGOs, we can best describe child sponsorship as a marketization of human development. How then does child sponsorship mobilize its vision of human development? In the next section I analyze discourses of human development and how child sponsorship demonstrates the malleable nature of this development paradigm.

Responsibility is power

By focusing on factors such as education, nutrition, and employment, human development places emphasis on the intersection of economic, social, and psychological realities

in the global South (Sanchez, 2000). The themes and rhetoric of human development are consistent with a classic modern approach towards advocating for individual liberty that allows its language to be easily manipulated. As a market-based intervention, child sponsorship enacts human development as a form of social entrepreneurship in a manner that is complicit with neoliberal ideals (Helmsing, 2015). In light of current debates about neoliberalism and the processes of marketization it entails, we are also required to place child sponsorship within the modern ethical framework upon which development is premised (Benhabib, 2013; Escobar, 1995; Schwittay, 2011; Pralahad & Hart, 2002).

Human development entails a shift in economic agenda from national per capita income towards a more relationship-oriented diplomatic perspective on global development. As Sanchez (2000) explains:

With human development, we call upon wealthy countries to recommit themselves to universal human rights, social, political and economic, and to realize the wondrous progress that is within our reach. We measure world leadership not by the yardstick of industrial production or per capita income, but by the strength and clarity of this commitment (Sanchez, 2000, p. 11).

This reorientation towards establishing global networks and away from conventional domestic economic metrics is harmonious with processes of globalization. The ambiguity of "universal human rights, social, political and economic…" can be read in multiple ways. Would economic rights under such a definition include deregulation? It is this ambiguity that can be manipulated easily by countries advocating for free trade, as such policy frameworks can be framed as affirming "universal…economic rights," (Sanchez, 2000).

There are certain contradictions inherent in the orientation towards alleviating global poverty espoused by human development theorists which should not go unnoticed. Nations leading the world economically and politically gain a sort of responsibility under this paradigm to 'discipline' the global South towards adopting policies of free trade, unfettered by regulation. While promoting this orientation there is simultaneously the hypocritical stance these same 'global leaders' take which Sanchez (2000) describes perfectly:

> Human development places a primary burden on the countries that are said to make up the 'Third World'. Here, it does not allow for excuses, but calls for a greater level of accountability and responsibility. It argues that well-placed investments in education and basic social services can go far in rapidly eliminating poverty… (Sanchez, 2000, p. 10).

The basic contradiction here is that of the disciplinary tendency of leading nations espousing the discourse of human development to advocate for developing states to invest in education and social services while simultaneously advocating for the surrender of resources through global trade and its dominant trend of neoliberalism. Here it should be noted that it is not human development itself which embodies this contradiction, but is inherent in the ways developed nations mobilize the language of human development for their own means. It is evident furthermore that it is not necessarily the "global North" mobilizing the language of human development in this way, but more specifically the private sector of these nations who can easily take advantage of this rhetorical malleability. Child sponsorship organizations represent one facet of the private sector by taking the form of an NGO and being given tax exemption can offer themselves as a market-based means to promote human development.

In its "marketization of poverty," child sponsorship enacts human development as a form of social entrepreneurship (Schwittay, 2011; Helmsing, 2015). Social entrepreneurship

emphasizes using "innovative ways to create social value and address social problems" (Helmsing, 2015, p. 55). Helmsing (2015) notes the ways in which power is generated within organizations and how "social entrepreneurs can also manipulate social entrepreneurial values to gain political power" (Helmsing, 2015). Social entrepreneurship simultaneously depoliticizes social issues and circumvents the state apparatus through proposing a market-based solution. Citing the compelling insights of Cho (2006), Helmsing (2015) writes: "By applying private social entrepreneurial strategies to meet social needs, the social entrepreneur bypasses political processes in favor of a subject-centered and sometimes market-oriented approach to the definition and achievement of social objectives" (Helmsing, 2015, p. 57; Cho, 2006). This subject-centered approach is evident in curious features of child sponsorship such as child-sponsor correspondence that promote a personal connection in the process of alleviating poverty.

Under the ethos of neoliberal principles, a vacancy is created in the global market for private entities to engage in human development practice. Child sponsorship assumes this responsibility and gains traction as a market-based development practice through championing an ethos of social entrepreneurship. Processes of marketization (such as child sponsorship) within development have not been without controversy, reinvigorating questions both old and new about development ethics.

Current scholarly debates challenge the efficacy of marketization in alleviating poverty. Schwittay (2011) demonstrates the invalidity of this framework which relies in many ways on neoliberal principles and its myths of "inclusive capitalism" (Prahalad & Hart, 2002). Criticizing Prahalad's notions of the fortune at the "bottom of the pyramid," Schwittay (2011) notes the incapability of "inclusive capitalism" to address the systemic problems which are themselves maintained through processes of capital accumulation: "transforming the poor into

protoconsumers…cannot address the structural drivers of their circumstances and will lead to

neither the eradication of poverty nor a corporate fortune…" (Schwittay, 2011, p. 71).

These debates raise new questions about marketization in particular, but also tap into

questions fundamental to the task of development in general. When we look at child sponsorship

in the context of evangelism, globalization, neoliberalism, marketization, and human

development, a clear pattern becomes evident: responsibility is power. The discourses of

responsibility present in international development that are particularly noticeable in child

sponsorship create semiotic representations of the impoverished other, engendering cycles of

intervention (Jefferess, 2002; Escobar, 1995; Plewes & Stuart, 2007). In the next section I frame

child sponsorship within critiques of development ethics and the discursive regime of

representation that it promotes and inculcates as a form of discipline.

Rethinking ethics and global poverty

Ethics commonly entails or describes the responsible use of power. Modern ethics is

premised on a conception of human rights, the justification for which has been frequently

problematized (Fraser, 1996; Benhabib, 2013; Roth, 2007; Chandoke, 2007). While many

theoretical accounts seek to provide this justification, Benhabib (2013) notes the manner in

which they are all derived from a set of common normative presuppositions: "…any justification

of human rights will presuppose some conceptions of human agency, some account of human

needs and rationality, as well as entertain some assumptions about the nature of our socio-

political world" (Benhabib, 2013, p. 38).

