"CHANGE A LIFE. CHANGE YOUR OWN": CHILD SPONSORSHIP, THE
DISCOURSE OF DEVELOPMENT, AND THE PRODUCTION OF ETHICAL
SUBJECTS

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Sociology)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2013

Abstract

This project explores the practice of child sponsorship and its role in helping construct ethical subjectivities in the North. Employed by organizations like World Vision and Plan International, child sponsorship is one of the most prominent and successful fundraising techniques for development efforts in the global South. Child sponsorship is more than an effective marketing tool, however; it is a powerful apparatus for the conveyance of representations about the global South, the North, and the relationship between the two. Using a discourse analytic approach, this project examines Canadian sponsorship programs, the advertising they produce, and sponsors they attract. This analysis addresses not only the representations contained within sponsorship promotional material but also the contexts in which this material is produced, interpreted, and acted upon.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with 31 child sponsors and 18 sponsorship staff, this research explores how sponsorship programs and sponsors are represented – and represent themselves – as trying to "make a difference" in the world, and how these representations relate to contemporary understandings of poverty and development. In the end, it is argued that the success of child sponsorship is not related as much to the way it focuses on the needs of poor children as it is to the way it constructs a vision of ethical action in the work of international development that coincides with the personal development of Northern sponsors, the "natural" bio-psychological development of Southern children, and the organizational development of sponsorship programs. In other words, child sponsorship and its advertizing (re)positions what it means to live ethically

in an unequal and unjust world. Through child sponsorship, the desires to become better

people(s), secure appropriate childhoods, and raise lots of money end up taking priority

over the goal of living together well on a global scale.

Preface

This research was reviewed by the University of British Columbia's Behavioural

Research Ethics Board. The Ethics Certificate number is H07-01145.

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation could not have been completed without the guidance, patience and support of many individuals. I would like to thank the faculty, staff, and my fellow students at UBC's Department of Sociology for the help they provided along the way. In particular, I would like to thank my committee members, Drs. Thomas Kemple, Renisa Mawani, and Sunera Tobani, for their insightful comments. This dissertation has undoubtedly benefited from their wealth of experience, and any faults that remain are mine alone. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Dawn Currie, for all the knowledgeable feedback, helpful advice, and personal encouragement that she provided throughout this project. I am also grateful to my family for seeing me through this process. Finally, I would like to thank all the participants who made this research possible through the generous gift of their time.

Dedication

For my wife and sons, who are my life.

Chapter One: Introduction

In May 1995, Lisa Anderson began sponsoring a 12 year-old Malian girl named

Korotoumou Kone through the American branch of Save the Children. Lisa sent the

organization US $20 a month in return for a picture of Korotoumou and assurances that

the sponsorship would help "change her life and make it better" (Anderson, 1998b: 1).

However, when Lisa went to visit her sponsored child two years later, she found out that

Korotoumou had died shortly after the sponsorship began. She had been struck by

lightning while working in a rice patty. Although the local representatives of Save the

Children had been informed of the incident, Lisa never received any information about

Korotoumou's death. What she did receive, after her visit, was a letter of apology from

Save the Children's vice president of international programs and a check refunding the

$480 that she had contributed.

As sad as it is, the sensational circumstances around Korotoumou's death turned

out to be beneficial for Lisa, who is a journalist with the *Chicago Tribune*. At the time,

she was one of a number of reporters and editors from the *Tribune* working on a "Special

Report" on child sponsorship. Child sponsorship is a fundraising technique primarily

used by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that specialize in issues of international

development and children's welfare. Ostensibly, child sponsorship works by pairing poor

children in the South with donors in the North. These sponsors contribute approximately

a dollar a day in order to support development projects in their sponsored child's

community. The *Tribune* report, indelicately titled "The Miracle Merchants: The Myths

of Child Sponsorship," was undertaken to examine the practices of child sponsorship

agencies in order to determine the accuracy of their advertising and the effectiveness of their intervention. Four organizations were included in the Chicago Tribune report: Save the Children USA, Childreach (also known as Plan USA), Children International, and Christian Children's Fund.[1] Over a two year period, twelve children were sponsored by reporters from the *Tribune*, and then without the sponsorship agencies' knowledge, these reporters set out to find their sponsored children and assess the impact of their contributions. The results of this "inquiry" cover almost 30 pages and appear in two separate weekend editions in March of 1998. Throughout the report, child sponsorship organizations are accused of commonly misrepresenting the state of sponsored children and the benefits they receive through sponsorship. They are also criticized for having overly expensive and bureaucratic administrations that allowed children to fall through the cracks. At a more fundamental level, sponsorship agencies are charged with duping Northern donors into a relationship that is largely a "marketing myth" (Anderson, 1998a: 1).

On the first day of the report's publication, Korotoumou's disembodied and washed-out face appears on the front page of the paper beside the bolded heading "Relentless campaigns of hollow promises". Her sad eyes accompany the reader through the introduction of the inquiry. The story of her death – and of Lisa's ensuing search to find out what went wrong with Save the Children's Mali operations – occupies the next four pages. Another full page is dedicated to the results of a follow-up investigation conducted by Save the Children that found an additional 22 cases in which donors had been sponsoring children who had died. In one of these cases, an American family

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[1] World Vision USA, the largest American NGO offering child sponsorship, is strangely absent from this list.

discovered that they had still been receiving letters from their sponsored child even though he had been dead nearly three years. Apparently, the letters were written by a member of the organization's local staff. According to the *Tribune*, this case illustrates how "donors can be betrayed by the sponsorship system" (Dellios and Anderson, 1998: 6). Taking up more than a third of the first set of articles, these stories of death and "betrayal" not only provide a compelling lead-in to the *Tribune* report but also offer a glimpse at some of the worst organizational problems associated with child sponsorship.

Both the tone of these stories and the results of the follow-up investigation, which ended in several local staff being "reprimanded", draw attention to a supposedly shocking problem with child sponsorship. As in many critiques of child sponsorship (e.g., Hancock, 1989: 16, Maren, 1997: 136), the problem is presented as an appalling lack of efficacy, transparency, and oversight on the part of sponsorship agencies. Whether wilfully negligent or not, these organizations are depicted as failing to live up to their responsibilities to sponsored children and to sponsors. In placing the blame squarely at the figurative feet of the sponsorship agencies, however, these articles not only describe the problem of child sponsorship as one of organizational ineptitude, but they also infer a predominantly administrative solution. The clear message from the sad tale of Korotoumou and her counterparts is that, in order to "fix" child sponsorship, these organizations need to improve their "development" practices in the "South" and their accountability in the "North"[2] (see the section "A note on terminology" for a discussion of the use of scare quotes and the terms North / South).

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[2] The terms North and South refer to what are sometimes called "developed" and "developing" countries respectively.

The fact that Lisa and others had not been informed about the deaths of their sponsored children is a dramatic illustration of the potential problems with child sponsorship, but the *Tribune*'s focus on sensational examples of organizational negligence avoids many interesting and challenging questions. While it is important that sponsorship agencies are held accountable for their actions, seeing the central problem and solution of child sponsorship as chiefly administrative neglects the influence of broader social, cultural, political, and economic contexts on the past and present practice of sponsorship. For example, knowing that some organizations have not provided the advertised benefits to each and every sponsored child does not tell us what it is about child sponsorship that has made it – and continues to make it – so remarkably successful in attracting donors. Furthermore, knowing that some donors have been misled, intentionally or not, does not help us to understand how child sponsorship fits into either the contemporary development industry or the current politico-economic climate of neoliberal globalization.

Addressing issues like these involves looking beyond the faults of sponsorship agencies, although these cannot be ignored, to the ways in which child sponsorship is marketed by organizations, and perceived by sponsors, as a reasonable response to Southern "underdevelopment". That is to say, instead of only exploring the misconduct of child sponsorship organizations, it becomes necessary to examine how the problem of development is constructed such that child sponsorship is seen to be a rational and ethical solution. In shifting the critical lens from the problem of sponsorship organizations to the problem of development, the results (or lack thereof) of specific sponsorship programs become less important than the way that the practice of child sponsorship reveals how

individuals and institutions think about development and act in its name. Such an emphasis on the relationship between child sponsorship and what is commonly called the discourse of development[3] makes it easier to formulate a critique of sponsorship that not only comments on organizational difficulties but also addresses the enormous historical and contemporary complicity of Northern societies, governments, and businesses in the current state of global poverty and inequality. This move toward a more general critique of child sponsorship and its relationship to contemporary development thought and practice can then help us make sense of the appeal of child sponsorship without tired references to the overuse of emotion-laden advertisements and the guilt they supposedly foster.

Studying child sponsorship

The present research project emerges out of these concerns to better understand the relationship between the practice of child sponsorship and the broader material and discursive contexts of international development. Rather than emphasize extraordinary examples of problems with child sponsorship, this study analyzes the everyday activities of sponsorship and how they are ordered, negotiated, and rationalized by those involved. It is grounded in a desire to shed light on how particular ideas about development are produced and reproduced at organizational and individual levels and in a recognition of the importance of child sponsorship and its associated representations to the (re)production of these ideas. Consequently, the aim of this study is to explore child

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[3] The "development discourse" or "discourse of development" has become a common phrase in the critical literature on development. Principally (if a bit simplistically), it refers to the way that relations of power define the "appropriate and legitimate ways of practicing development as well as speaking and thinking about it" (Grillo, 1997: 12). See below for more explanation.

sponsorship both as a prominent feature of the contemporary development industry and as a significant facet of mainstream development discourse. In other words, this study examines child sponsorship not only as a successful fundraising tool but also – and more importantly – as an influential component of identity formation in the North.

A focus on what happens in the North may seem counterintuitive, but it fits well with the contemporary nature of child sponsorship. Most of what goes on nowadays in relation to sponsorship is more about opening Northern wallets than feeding Southern bellies. Basically, there is an underappreciated but substantial divide between how sponsorship programs raise money in the North and spend it in the South, which is one of the reasons that the *Tribune* journalists referred to it as a "marketing myth" (Anderson, 1998a: 1) (see Chapter Two for more discussion on this point). Although a direct social and financial relationship between sponsor and child can be inferred from sponsorship advertising, this is not often the case. With most sponsorship agencies, money is pooled at the national level and sent in bulk to "partner" agencies or local affiliates to be spent on community and regional level projects. There are no guarantees that these projects, funded by sponsorship dollars, will meet the specific needs of the children being sponsored. On a related note, the content of letters and reports coming from sponsored children, their families, or local field offices is often generic and superficial. Although it is possible for meaningful relationships between sponsors and sponsored children to exist, these seem to be a rarity and are not essential to the process. These features indicate that child sponsorship is better understood as an elaborate fundraising technique than as a comprehensive development strategy (see Chapter Three for more details regarding the

argument that child sponsorship is principally oriented towards raising funds from sponsors).

As a fundraising technique, child sponsorship is remarkably successful. In fact, it is one of the most lucrative fundraising tools in terms of private donations for development assistance in the South (Smillie, 1995: 136). It is used by a bewildering array of both "faith-based" and secular NGOs, the largest of which have annual revenues in the hundreds of millions of dollars. For example, the international networks Plan International and the ChildFund Alliance reported revenues of around US $600 million in 2011 (ChildFund Alliance, 2012; Plan International, 2012). World Vision, the world's largest relief and development network that offers child sponsorship, had a worldwide revenue of about US $2.8 billion in 2011 (World Vision International, 2012). While a portion of these funds now comes from corporate donations and government grants, child sponsorship is often the central element of these organizations' fundraising strategies. With millions of sponsors across the globe (World Vision Canada alone has more than 300,000 sponsors) giving upwards of CAN $450 per year, how could the situation be otherwise?