The problem posed by the normative presuppositions necessary for the human rights

claim is exemplified through an examination of what has been termed "ESC rights (economic,

social, and cultural)." In a critique of Kenneth Roth's (2007) defense of ESC rights, Chandhoke

(2007) notes the difficulty of implementing ESC rights in the current context of international law; "In a globalized, interdependent world where the power of governments over natural resources has been drastically curtailed, which agency, it is asked, has the responsibility to uphold these rights – governments, international institutions, global civil society, or the United Nations?" (Chandoke, 2007, p. 183; Roth, 2007). The set of normative presuppositions entailed in the ESC rights claim is premised upon a tendency of "normalization" found in development discourse and echoes the disciplinary rhetoric and practices we find in human development, evident in the technique of "shaming" vouched for by Roth (Escobar, 1995; Sanchez, 2000; Chandhoke, 2007; Roth, 2007).

In this modern conception of ethics cherished in development discourse, images of helplessness and victimhood are associated with a lack of development and thus create an imperative to intervene. These tropes build a regime of signs associated with the "developing world" which some have described as "poverty pornography" (Plewes & Stuart, 2007; Jefferess, 2002). This trend builds upon racialized stereotypes of laziness that have origins in the colonial era yet remains a constitutive element of neoliberal principles. This insidious regime of racialized discipline is further entrenched in the theory and practice of international development.

Escobar's (1995) critique challenges discourses of responsibility and progress in international development. The formation of discourses of modern development is predicated on a tendency to normalize the world in the image of the West:

A type of development was promoted which conformed to the ideas and expectations of the affluent West, to what the Western countries judged to be a normal course of evolution and progress… By conceptualizing progress in such terms, this development

strategy became a powerful instrument for *normalizing the world* (Escobar, 1995, p. 26)

(emphasis mine).

With the "discovery" of poverty, new normative ideals of progress were impressed upon the

world through development interventions. Yet there are resistances to this normative framework

and the crumbling and inadequate foundation of modern ethics upon which it stands:

> The political and economic order coded by the tale of three worlds and development rests
>
> on a traffic of meanings that mapped new domains of being and understanding, the same
>
> domains that are increasingly being challenged and displaced by people in the Third
>
> World today (Escobar, 1995, p. 24).

It is through these movements that Escobar (1995) envisions a paradigm of post-development

that incorporates indigenous knowledges rather than suppressing them (Escobar, 1995). In this

emerging ideal, indigenous peoples around the world might use the technological innovations of

modernity for their own political projects, highlighting the inadequacies of development

interventions to which they are subjected (Escobar, 1995).

Under the auspices of responsibility, child sponsorship operates under conventional

definitions of ethics and development that are complicated by these scholars. Escobar (1995)

notes sentiments of "messianism" and a "quasi-religious fervor" which is inscribed in the

development task that echo discourses of salvation in child sponsorship (Escobar, 1995, p. 25;

see also O'Neill, 2013). Given these commonalities, how do we come to enact this post-

development ideal, particularly when assisting children in emergency situations? In the next

section, I discuss the paradigm of co-development and how this framework may elevate us

towards this ideal and beyond the cycles of development and intervention promoted in a modern conception of ethics.

The promise of cooperation

Rather than perpetuating the cycles of intervention undertaken in development, enacting post-development will require forms of mutual cooperation and solidarity. This is in many ways parallel to the paradigm of co-development. While co-development generally refers to the process of working specifically with immigrant groups (Fauser, 2014; Marabello, 2013), there is an implication of mutual involvement and articulation of the development process between both practitioners and receivers of aid which bears further consideration. The ways in which this notion can decenter distinctions between the deliverer and recipient of "development" and thus complicate conventional definitions and discourses of humanitarianism might provide us with sort of "bridge" leading to post-development landscapes. It is here that my inquiry centers in examining marketing content of child relief agencies.

Fauser's (2014) definition of the purpose of co-development intersects with principles of active involvement and articulation of the task of development. One key theme of co-development cited by the author is "a close connection between local integration and transnational cooperation, which conceptualizes migrants as intermediary agents" (Fauser, 2014, p. 1069). In this intermediary role, migrants and refugees play a pivotal position in shaping narratives of progress, destabilizing conventional categories entailed in development discourse. This destabilization is promising insofar as it also challenges semiotic regimes that uphold stereotypes of laziness predicated upon modern theories of intervention (Plewes & Stuart, 2007). In Fauser's analysis of migration settlement in Spain, these trends can be also viewed from a

perspective of transnational cooperation, with cities of different nations coordinating in the process of navigating new co-development terrains (Fauser, 2014).

By placing the themes of transnational cooperation found in co-development in the context of UNICEF, we can discover the extent to which this principle is already at play in multilateral endeavors. It is for this reason that I include UNICEF in my analysis alongside child sponsorship agencies. I compare and contrast the presence of these themes, juxtaposing market-based interventions represented by two child sponsorship agencies with those of established transnational structures.

How do child relief organizations implement these principles of co-development in their programs? How is this further evidenced in their marketing materials? How do child sponsorship and multilateral agencies differ in their implementations of this ideal? In the next section, I demonstrate the methodology by which I search for the presence of this factor through content analysis.

Methodology

In order to discover how themes of cooperation, intervention, and humanitarianism are enacted in the marketing materials of child relief agencies, a deconstructive approach towards these texts is required. Deconstructive approaches utilize insights of post-structural theory to reveal hidden meanings and how power is mobilized through language. In other words, "a deconstructive approach to textual analysis aims at exposing what is concealed within or has been left out of a text," (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 237). Deconstruction in the context of content analysis aims at discovering these critical absences and concealments.