We should not forget, however, that child sponsorship is more than a means to garner donations; it is also a powerful apparatus for the conveyance of representations of the South (and the North). It is no coincidence that images of destitute children are often the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of the global South. Years of sponsorship advertising have made the hollowed-out faces of "black" children an iconic symbol of poverty in the world and have arguably taken the place of colonial imagery in Northern popular culture (see the section "A note on terminology" for a discussion of the

use of the work "black" in this instance). The images in these ads are heartrending and the language seductive. The overwhelming use of these kinds of images has even resulted in many commentators arguing that people have become inured to them and now respond with apathy and even resistance, so-called compassion fatigue (e.g., Moeller, 1999). Others have argued that these images are one of the foremost factors perpetuating stereotypes about the South and its people (Smillie, 1995: 136) (see Chapter Four for more information and arguments on the role of representations of the South in sponsorship promotional material). Whatever the case, child sponsorship and its associated imagery are now a regular feature of the cultural landscape in the North. Sponsorship appeals can commonly be found in newspapers, magazines, and on the Internet, and sponsorship infomercials are a standard element of daytime television in North America. These marketing campaigns are independently publicized by the news media, churches, and other development organizations and are more often than not endorsed by high-profile spokespersons. Child sponsorship has now become so powerful and so commonplace that it has been described as "not only *the* most successful fundraising tool in the North, but the pre-eminent lens through which a very large and growing majority of northern citizens view the South" (Smillie, 1998: 30).

This understanding of the enormous power of child sponsorship to influence thought and action in the North – irrespective of its actual contributions in the South – is central to the way this project is formulated. It is based on a vision of child sponsorship as first and foremost a fundraising technique with serious implications for the way Northerners view themselves in relation to the world. Such an emphasis on the subject positions of Northerners in relation to child sponsorship, and international development

in general, is not completely novel. There have been several critiques of sponsorship that address such things as the role of organization staff in sponsorship scandals, the emotional state of sponsors upon signing up, or the stereotypical portrayal of Southerners within sponsorship advertising (e.g. Hancock, 1989; Jefferess, 2002a; Maren, 1997). Unlike such analyses of child sponsorship, however, the present project focuses more generally on the way sponsorship is constructed as an ethical practice in contemporary society. Rather than analyse specific sponsorship ads for example, this project focuses on the broader discursive mechanisms through which sponsorship staff and sponsors (are able to) position themselves as doing something that is almost unquestionably good.

An emphasis on the ethical nature of sponsorship, and its relationship to the subject positions of Northerners involved in sponsorship, fits well within the previously-mentioned focus on the relationship between sponsorship and the discourse of development. After all, what is understood by the term development not only has an enormous influence on the staff members who produce the promotional material of sponsorship programs and on the sponsors who interpret this material, but it is also inherently tied up in particular visions of progress and the values associated with those visions. Based on these analytical priorities, then, the present project sets out to examine why child sponsorship is commonly seen as a rational and ethical response to global poverty. Stated more precisely, this project is guided by the following overarching question: What is the relationship between the discourse of development and the practice of child sponsorship such that it produces a situation in which sponsoring a child is seen as both a rational and ethical response to global poverty?

Within the scope of this question, the following chapters explore the relationship among Canadian sponsorship programs, the promotional material they produce, and sponsors they attract (Chapters Three, Four, and Five respectively). These three components of sponsorship represent specific sites within which different aspects of the discourse of development can be usefully seen to operate (see Methodology section below for a general discussion of the methodological perspectives that guided this project and a detailed account how the research was undertaken). Consequently, apart from an introduction to child sponsorship and a discussion of the theoretical framework used in this project (Chapter Two), these chapters form the core sections of this project. Drawing on in-depth interviews with sponsorship staff and sponsors, these chapters present a discourse analysis that highlights how sponsorship programs and sponsors are represented – and represent themselves – as trying to "make a difference" in the world, and how these representations relate to contemporary understandings of poverty and development. Accordingly, the theme that is used to tie together the various components of this project is that of the ethical (trans)formation of the sponsor.

Developmentality and the (trans)formation of the sponsor

Representations of sponsored children and the South they symbolize are probably the most conspicuous feature of child sponsorship and its promotional material, and these representations make sponsorship a central site for the construction of Northern worldviews. More than this, however, sponsorship represents a significant force in the formation of Northern identities. Not only do representations of Southern "Others" play a formative role in the way Northerners view themselves (Levinas, 1969; Said, 1992), but

sponsorship advertising also places significant emphasis on the sponsors themselves and how they should think and feel about the act of sponsorship. As with many commercial products, sponsorship marketing is often more about the buyer and his or her (potential) lifestyle than about the object or service being sold. Although images of children are a necessary ingredient of sponsorship promotion, the narrative of child sponsorship often revolves around how the sponsor transforms both the life of the sponsored child and his or her own life in the process. This transformation is a major selling point of sponsorship advertising, and it is captured in the long-time World Vision slogan "Change a life. Change your own".

Through the "magic" of child sponsorship, individuals are not only transformed from simple donors into sponsors, but sponsors are also (supposedly) transformed into better people. The key to this transformation is that it occurs in an ethical realm largely removed from the respective lives of the sponsor and the child. Even if the sponsorship funds have no bearing on the well-being of the child (as in the case of Korotoumou) and even if the sponsor donates for less than altruistic reasons (as in the case of Lisa), the act of sponsorship itself is seen to be undeniably good. After all, it is almost impossible to dispute the ethical nature of helping support a child who is poor. Why else should it seem so appropriate that Lisa be offered a refund when her sponsorship was as conceivably "fraudulent" as the organization's portrayal of Korotoumou's life? This ethical quality of sponsorship is not only transformative but also formative; it helps constitute Northern subjects (or citizen-subjects) who are always already good.[4] As part of a movement that

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[4] The term citizen-subjects is borrowed from Cruikshank (1999), who makes use of it to discuss a similar process. The rationale behind her use of this term, which could reasonably be applied here, stems from the common discursive imbrication of national and ethical aspirations. This worthwhile point, however, falls beyond the scope of this project as it is presently formulated, and so the term "subject" will be used instead.

sees people doing good by enjoying or improving themselves (as with marathon runs that help cure cancer and massive rock concerts that help save the environment), child sponsorship presents individuals with an almost instantaneous way of becoming better people – possibly better than they have otherwise made themselves. Because of the apparently miraculous capacity of their donations to forever alter some poor child's life, sponsors are able to attain the status of an extraordinary person that is so desirable in modern Western culture. In this way, child sponsorship and its advertising help (re)position what it means to live ethically in an unequal and unjust world.

The relationship between the representation of Southern Others and the production of ethical subjects in the North did not, of course, originate with child sponsorship. This relationship is rooted, at least in part, in the racialized interactions stemming from the colonial era and its civilizing mission. By focussing exclusively on the help provided to the child and the corresponding generosity of the donor, these historical relationships, which undergird the very categories of North and South, are elided. Even though the contemporary structure of the world is based on this legacy of imperialism and colonialism, the racialized aspects of these relationships are absent from many present-day discussions of child sponsorship. Consequently, rather than say that the ethical (trans)formation of the sponsor is wholly removed from the lives of sponsor and child, it is perhaps more appropriate to say that this (trans)formation is situated in a very particular manner such that it simultaneously draws on and negates the racialized relationships associated with these lives. Even though categories of race are too often (and paradoxically) invisible nowadays, they still maintain an organizing frame of reference for most international activities, including child sponsorship. Therefore,

processes of racialization – and the (neo)colonial relations that are supported by them –

provide a powerful but largely unacknowledged context for the ethical (trans)formation

of sponsors. In particular, it should be kept in mind that the construction of good (white)

people(s) is predicated upon an historically oppressive association with helping poor

(black) Others. In this way, the work of international development in general, and child

sponsorship in particular, can never truly be separated from the perspective of "the white

man's burden".[5]

By examining the way sponsors are (trans)formed through sponsorship into ethical

subjects, it is possible to highlight the relationships among the structures and practices of

sponsorship programs, the thoughts and actions of sponsors, and the representations of

sponsorship that unite them. An appreciation for these relationships, in turn, helps clarify

the connections between the practice of child sponsorship and a discourse of development

that is historically constructed and indelibly racialized. In order to facilitate the analysis

of this connection, this research employs a theoretical perspective labelled

"developmentality". A modified version of Michel Foucault's (2003[1978]) concept of

governmentality, developmentality is a portmanteau of "developmental rationality" or

"development mentality" (see Chapter Two for a more in-depth discussion of both

governmentality and developmentality). Developmentality primarily draws on Foucault's

later work on the ethics of the self, focusing on the way individuals constitute themselves

as ethical subjects within a particular moral environment (see Foucault, 1990[1984]). In

this light, developmentality draws attention to the way in which the various meanings or

uses of the term development (such as international, personal, biological, even

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[5] For a discussion of the modern incarnations of Kipling's well-known title, see William Easterly's (2006) book on contemporary foreign aid.

organizational) articulate with each other in important and disturbing ways. The most obvious instance of this articulation is the organic metaphor underlying the concept of development, whereby the development of the individual human body – not to mention the evolution of the entire species – "naturally" progresses through time just as international (or economic) development is often seen as the unfolding of innate laws of human behaviour. Another aspect of this articulation is the way in which modern knowledges and practices of development have become increasingly centred on both the level of the population (state, community, etc.) and the level of the individual. An easy illustration of this trend can be seen in the "UN Declaration on the Right to Development", which declares that the "right to development is an inalienable human right… which every human person and all peoples are entitled" and that states' policies should "aim at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals" (United Nations General Assembly, 1986).

As with all cases of such articulation, this understanding of the apparently inseparable relationship between individual and collective development must be seen as more than the natural expression of the meaning of development. Instead, it is a product of a "deep historical link" between a variety of movements associated with the expansion of liberal arts of government (Foucault, 2003[1978]: 243). The link between these movements, which include such things as an increasing emphasis on the theme of population and an increasing separation of the sphere of economics from social life, has resulted in a particular vision of what progress is and how it can be achieved. This vision of progress, in turn, has resulted in particular understandings of ethical action in contemporary society. Through this process, perceptions of what makes a person good

are tied to a specific pattern of relationships with others (or in this case Others) and, consequently, to broader fields of knowledge and power related to development (see Chapter Two for a more in-depth discussion of these issues). These broader fields of knowledge and power are often referred to in terms of the discourse of development.

The discourse of development

Writing about international development in terms of discourses is a relatively new and specialized practice with the broader field of development studies (and the sociology of development in particular). It is largely a product of the so-called cultural turn in the social sciences that arguably began with the postmodern movement, but became solidified in what is commonly labelled poststructuralism. Jacques Derrida's (1978) (in)famous paper, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", is often seen to herald the poststructural movement even though it was first presented at a 1966 conference in the United States on structuralism. In typical postmodern fashion, this paper critiques the traditionally rigid use of structures to explain social phenomenon as reliant on an imagined foundation that is not actually present. Poststructuralism, which is also now largely associated with the work of Foucault, represents this notion of a lack of any foundational structures with which to study the social world. Poststructuralism is associated with a variety of theoretical perspectives, including such things as the fragmentation of the self, the end of truth, the relationship between knowledge and power, and the importance of intertextuality. The influence of poststructuralism on both sociology and development studies has been profound, and while it is perhaps still more common to see "traditional" (structural) analyses of development and its difficulties,

there have been a host of recent works that employ a discursive approach to international development (e.g., Crush, 1995; Rist, 2002). What exactly does it mean, however, to discuss the discourse of development, and what does this discursive approach look like?

Although there is little agreement on the meaning of the term discourse, it is generally used to indicate conversation or debate and, within linguistics, to encompass all verbal or written communication that is longer than a single statement and that has some degree of cohesiveness. Foucault's notion of discourse is both broader and more specific than these conventional meanings, and it is inseparably related to his ideas about power, knowledge, truth, and subjectivity. For Foucault (2002[1969]), discourses are not only "words and things" but also "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (54). In other words, a discourse is not just a "groups of signs" and what they signify; it is also the "group of rules" that both determines the meaning of words and, crucially, the truth of statements in any given context (54). This feature of discourse as truth-practice comes from the relationship between knowledge and power, which is circular and inseparable. Foucault does not say that knowledge is power (a common and unfortunate misreading) but that the "production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements" always occurs in a field of power relations (Foucault, 2003[1977]: 317). These relations of power are supported and extended, in turn, through the resulting configuration of knowledge. Because of this relationship, truth is not something external to discourse – something against which discursive elements can be measured. Instead, truth relies on discourse for its very production, and the resulting "'regime of truth" has a subtle yet powerful influence on the way people understand the world and act within it. Consequently, discourses are both "an instrument and an effect of

power" relations, and as such, they are more than a linguistic component of social interaction (Foucault, 2003[1978]: 101). Not only are discourses specific to particular social formations, locations, and time periods, but they are also inseparably related to the multitude of everyday practices that define these situations.