My theoretical point of entry also adapts from what Escobar (1995) has termed "institutional ethnography" (Escobar, 1995). In this framework, "a local situation is less a case

study than an entry point to the study of institutional and discursive forces and how these are related to broader socioeconomic processes," (Escobar, 1995, p. 109). Through the means of content analysis, I describe these discursive forces and demonstrate how they are present in child relief agency materials. A post-structural examination of these materials shows how discursive forces are generated and perpetuated through images and text. I make connections between discursive themes and program designs by consulting evaluation reports and program descriptions of the agencies under examination.

The method of content analysis I undertake consists of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. While the quantitative dimension is more linear, seeking to confirm or disprove a specific hypothesis, the qualitative dimension is more loose and "spiral" in orientation, seeking exploration itself as opposed to using a positivistic framework (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). These distinct approaches to content analysis complement each other insofar as they offer different ways of examining marketing materials. For example, Jefferess' (2002) analysis of World Vision telethons thematically codes the material and engages in a similar mixed-methods approach to content analysis (Jefferess, 2002). Other studies engaging in content analysis using thematic coding have either used mixed-methods approaches or applied elements of deconstructive critique to quantitative data surveyed (Bond, 2014; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010; Mügge, 2016).

In my quantitative analysis, I take marketing content from the websites of the three organizations profiled, where a pool of 40-60 images is randomly selected from each. I measure two separate yet interdependent variables. The first variable measures child dispositions consisting of "uplifting", "impartial", or "despairing" categories. Each disposition category is comprised of a set of themes. Under the "uplifting" category, there are themes such as piety,

laughter, and contentment. "Impartial" dispositions are characterized by images which convey slight confusion, surprise, or are purely for documentation. "Despairing" dispositions convey outright suffering, such as crying, sadness, and pain.

The second variable measures whether the children are engaged or disengaged in the given photo or video. Compiling the data from these two factors, I search for a "co-development indicator" existing in the materials. That is, whether or not the presence of a co-development ethic emphasizing collaboration, is at play in the organization given the content of the marketing materials. The focus is primarily on the material activity of what the subject is *doing*. For example, are children assisting in the development process? What is therefore defined as development? This latter question is more the subject of qualitative analysis.

The quantitative dimension is used to confirm or reject this "co-development indicator" theory. Since the variable of engagement alone is insufficient grounds for claiming cooperation, a "disposition" variable is present in the quantitative coding rubric. I examine the presence of a "co-development" ethic in imagery which is engaged and either "uplifting" or "impartial" in disposition. This set of images fall under what I term the "co-development indicator field." I exclude the presence of an engaged, "despairing" combination from this metric, as such images which would portray unhappy children doing work and are obviously rarely present in the marketing materials. I nonetheless include a "despairing" component in the disposition variable, as many of the passive images of children portray them in an unhappy or upset manner.

In my qualitative approach towards the research, I examine the same materials as does the quantitative, but also extend that examination into other variables including the textual content of the websites of these organizations. Through the qualitative dimension of the research, I attempt a post-structural examination of the marketing content in order to note "absences" in

the marketing content, such as contradictions that are concealed from view. I hold under scrutiny the manner in which development discourses are mobilized by child sponsorship agencies and how neoliberal principles are invoked in their rhetoric.

By combining these approaches to content analysis and examining marketing materials of child relief agencies, I demonstrate how principles of marketization are at work in child sponsorship strategies. I further contrast these principles with the multilateral approach of UNICEF by examining evaluation reports and juxtapose it with their marketing content. In engaging with this form of "institutional ethnography," I demonstrate how alternatives to development may exist in these multilateral frameworks in the form of a co-development ethic (Escobar, 1995). This ethic is evidenced both in marketing content and text, as well as program evaluations.

Data analysis and discussion

Through a content analysis I examined web-based marketing materials of Compassion International, World Vision, and UNICEF. Each of these organizations present a particular vantage point on the task of development and humanitarian intervention. As such, I divide my analysis into a section for each of them that also describes the specific theme they embody.

For Compassion International, child sponsorship is a means of fulfilling Christian duties, with their marketing content centering around cultivating a sense of piety and community. World Vision, while retaining a fervent Christian ethos, frames its programs and mission around rhetoric of sustainability. Both child sponsorship agencies elaborate visions of global Christian fellowship and evangelic charity that conform to modern discourses of ethics, development, and the interventions it entails (O'Neill, 2013; Escobar, 1995; Benhabib, 2013).

UNICEF's marketing content is largely descriptive, detailing cooperation with government agencies and local communities in a manner differing from the intervention-based approaches of the two child sponsorship agencies. The difference in approach is further demonstrated by contrasting the Area Development Programs (ADPs) of World Vision with the Community Care Coalitions (CCCs) of UNICEF (Yuen, 2011; Berhane et al., 2015; Bahng, 2009). UNICEF's presence of images and text demonstrate the power and importance of cooperation and emphasize collaboration with multiple sectors of society. The quantitative and qualitative approaches I undertake simultaneously confirm an indication of a co-development ethic in UNICEF programs absent from child sponsorship promotional materials of Compassion International and World Vision.

Piety and Prevention: Compassion International

In the marketing materials of Compassion International, a strong emphasis is placed on Christian charity that assigns responsibility to the act of sponsorship. The semiotic arrangement Compassion upholds utilizes a formula of piety and prevention to invoke themes of responsibility that are endemic to child sponsorship. The themes of piety and prevention are visible in both visual and written materials.

The use of "uplifting" imagery found in Compassion International differs greatly from the stereotypical imagery commonly associated with humanitarianism (Plewes & Stuart, 2007). This factor of positivity is constituted by images that depict smiling and laughing

children. These images bring much needed hope to the task of development. Yet this hope is mutually inspiring, not just for children, but for the sponsors themselves.

Some of the images coded as "uplifting" are also engaged and fall under the co-development indicator field. With these images, subjects are depicted immersed in prayer, building upon themes of piety. Another set of images that can be situated within the co-development indicator field show children studying in classrooms. In one depiction of these images statistics are featured emphasizing high rates of employment and church engagement in sponsored children, saying, "the odds are better with Compassion" (Compassion International, 2016). Formal education and religious devotion are depicted as intimately intertwined in such representations.

Upon examining the web page profile of the Leadership Development Program (LDP), the tendency characterizing education and devotion as co-dependent is particularly acute. The LDP "identifies Compassion-assisted young men and women who have shown potential to become Christian leaders who can, in turn, influence their own churches, communities and nations" (Compassion International, 2016). Along with providing scholarship assistance, the youth admitted into the program "receives …an additional Christ-centered curriculum with 24 leadership topics" (Compassion International, 2016). The undisclosed possibility that students are vetted from the program for lacking the evangelic definition Compassion employs of 'showing leadership potential' demonstrates the manner in which the ideal subject of prevention is both constructed and disciplined within child sponsorship (O'Neill, 2013).

These engaged images are juxtaposed next to individual children profiles that feature photos of children with "impartial" dispositions. Every other profile icon features a desperate indication noting how long a given child has had to wait for assistance. On the "Sponsor a Child"

page, many of these profiles are brought to our attention at once, with some children featuring additional icons noting that they live in AIDs-affected areas or in an area prone to a "higher risk of exploitation and abuse" (Compassion International, 2016). The organization of images in this way creates a strong impression of the importance of piety in the practice of prevention through sponsorship (O'Neill, 2013). The manner in which the co-development image pool of Compassion International relies upon narratives of salvation and a modern conception of ethics challenges their potential for embodying a co-development ethic.
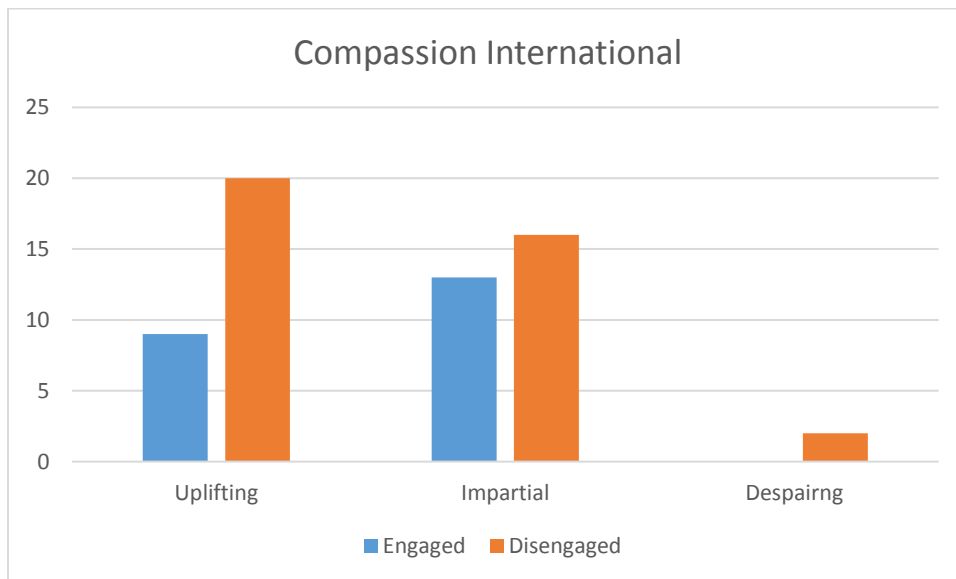
The reflexivity that Compassion International shows in their photography is evident in some of the marketing text. The website devotes a full section to analysis of child sponsorship photography and some of its ethical quandaries. In the philosophy of photography employed by Compassion International, hope is an essential ingredient to reduce the problem of victimizing children:

    The pictures of poverty and children in need that you see on our website are meant to

    show the dignity and hope living within the poor despite the oppression poverty inflicts

upon them. In our poverty photography, we believe in being honest about the challenges

the poor face, we seek to portray them in ways that show hope and the promise of a

positive future (Compassion International, 2016).

The desire to have these photos "expressing need while maintaining dignity" is a key feature of

Compassion's approach. The forces of piety and prevention coalesce in this vision to give child

sponsors a chance to keep hope alive through sponsorship as an expression and implementation

of faith. As O'Neill (2013) poetically expresses: "Cast aside by privilege, left pushing a camel

through the eye of a needle, the practice of child sponsorship delivers to sponsors…a clear sense

of their place in this world" (O'Neill, 2013, p. 211). Building upon this theme of piety,

Compassion International devotes a full section of their website to the Biblical view of poverty

and the evangelist call to resolve its problem.

Compassion goes so far as to ask: "Do your pictures of poverty include smiling and

laughing children?" (Compassion International, 2016). We are given a whole new genre of

photography to consider in the process. These attempts made by Compassion at demonstrating

conscientiousness about contemporary debates in development discourse are sophisticated, but

fall short of analytical rigor: "Our imagery does not portray the 'pornography of poverty' where

poor men, women, and children lose their dignity because a picture focuses overwhelmingly on

the brutality of their condition or environment" (Compassion International, 2016).

However, it is precisely the decontextualizing tendency of 'poverty pornography' which

is the subject of common critique. Stripping away the context of poverty enables the causes of

poverty to remain hidden from view. As Plewes & Stuart (2007) note, in reference to "poverty

porn" imagery:

Messages like these can undermine NGOs' efforts to create a broader understanding of

the underlying structures that cause poverty and injustice. They ignore Northern

complicity in creating inequality. At the very least these images convey a limited picture

of life in Southern countries. At their worst they reinforce racist stereotypes. (Plewes &

Stuart, 2007, p. 24).