This understanding of discourse led Arturo Escobar (1995), one of the best known importers of Foucault`s work into the field of development studies, to focus on what he calls the "three axes" of development:

> the forms of knowledge that refer to it and through which it comes into being and is elaborated into objects, concepts, theories, and the like; the system of power that regulate its practice; and the forms of subjectivity fostered by this discourse, those through which people come to recognize themselves as developed or underdeveloped (10).

In structuring his analysis around these "axes", Escobar indicates what he means by the discourse of development and how he studied it. Although the theme of development can be seen as encompassing a wide range of elements – including such things as a particular conception of time and space, a particular way of representing ourselves and Others, and a particular regime of governance (Rojas, 2001) – Escobar (1995) stresses that to "understand development as discourse, one must look not at the elements themselves but at the system of relations established among them. It is this system that allows the systematic creation of objects, concepts, and strategies; it determines what can be thought and said" (40). An emphasis on the system of relations that coordinates thought and action around development is a shift away from the common practice of development studies, which centers on studying the economics of projects and policies in order to figure out best how to "unleash" the latent forces of development. Because of this emphasis, the discourse of development is best "characterized not by a unified object [a reified vision of what development is and how to achieve it] but by the formation of a

vast number of objects and strategies" (44).[6] The discursive connections among these

objects and strategies are so pervasive that it is almost "impossible to conceptualize

social reality in other terms" (5).

Wolfgang Sachs (2000) underscores this point when he writes that development can

be understood as nothing less than "a secular salvation story", which for fifty years "has

been much more than just a socio-economic endeavour; it has been a perception which

models reality, a myth which comforts societies, and a fantasy which unleashes passions"

(7, 13). Like Escobar (1995), Sachs (1999) places the origins of international

development – the concept as it is generally, albeit loosely, understood today – with

Harry Truman's 1949 inaugural address. This speech was not only the "starting-gun in

the race for the South to catch up with the North", but it was also a defining moment in

the creation of an all-encompassing economic worldview – a particularly American

worldview (4). With a few words, Truman conferred upon a majority of the world's

population the status of "underdeveloped" and thus fundamentally altered the semantic

terrain of international politics. For this majority, Truman not only turned development

into "a reminder of *what they are not*" but also imposed the principal goal of their lives:

"to escape from the undignified condition called underdevelopment" (Esteva, 1992: 10, 7

emphasis in original). This is not to say that the concept of development did not exist

prior to Truman's "Point Four Program" or that the age of development heralded by this

program had no connection to the colonial era that preceded it. As noted by Teodor

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[6] Because of this diversity with development discourse, some scholars have argued that there are multiple
discourses of development and not just a single discourse (e.g., Grillo, 1997; Rojas, 2001). Escobar (1995)
does mention that the elements of development discourse change but that these changes "always occur
within the confines of the same discursive space" (42). Both of these positions have some merit, and in
reality, the issue is one of semantics more than of theoretical disparity. For reasons of clarity, however, this
project uses the term development discourse in the singular except when referring to different meanings of
the term development and their associated discourses (as in international development versus biological
development). See Chapter Two for more information.

Shanin (1997), the idea of progress inherent in development is a "major philosophical

legacy left by the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries" (65). This idea resolved the

apparent problem of cultural and material differences between societies by answering the

questions: "What produced diversity? The different stages of development of different

societies" and "What was social change? The necessary advance through the different

social forms that existed" (67). This philosophical legacy, which became one of the

central ordering principles of modern development, dictated the subsequent work of all

politicians and social scientists. If societies could be easily placed on a track from less to

more "advanced", then almost all social quandaries could be reduced to one simple

question – how do societies advance, or rather, how can we (advanced societies) help

others (less-advanced societies) progress?

Even though the concept of development owes a philosophical debt to

Enlightenment thought, what happened in the Truman era represented a fundamental shift

in the understanding of societal progress. No longer were the colonial objectives of

"economic progress" and of elevating "natives to a higher level of civilization" two

distinct areas; after World War II, these two areas collapsed into the all-encompassing

concept of international development (Sachs, 2000: 5).

> The former distinction between an economic and a moral realm vanished, a
> sign of a conceptual shift. From now on, not only resources figured into the
> development formula, but people as well. Inversely, the moral concern for
> people was eclipsed by the economic concern for growth. This shift
> indicated that a new worldview had come to the fore: the degree of
> civilization in a country can be measured by its economic performance
> level. (5)

This foregrounding of the economic arena turned economies into wholesale proxies for

societies in which "the economy overshadows every other reality" and development

specialists see "not a society that has an economy, but a society that *is* an economy"

(Sachs, 1999: 17). It also turned social life into a "technical problem" to be solved by these specialists; development was thus not a "cultural process" but "a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended… to make societies fit a preexisting model that embodied the structures and functions of modernity" (Escobar, 1995: 44, 52). This sweeping emphasis on the economic aspect of progress is linked to the particular "problematization of poverty" that became pervasive at the time (44-45). Although relative deprivation has existed since pre-history, the phenomenon of mass poverty in Asia, Latin America, and Africa was "discovered" as if it were a novel condition the existence of which could suddenly not be tolerated. Poverty was thus "used to define whole peoples, not according to what they are and want to be, but according to what they lack and are expected to become" (Sachs, 1999: 9). This "globalization of poverty", which homogenously constructed two-thirds of the world as poor, came with its own solution that was not only obvious but also unquestionable. "That the essential trait of the Third World was its poverty and that the solution was economic growth and development became self-evident, necessary, and universal truths" (Escobar, 1995: 24).

While the discourse of development has come to be dominated by political and economic issues, particularly that of poverty, the importance of historical and socio-cultural features within and around the discourse should not be overlooked. Truman may have succeeded in "freeing the economic sphere from the negative connotations it had accumulated for two centuries, delinking development from colonialism" (Esteva, 1992: 17), but we should not so easily dismiss the "important connection between the decline of the colonial order and the rise of development" (Escobar, 1995: 26). In fact, the entire discourse of development can be seen, in many ways, "as a response to challenges to

imperial power" (26). Consequently, despite many changes in the outward relationship between colonizer and colonized after independence, "there are very strong lines of continuity between colonial and development discourse and policy" (Biccum, 2005: 1006). Because of this continuity, many emerging countries in the South "reinterpreted the power gap" of the colonial order "as a development gap" and, in many "developed" countries, "economic disdain has thus taken the place of colonial contempt" (Sachs, 2000: 8; 1999: 9).

Even though many of the overt manifestations of colonial power have been whitewashed out of prevailing development narratives, Escobar (1995) stresses the foundational influence of "patriarchy and ethnocentrism" on the configuration of the development discourse (43). Through this influence, "[f]orms of power in terms of class, gender, race, and nationality[7] thus found their way into development theory and practice. The former do not determine the latter in a direct causal relation; rather they are development discourse's formative elements" (43). These "forms of power" link development to imperialism not as much through equivalent discriminatory practices – although this does happen – but through their respective "regimes of representation" (Escobar, 1995: 10). Representations are the fundamental building blocks of discourses, and because of the relationship between power and knowledge, they are often organized into those that are accepted / acceptable and those that are unaccepted / unacceptable. The resulting exclusionary effects, which help maintain the historical divisions among perceived races among other things, are reproduced despite changes of wording or character between the discourses. In this way, critiques of international development

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[7] Religion might also be added to this list.

draw on, and add to, discussions of colonial exercises of power and their relationship to the classification of individuals and populations.

In theorising the transition from colonial orders to regimes of development, it is important to remember not only that many developmental categories are the result of a historical legacy of colonialism but also that these categories are presently located within ongoing imperial relationships. What is commonly referred to as the "new imperialism" (for example, see Harvey, 2003) describes the discursive and structural relationships that principally represent the expansion of American dominance across the globe and its consequences for people(s) in the South. These relationships include overt elements, such as the Truman Doctrine or The Project for a New American Century, and less straightforward aspects, such as the Chicago Boys or the so-called Washington Consensus. The contemporary "work" of international development was formulated within, and cannot now be separated from, this context. While the relationship between imperial motivations and development practices have a plethora of effects on the ground in the South, they have an equally important influence on perceptions in the North.

Just as the discourses surrounding "old imperialism" and "the Orient" had more to do with British, French, and American worldviews than with the actual lives of "Orientals" (Said, 1979), the discourse of development tells us as much about the way Northerners envision people in the South as about the vast complexity of what occurs around the world on a day-to-day basis. Many scholars writing about imperialism and development in terms of discourse have focused on the impact in the South, but we should not forget that equivalent discursive processes take place in the North. Apart from being the site where much of the world's "development knowledge" is constructed (or at

least institutionalized and legitimized), the North is also a place where social and cultural perspectives on development and so-called developing peoples are (re)produced (see Chouliaraki, 2006; Hall, 1992; Jefferess, 2002a; Lutz and Collins, 1993; Moeller, 1999; Nederveen Pieterse, 1992; Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004). Whether through news media, promotional material from development-oriented charities, documentaries and feature films, magazines such as *National Geographic*, governmental development agencies, or other sources, individuals in the North are exposed to a variety of ideas and values regarding international development and the people who are seen to be principally in need of it. Besides having to interpret these representations of the world and react to them psychologically, they are often called on to respond to them externally through personal discussion, charitable donation, and political action. These responses, together with the activities of policy-makers, academics, activists, and NGO staff, shape the perspectives that determine the political and economic practices of the development industry.

As Northerners interpret and respond to representations of the South, (re)producing particular perspectives of themselves and other in the process, they are commonly called on to reference historically-rooted ideas of race. The racial classifications that figured so prominently in colonial discourse may have become muted or transformed – now commonly taking the guise of ethnic categories rather than biological ones (Barker, 1981) – but their legacy is starkly evident in the discourse of development. After all, it is no coincidence that the very division of North and South that underpins the logic of international development reflects a global configuration that is equally rooted in perceived racial (and now cultural) difference as it is economic difference. Emerging out of historical practices of colonialism and set with contemporary practices of imperialism,

processes of racialization lie at the heart of the way Northern interventions in the South –
in the name of development or humanitarianism – are rationalized (for example, see
Razack, 2004). Stated in another way, it should not be forgotten that the discourse of
development is, at its heart, a racialized discourse, one that not only helps structure
Northern understandings of Southerners and their problems but also helps constitute
Northern people(s) as "legitimately" different.

Development occupies the centre of "an incredibly powerful semantic
constellation" (Esteva, 1992: 8), and the description of development as a discourse gives
the impression that it is a totalizing and unified force acting on individuals in the North
and the South. The idea of development does have an enormous influence on the way
people perceive of and act in the world, but it is neither totalizing nor unified. "Within
development there is and has always been a multiplicity of voices… even if some are
more powerful than others" (Grillo, 1997: 22). Different understandings of development
have affected the field as much as different conceptions of how to achieve it. These
differences are constantly being negotiated within the discourse, making development a
contested terrain both semantically and politically. These differences have been at the
heart of paradigm changes within development thought over the last sixty years, and have
been the source of many "alternative" movements in development policy and practice.
According to Escobar (1995), though, the overarching discursive formation has been
quite stable with so-called development alternatives never quite reaching the scale of true
alternatives to development.

Escobar and the other scholars referenced in the section above are, for better or
worse, often lumped together as espousing a "postdevelopment" perspective. Academics

writing from this perspective not only treat development as a discourse but also often

advocate for the removal of the term development from use. They see the field of

international development as largely, if not completely, bankrupt and argue for a

reinterpretation of the idea of progress. A single quote by Wolfgang Sachs (1999) neatly

summarizes much of the postdevelopment platform:

> the idea of development stands today like a ruin in the intellectual
> landscape, its shadows obscuring our vision. It is high time we tackled the
> archaeology of this towering conceit, that we uncovered its foundations to
> see it for what it is: the outdated monument to an immodest era (3).