As insightful as this commentary is, the analysis could be taken a step further. The way in which

NGOs, such as child sponsorship organizations, evade the state apparatus and themselves

perpetuate cycles of poverty should be underscored, especially the blatant "marketization of

poverty" so evident in their approach (Schwittay, 2011). Indeed, the analysis Plewes & Stuart

(2007) present is further limited insofar as they assume the problem lies somehow with the

disposition of children or solely with the negative messages implied by such imagery. Under

such a rubric, we would find that Compassion International would surely pass. The fact that the

systemic causes of poverty remain hidden from view and is replaced by images of happy

children in pious worship should give us pause to seriously consider the criteria for what actually

constitutes "poverty porn." If such images entice viewers to become sponsors, and to maintain

the "salvific narrative of intervention" in the form of a fictive kinship, on the premise of

ignorance, this seems more indicative of a vicarious, "pornographic" mentality than images

portraying suffering children, in which we might at least know the cause (O'Neill, 2013;

Fieldston, 2014).

As expressions of social entrepreneurship, evangelic child sponsorship campaigns build

upon themes of community engagement and expand the notion of community to a global scale.

Rhetoric centering around themes of "belonging" is consistently used to convey this global

Christian imaginary: "For many of these children, the Gospel will begin making a home in their

hearts as they bow their heads, close their eyes, and voice a prayer of thankfulness for their

sponsors" (Compassion International, 2016). In the globalized context that child sponsorship

operates within, it performs a key duty prescribed for the voluntary sector in maintaining

capitalist relations.

Non-profits "… do not merely complement the market and the state but rather mark the

absent center of capitalism," indicative of an "absence of subjects properly constituted as

voluntary participants in capitalism" (Joseph, 2002, p. 73). In Joseph's analysis, the non-profit

industry fabricates this consent by providing the simulation of community. Compassion

International gives adults in the developed world a renewed sense of community through

financial means, and in the process, reifies money as an object of social worth. From the mission

statement:

> In response to the Great Commission, Compassion International exists as an advocate for
>
> children, to release them from their spiritual, economic, social and *physical poverty* and
>
> enable them to become responsible and fulfilled Christian adults (Compassion
>
> International, 2016) (emphasis mine).

The notion of "physical poverty" has an ironically dematerializing effect. "Physical poverty"

serves a need to make poverty seem real for potential sponsors. Whatever deficiency money

can't alleviate in this arrangement can be resolved by the Good News of Jesus Christ, which

children are "enabled to become" adherents of. The manner in which poverty is felt on physical

terms, such as in the forms of hunger or lack of shelter, is prioritized but exist alongside a host of

other forms of poverty in need of arbitration. There is a multiplication of poverties in this project,

where we find odd terms such as "physical poverty" that are tautological in nature and expose

the hollowness of development and its premises of capitalist aid and intervention, marking an "absent center" in need of filling (Joseph, 2002; Escobar, 1995).

A World Vision of development

In the marketing materials of World Vision, the agency mobilizes discourses of sustainable development to portray child sponsorship and evangelic aid in a progressive light. This echoes Compassion International's attempts at displaying conscientiousness about current debates in development concerning representation. World Vision emphasizes community development more than the personal connection entailed through correspondence. This approach is evident not only in marketing materials but also through an analysis of the hallmark Area Development Programs (ADPs) World Vision uses in their project implementation.

A quantitative analysis of visual data from World Vision reveals a large presence of imagery featuring children with "impartial" dispositions. While in contrast to cliché pictographic tendencies of blatantly suffering children, this has a similar outcome of portraying children as victims of their surroundings (Plewes & Stuart, 2007). In contrast to Compassion International, World Vision portrays suffering, yet in a manner which is still contained and under control. The responsibility entailed in representing impoverished children seems to be a balancing act between these two tendencies—that of showing children as dignified and diminishing the realness and causes of poverty in the process, or attempting to show victimhood in a manner which suggests passivity and even indolence.

The high presence of disengaged imagery with World Vision indicates the latter type of approach. We find similarities with Compassion International when examining the content of the marketing material, however. As with Compassion, the few images which can be classified as engaged are images such as children in prayer or in a classroom. The dearth of such engaged images and the already problematic issue of pairing evangelic doctrine with formal education they imply invalidates the possibility of a co-development ethic at play in World Vision marketing content.

In terms of rhetoric, the emphasis on ministry is strong in the World Vision mission statements and program descriptions: "motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people" (World Vision, 2016). A stark difference can be found, however, in the use of rhetoric borrowed from discourses of sustainable development. Discourses of sustainable development elaborate on achieving systemic transformation across different domains (such as social, economic, environmental) with a focus on intergenerational flourishment (Imran, Alam, & Beaumont, 2014; Hopwood, Mellor, & O'Brien, 2005). Achieving systemic transformation necessarily entails cooperation with the state as the arbiter of such changes. For World Vision, this produces a great tension and contradiction, given the tendency of the voluntary sector to circumvent the state while entertaining a nostalgia for building community (Shwittay, 2011; Helmsing, 2015; Joseph, 2002). This contradiction has been brought to the fore in recent scandals which attest to the problem of attempting community-based interventions under the guise of child sponsorship (Hadid, 2016). Upon examining the rhetoric used by World Vision, especially in reference to their ADPs, we find this contradiction expressed even more openly.
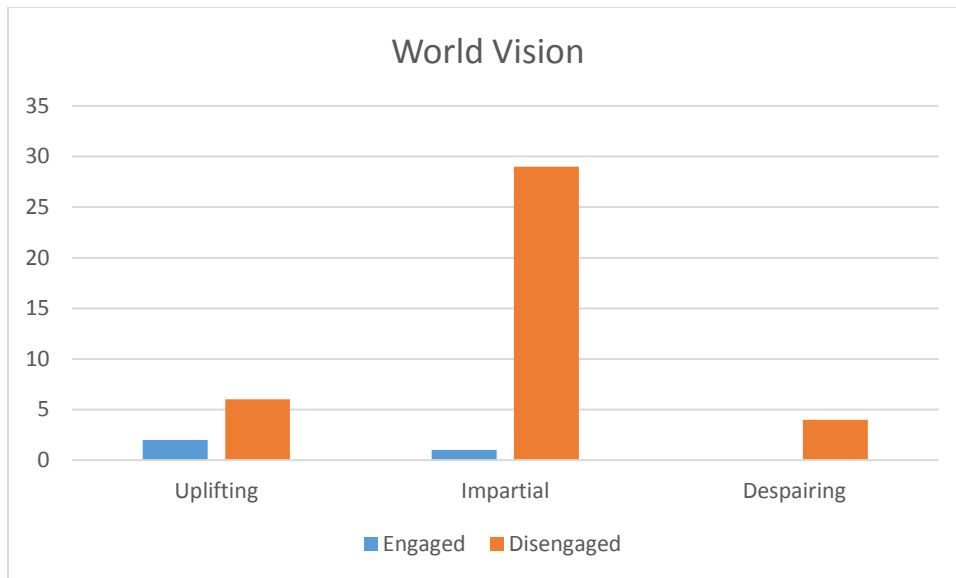
The manner in which World Vision avoids cooperation with state actors through their ADPs is openly stated in their program descriptions: "We are members of an international World Vision partnership that transcends legal, structural, and cultural boundaries" (World Vision, 2016). In this vision, an evangelical community has precedence over the state and its authority, and issues of cultural difference can be conveniently brushed aside given the presumed common adherence to Christian principles.

Yet World Vision notes that part of this struggle is also addressing systemic issues through their 'sustainable' approach: "We are responsive in a different sense where deep-seated and often complex economic and social deprivation calls for sustainable, long-term development..." Again we read from the website: "World Vision's child sponsorship program works alongside children, families, and communities to build sustainable solutions that release them from long-term poverty" (World Vision, 2016). In this definition of sustainable development, people in poverty are the "subject of prevention" who through Area Development Programs can be "released" from their condition (O'Neill, 2013). The manner in which this approach places humans at the center of sustainable development has been the center of critiques

of consensus definitions of the framework of sustainable development, which have analyzed its problematic anthropocentrism (Imran et al., 2014). The absence of critical frameworks like political ecology in research validating World Vision's approach further testifies to the validity of applying this critique to World Vision. It should be noted yet again that such research is decidedly biased in favor of econometric and statistical approaches, neglecting the social elements and subjective experiences of development processes from the perspective of recipients (Bahng, 2009; Peralta, et al., 2013).

The central controversy with World Vision's approach has been on program implementation in the form of the ADP. Regarding how these programs work, Yuen (2011) writes:

> These ADPs are long term projects that involve such diverse possibilities in initiatives in health, education, agriculture, water, infrastructure, landmines, leadership, gender, and income generation. Sponsorship funds in a community are pooled and then channeled into larger projects….it was confirmed that the children do not personally see any of the funds donated by sponsors but instead, benefit indirectly along with their community (Yuen, 2011, p. 44).

This last aspect has been the source of much controversy for World Vision. Hadid (2016) profiles how one sponsor's realization of how his money was distributed at community level and never went specifically to the child with whom he had been paired (Hadid, 2016). Though the money assisted the child indirectly through being channeled into the community, the sense of kinship created in the child sponsorship process was lost as a result. World Vision's attempt to address systemic issues through the ADP format relies on the imaginaries of personal connection and kinship created by child sponsorship, yet in practice it abandons the core of this method.

This deceit has led to many accusations against World Vision and brings into question another set of ethical issues related to program design and marketing content (Jefferess, 2002; Yuen, 2011; Bornstein, 2001). In quietly abandoning the personal aspect of child sponsorship in their programs, World Vision replaces it with an imagined community with the church as its anchor and evangelism as its modus operandi.

While the ADPs recognize the interconnectedness of individuals by allocating funds to the community level, the neglect of how communities and localities are defined, regulated, and governed by the state leads to certain problems. In this instance, the NGO can operate as an ideological threat to the state, importing foreign values and development agendas which may run contrary to government plans (Joseph, 2002). Not only does this intrusion conflict with or ignore cultural, political, and economic realities (factors conveniently "transcended" in World Vision's universalist ethos), but also reinforces global hierarchies and cycles of development and intervention. In Joseph's (2002) critique of the voluntary sector, non-profits perpetuate capitalist ideology by wedding it to a sense of community, a process that can best be framed as a form of hegemony: "To put this in…Gramscian terms, non-profits function as a hegemonic apparatus, articulating the desire for community with a desire for capitalism" (Joseph, 2002, p. 73). This observation parallels Fieldston's (2014) notes on the legacy of child sponsorship as a strategic, ideological tactic and 'Trojan horse' which promoted capitalism during the Cold War under the guise of helping children in poverty.

In these features of World Vision, secular discourses are mobilized in tandem with evangelic righteousness. Compassion International and World Vision mobilize blatantly religious forms of development. Child sponsorship is already derived from a marriage of evangelic principles with discourses of neoliberal aid and inclusive capitalism (O'Neill, 2013; Prahalad &

Hart, 2002). Given the relatively low presence of engaged imagery signifying cooperation in both Compassion International and World Vision's materials, how can this be compared to more openly secular avenues of humanitarian relief? In the next section, I examine UNICEF, a multilateral agency espousing secular principles, in order to see how themes of cooperation are enacted in terms of marketing content and program design.

Cooperation and Consensus: UNICEF and co-development

Comparing and contrasting approaches to human development that use child sponsorship to those of UNICEF provides insight into the unique manner in which both uphold discursively-generated representations through their marketing content. Placing these marketing materials in context with program descriptions also affords insight into how market-based means of intervention such as child sponsorship may differ from the multilateral approach of UNICEF in terms of program design. How these programs differ in terms of their implementation as well as their perspective on the state confirms the nature in which child sponsorship is constituted by neoliberal principles.

The multilateral approach exemplified by UNICEF departs from child sponsorship in terms of its promotional material and program designs in multiple respects. Comparing the ADP of World Vision and the CCC design of UNICEF, multiple divergences are also evident regarding themes of cooperation and engagement. With the promotional materials, in terms of both written and visual text we find an emphasis on informing the public on the various nuances of program implementation. The themes of collaboration found in UNICEF materials and programs indicate the presence of a co-development framework in their approach to humanitarian assistance for children. Co-development, with its emphasis on cooperation with marginalized and at-risk populations, destabilizes categories of recipient and administrator, and

is a theme present in UNICEF marketing content. Despite these promising features of UNICEF

marketing content and program descriptions, we may need to remain skeptical of framing

UNICEF in terms of co-development given certain troubling commonalities with child

sponsorship materials.