Many of the critiques levelled by postdevelopment scholars are thought-provoking,

especially the concern with very notion of development to describe the differences

between the North and the South, and the present project largely follows a

postdevelopment perspective. After all, the concept of developmentality used in this

project (and discussed in depth in the latter half of Chapter Two) directly addresses the

significance of the idea of development and its relationship to global poverty and

inequality. However, we must also be wary of characterizing all that goes on under the

rubric of development as homogenous or inescapable or universally negative. The view

of development as a (bankrupt) discourse has tended, albeit for some good reasons, to

lead down that road (see the section "A note on terminology" for a discussion of the

continuing use of the term development). Even though it is slightly out of context here, a

well-known quote by Foucault (2003[1983]) provides some perspective on this issue:

"My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not

exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to

do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism" (104).

The discourse of development is dangerous, but this danger should not lead us to

oversimplify the issues involved. Instead, it should make us all the more attentive to complexity and all the more cautious with our conclusions.

The problem with child sponsorship

The analysis presented in this study privileges this view of development as discourse without claiming to map the entirety of its breadth or influence in the North. No attempt is made, consequently, to represent all aspects of development discourse, which spans an astounding range of cultural, technical, and policy-oriented texts. The goal here is to not to expose the "real" and sordid underbelly of development any more than it is to reveal the negligence of particular sponsorship agencies. Consequently, there is neither the intention to provide a comprehensive explanation around the practice of child sponsorship or its advertising nor the desire to produce a list of concrete recommendations as to how it could be improved. Instead, this project is designed to chart some specific discursive mechanisms that link some mainstream descriptions and strategies of development to the organizations, individuals, and representations involved in child sponsorship fundraising. The objective of this process, given the qualitative nature of this study, is simply to highlight the fact that there is something noteworthy happening at the intersection between the way sponsorship is described and development is imagined – something that helps order the ethical landscape in the North and helps rationalize a practice whose value is questionable at best.

Child sponsorship is problematic, but it is fraught with difficulty not simply because of what it might fail to do (help Southern children) but above all because of what it is actually designed to do (raise money from Northerners). The way in which child

sponsorship accomplishes this fundraising task, and its remarkable success in doing so, tells us something not only about development and its role in the world but also about ethical frames of reference within contemporary liberal societies. As a fundraising strategy, child sponsorship is at least as much about satisfying the needs of Northern sponsors as it is about addressing the needs of Southern children (something sadly reminiscent of the development industry at large). It is structured around providing positive recurring feedback for donors; giving them a feel-good experience in exchange for their money (Jefferess, 2002a). This aim is perfectly understandable from a marketing perspective, and it is one of the crucial elements that make sponsorship so successful.

This orientation of child sponsorship promotion, however, depends upon and ultimately reinforces a particular vision of what it means to do (or be) good in response to problems of global poverty and inequality. More than a fleeting feeling of compassionate warmth, child sponsorship offers (white) sponsors a way to become better people – a way to develop themselves as individuals while they help develop (black) Others. Likewise, child sponsorship offers NGOs the opportunity to become better *development* organizations through being more successful *fundraising* organizations. The discursive link between personal development, organizational development, and international development is crucial in creating the space necessary to position sponsors and sponsorship organizations as "doing good" (development work) through the act of "becoming better" (people/organizations). This link is not simply a matter of overlapping meanings of development, however. It is rooted in very specific historical relationships that have been shaped and legitimized by particular ideologies and practices, most notably those of liberalism and colonialism.

The problem with this articulation of international development goals with organizational and personal aspirations is that, in many ways, child sponsorship ceases to be (if it ever was) a means to an end and becomes an end in itself – an ethical tautology facilitated by a particular understanding of development. Far from being an abuse of prevailing ethical principles, this emphasis on doing good in the world as a by-product of personal and organizational development is a fundamental aspect of modern liberal thought and a natural extension of colonial relations. In this way, child sponsorship can be better understood as a constituent factor in the reproduction of current relations of knowledge and power in the world – and the value structures that support these relations – than as a method for transforming the status quo.

Methodology: From critical cultural studies to discourse analysis

The project uses a discourse analytic approach to study mainstream understandings of development and their relationship to the everyday practices of child sponsorship and to the ethical subjectivities of Northerners. There is little consistency, however, in the understanding or use of discourse analysis across the social sciences (Brown and Yule, 1983; Graham, 2011; 2002; Mason, 2002). Beyond a general emphasis on studying "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world", discourse analyses can vary widely in both form and function (Joergensen and Phillips, 2002: 1). Part of this variety can be attributed to the different meanings of the term discourse. As discussed above with reference to the discourse of development, there is a general distinction between discourse (an abstract noun) as referring simply to written or verbal communication that represents social practices and discourse(s) (a count noun) as

referring to specific bundles of representations that are "inherently positioned" (Fairclough, 2001). This division is also sometimes referred to by discussing small "d" discourse and big "D" Discourses, where the former is "language-in use" and the latter "language plus 'other stuff'" (Gee, 2005: 26). As Mason (2002) explains, while discourse analysis represents "an analysis of the ways in which discourses [abstract noun or small "d" discourse] – which can be read in texts and talk – constitute the social world… For some, especially in the Foucauldian tradition, there is an interest in discursive practices [count noun of big "D" Discourses] which blend together text, talk *and practice*" (57, emphasis added). This breakdown is somewhat too simplistic as most uses of discourse analysis actually operate by looking at the relationship between these two different meanings of discourse; that is, discourse analysis, and especially "critical" discourse analysis, most often focuses on how discourse produces, and is in turn reproduced, by Discourses (Gee, 2005). However, this distinction is useful to highlight how some studies using discourse analysis tend to focus more on the specific linguistic features of communication and other tend to focus more on the general relationships between everyday action (especially communication) and particular constellations of knowledge and power (Graham, 2011). Many studies that emphasize the latter approach draw on a Foucauldian understanding of what discourses are and how to study them.