In stark contrast to the World Vision's ADP framework for community development,

UNICEF programs operating at local levels explicitly state an interest in working with

government actors in project implementation (Berhane et al., 2015). This is best exemplified by

Berhane et al.'s (2015) assessment of the Social Cash Transfer Pilot Programme (SCTPP) which

was implemented in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. With the SCTPP, a unique feature was

developed within the program in order to effectively integrate local beneficiaries:

> A novel feature of the SCTPP is the creation of Community Care Coalitions (CCCs).
>
> These are community-led groups that serve as a support mechanism for the vulnerable
>
> populations in the community. CCCs are hybrid organizations with representation from
>
> both government and civil society organizations. CCCs play a critical role in beneficiary
>
> identification and selection and assisting in payment processes (Berhane et al., 2015, p.
>
> 6).

The CCC differs greatly from the ADP of World Vision in the manner which it integrates

government actors. The notion of a "coalition" also challenges the dynamic of hierarchy created

by cycles of development, and is indicative of an acknowledgement of the need for grassroots

mobilization in the process of potentially sustainable development (Lewis & Gardner, 1996;

Escobar, 1995). It should also be noted that with the work of Berhane et al. (2015), a rigorous

qualitative approach is utilized in conjunction with econometric measurements in order to

examine social factors and the overall efficacy of the SCTPP (Berhane et al., 2015). Such a

mixed-methods approach enables a more nuanced view of the project implementation, allows for more comprehensive feedback and evaluation, and yet again stands in contrast to research which has validated child sponsorship programs (Wydick, 2013; Wydick, Rutledge, Chu, 2009; Wydick, Glewwe, Rutledge, 2013; Bahng, 2009; Peralta, et al. 2013).

UNICEF's emphasis on coordination with government actors in their approach to community development is evident in their program descriptions and marketing materials. On the website, we find consistent references to the importance of working with host governments in order to address systemic issues: "The heart of UNICEF's work is in the field. Each country office carries out UNICEF's mission through a unique programme of cooperation developed with the host government" (UNICEF, 2016). This approach, in which interventions are customized based on consultation with government actors, differs from World Vision's ADP program in its openly stated lack of regard for government coordination and the "legal boundaries" it imposes.
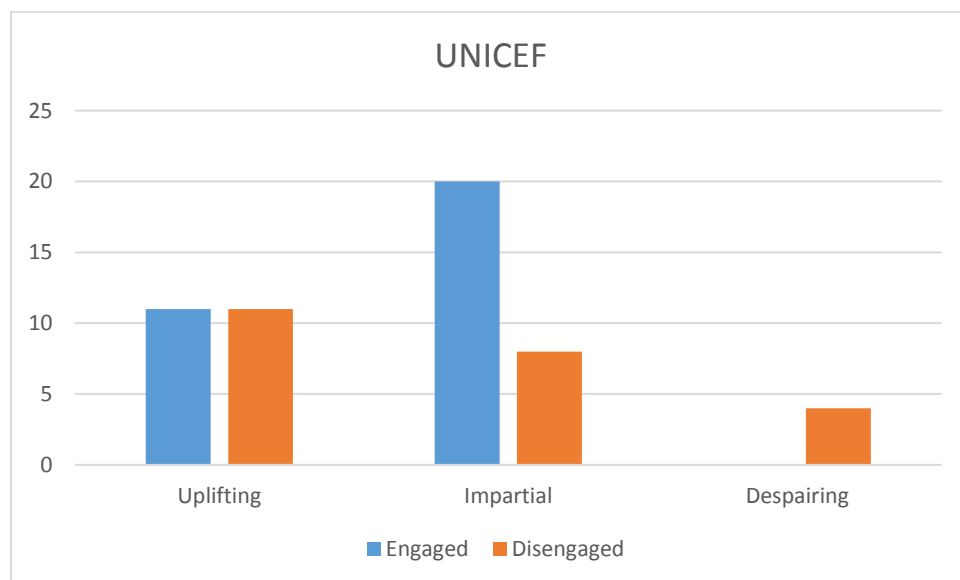
With the quantitative data, we also find a sharp contrast in UNICEF images compared to both

Compassion International and World Vision. Compared to high levels of disengaged images in

the latter, with UNICEF there is a diverse

mixture of children in different situations,

highlighting the complexity of problems

and situations which arise under

circumstances of poverty, natural disaster,

war, and famine.

The engaged image pool includes

portraits of children receiving immunization, carrying boxes of supplies, and UNICEF staff

members coordinating with local populations. Such an ethic of discipline shows the necessary

cooperation which is needed in humanitarian interventions, and challenges the racist stereotype

of the needy and lazy recipient of aid (Plewes & Stuart, 2007). With such images, we are

reminded of the hard work undertaken by all parties to survive under situations of duress and

hardship. With such an unfiltered display of reality, there seems to be little evidence for a

manufactured approach to the photography we find with UNICEF, standing in contrast to

Compassion International. Without a formulaic "poverty photography" rubric to draw inspiration

from we as an audience are instead shown the difficulties and possibilities which arise in some of

the worst circumstances children can face without a rationalized filter. UNICEF has an intense

focus on working with refugee and immigrant children, an incredibly vulnerable group of

children in the world, and a critical populace of the co-development paradigm (Fauser, 2014;

Marabello, 2013). Given the collaboration-themed presence and quantity of imagery qualifying

as "engaged" in the UNICEF content pool, the indication of a co-development ethic is clearly present in UNICEF's approach to child-focused humanitarian relief and aid.

In common with the content of Compassion International and World Vision, there is a small yet powerful presence of images among UNICEF's marketing materials that fall under themes of outright suffering. Such content includes images of children crying with little context or description of contributing factors. While "child-sponsorship organizations are demonstrably the biggest users of pornography of poverty images" the clear indication of this type of photographic tactic in UNICEF materials equally challenges the promise of cooperation and solidarity indicated in other aspects of their content (Plewes & Stuart, 2007, p. 30).

While the marketing content of UNICEF can be situated as exemplifying co-development principles (especially in comparison to the avenues taken by the aforementioned child sponsorship agencies), it is still founded upon a modern conception of ethics that may prove difficult to transcend if we are to come to a post-development world (Benhabib, 2013; Escobar, 1995). Nonetheless, UNICEF departs from discursive representations of the "global South" that are endemic in child sponsorship through emphasizing collaboration in their marketing content. This emphasis equally reveals itself in programmatic designs that deliberately attach an importance to working with the state and host governments, a facet so thoroughly de-emphasized and even reviled under the neoliberal framework that child sponsorship can be situated within.

Conclusion

Through content analysis, I have demonstrated multiple key divergences between two major evangelic child sponsorship agencies and UNICEF. Among these divergences is the presence of themes of collaboration in UNICEF materials. In framing child sponsorship as a marketization of human development, further divergences are found between child sponsorship

agencies and multilateral organizations such as UNICEF in terms of their view of the state, where collaboration and cooperation are yet again emphasized in the latter in program designs, evaluations, and descriptions. The theme of collaboration, present in the paradigm of co-development, challenges traditional roles prescribed by development discourse (Fauser, 2014; Marabello, 2013). In light of current critiques of development and the modern ethical framework upon which it is based, I have argued that co-development may act as a bridge leading to a post-development ethos (Benhabib, 2013; Escobar, 1995; Chandhoke, 2007).

Through a process of marketization, child sponsorship turns the pressing matter of human development focused on children into a feat of social entrepreneurialism. While this broader trend is apparent in international development in the form of the NGO in general, given the ubiquity of child sponsorship programs and their particularly sensitive and important task we are under an immense obligation to scrutinize them as development practitioners (Jefferess, 2002; Joseph, 2002). The marriage of neoliberal principles of aid with Christian evangelism also brings important questions to the fore; what are the limitations of religion-based development? How are personalized forms of development such as child sponsorship problematic?

In the process of circumventing state and government actors, child sponsorship organizations demonstrate their reliance upon principles of neoliberal aid. Neoliberalism as a set of principles isn't confined to merely economic realities however, and extends into every domain of life (Schwittay, 2011; Turner, 2015). In their disregard for consultation with the state, child sponsorship organizations can actually perpetuate forms of state discipline which reinforce cycles of poverty, such as the example with school uniform policy in Kenya (Evans, Kremer, & Ngatia, 2009). Such measures can be described as unsustainable, yet as we see with World Vision, the pliable language and rhetoric of sustainable development is readily manipulated to

vouch for the cause and methodology of child sponsorship. This makes a post-structural examination of the marketing text itself an appropriate venue for critique.

Child sponsorship is problematic in an almost metaphysical sense—the narratives of salvation generated in the process of correspondence simultaneously create and reinforce an already pervasive stereotype of the helpless Other (Fieldston, 2014; O'Neill, 2013; Plewes & Stuart, 2007). By applying the lens of co-development, a development paradigm emphasizing cooperation and collaboration between vulnerable groups and intervening parties, we can examine how child relief agencies affirm or neglect this principle in their activities of humanitarian aid (Fauser, 2014; Marabello, 2013). An analysis of marketing content in order to verify the presence or absence of this paradigm reveals the manner in which discursive representations of the "global South" are upheld (Plewes & Stuart, 2007; Jefferess, 2002; Escobar, 1995).

With the high presence of imagery emphasizing cooperation, collaboration and mutual aid, UNICEF's marketing materials highlight a departure from representations evident in child sponsorship. In working with the state, engaging in a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process, and creating customized ad hoc community groups such as the CCCs in Ethiopia, UNICEF addresses systemic issues with a focus on particularly vulnerable groups of children (Hagen-Zanker & Mallett, 2015; Berhane et al. 2015). The CCCs are designed to address issues on a contingent basis on the premises of cooperation. This approach aligns with critiques of the modern ethical framework upon which development is founded and challenges discursively generated images that uphold stereotypes of dependency (Benhabib, 2013; Escobar, 1995; Plewes & Stuart, 2007). It is for these reasons that an indication of a co-development ethic can

be found at work in the programs of UNICEF, an ethic absent from child sponsorship program designs and marketing content.

Despite these promising features, all three organizations profiled feature a small yet significant presence of images that depict outright suffering with little context or information. Such images uphold a semiotic regime that colludes with modern discourses of development and the host of stereotypes that it invokes. While the presence of these images in UNICEF materials is discouraging and may challenge viewing it as a vehicle towards arriving at a post-development world, the thematic presence of co-development in these materials may enable us to shape discourses and practices within UNICEF with a mind towards Escobar's (1995) emerging ideal.

The modern ethical framework particularly present within child sponsorship is challenged by its neoliberal principles of marketization. Under such circumstances, a false sense of hope can be created in which both the sponsors and sponsored children fall victim to the very conditions causing their suffering. Rather than alleviating suffering, child sponsorship sentimentalizes a material exchange in the form of a financial transaction. The delusions of salvation and artificial kinships created the process of correspondence promise bring salvation to all parties involved (O'Neill, 2013; Fieldston, 2014). In the end, it is an empty yet powerful gesture, further providing a mouthpiece for telling the mythical and pervasive "tale of three worlds" (Escobar, 1995).

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Appendix A

Compassion International

state	Engaged	Disengaged
Uplifting	9	20
Impartial	13	16
Despairing	0	2

World Vision

state	Engaged	Disengaged
Uplifting	2	6
Impartial	1	29
Despairing	0	4

UNICEF

state	Engaged	Disengaged
Uplifting	11	11
Impartial	20	8
Despairing	0	4

*highlighted region indicates co-development indicator field undergoing qualitative analysis

Appendix B

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