For Foucault (2002[1969]), discourses are not only "words and things" but also "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (54). This means that a discourse is not just a "groups of signs" and what they signify; it is also the "group of rules" that both determines the meaning of words and, crucially, the truth of statements in any given context (54). According to Foucault (Foucault, 1990[1978]: 100), then, the

study of discourse(s) should be less concerned with revealing the "true" significance of communicative acts and more concerned with understanding how truth is produced through the strategic use of discursive elements within particular contexts. This emphasis on strategy is important because it indicates the active nature of the interface between people and discourses, which both shape the subjectivities of individuals and are themselves shaped by these individuals. In the end, however, the goal of discourse analysis is simply to highlight how certain areas of life, and the practices with which they are associated, become normalized through the use of language and the production of knowledge.

While a Foucauldian-style discourse analysis goes beyond the content of cultural texts to the rules that determine their legitimacy and order their use, it is not an attempt to expose these rules as much as an attempt to piece together the relationship between everyday practices and the constellations of knowledge and power in which they are embedded. This objective with discourse analysis is evident in the way he formulates his own project in *The History of Sexuality*, where he writes that the questions to be addressed are:

> In a specific type of discourse on sex, in a specific form of exhortation of truth, appearing historically and in specific places (around the child's body, apropos of women's sex, in connection with practices of birth, and so on), what were the most immediate, the most local power relations at work? How did they make possible these kinds of discourses, and conversely, how were these discourses used to support power relations? How was the action of these power relations modified by their very exercise, entailing a strengthening of some terms and a weakening of others, with effects of resistance and counterinvestments, so that there has never existed one type of stable subjection, given once and for all? How were these power relations linked to one another according to the logic of a great strategy, which in retrospect takes on the aspect of a unitary and voluntarist politics of sex (97)?

From this brief description, it is important to appreciate not only Foucault's emphasis on the relationship between power and discourse but also his particular understanding of "subjection". Here, subjection is not simply a dominating force that removes the agency from individuals; it is a process of subject-formation in which individuals participate. In combining the idea of subjectification with subjugation, he draws attention to the inherent productivity of power (see Foucault, 2003[1982a]). Because power produces as well as constrains, processes of subjection are always incomplete and unstable. These processes occur within a network of power relations that features both the "voluntary" action and the strategic limitation of individuals. The constitution of subjects who are free to act, but whose possible field of action is bounded, is at once the most liberating and the most insidious aspect of modern forms of power. It is simultaneously liberating and insidious because it connects that which allows for change to that which reproduces particular relations of power and knowledge. In addition to highlighting the context-specific association between discourses and power relations, probing the way in which people are constituted as (free) subjects through discourse is a central objective of Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Given these loose objectives, researchers who follow Foucault "do not speak of their research 'findings'. They tend to use less emphatic language, recognizing that truth is contingent upon the subjectivity of the reader and the fickleness of language" (Graham, 2010: 666). This method seems a little haphazard on the surface as researchers using this approach try to preserve some of the complexity of social world within their analyses. Consequently, many Foucault-inspired analyses "shy away from prescribing method, for no matter how standardized the process, the analysis of language by different people will

seldom yield the same result" (666). The value in such a methodological perspective, then, does not lie in the truths that are uncovered or even in the relationships that are brought to light, but rather in the ability of the reader to view things in a new light such that what was previously seen to be natural or value-free is now seen to be problematic and value-laden. The lack of more "standardized" methodological procedures within Foucauldian discourse analysis, then, is "not seen as problematic for the aim of poststructural analysis is not to establish the final 'truth' but to question the intelligibility of truth/s we have come to take for granted" (666). Gee (2005) summarizes this aspect of discourse analysis by stating that the

> "goal of discourse analysis is to render even Discourses with which we are familiar 'strange,' so that even if we ourselves are members of these Discourses we can see consciously (maybe for the first time) how much effort goes into making them work and, indeed, seem normal, even 'right,' to their members" (102).

In light of this simple but far-reaching goal, the present project looks at the way sponsorship organizations and sponsors understand and position their activities within the broader contexts of international development and charitable donation. Following the Foucauldian interpretation of discourse explained above, this study attempts to trace some of the important relationships between perceptions of development and practices of child sponsorship. The objective of this analysis is to explore the way mainstream understandings of development are taken up by sponsorship agencies and sponsors to help construct a vision of the purpose and ethical value of child sponsorship. This objective is implicit in the overarching research question that guides this project: What is the relationship between the discourse of development and the practice of child sponsorship such that it produces a situation in which sponsoring a child is seen as both a rational and ethical response to global poverty? In order to address this question

empirically, a critical cultural studies perspective was initially adopted to break this

project into manageable components.

As outlined by Kellner (1995), the project of critical cultural studies

insists that culture must be studied within the social relations and system
through which culture is produced and consumed, and that thus study of
culture is intimately bound up with the study of society, politics, and
economics. Cultural studies shows how media culture articulates the
dominant values, political ideologies, and social developments and novelties
of the era (6).

Consequently, Kellner advocates for a "three-fold project" that analyzes the *production*

and political economy of cultural texts, the content or *message* of these texts, and their

reception and effects (7). Each of these areas is necessary to fully understand the "life" of

cultural products and to avoid misinterpretation by too narrowly focusing on a single

aspect (such as has arguably been the case with content analysis). This reasoning stems

from the British cultural studies tradition, which locates meaning not in the text itself but

in the mediated interaction between the text producer and the text consumer (Hall, 1980).

Consequently, the present project set out specifically to study the representations within

sponsorship promotional material through examining the areas of production, message,

and reception (of sponsorship promotional material) that loosely corresponded to three

components of child sponsorship in the North: sponsorship programs, sponsorship

advertising, and sponsors.

While a critical cultural studies perspective initially guided the design of this

project, the emphasis shifted during the course of the research as is common when using

qualitative methodologies (Mason, 2002: 25). As the theoretical framework for the

project developed alongside the empirical component, the analysis took on a different

dimension than a relatively straightforward investigation of the representations in

sponsorship promotional literature. Consequently, while the empirical division into the three components of sponsorship remains prominent in this project (and is still reflected in the structure of the chapters), the analytical focus on production, message, and reception has largely been replaced by an emphasis on processes of subjectification at each of these sites within the practice of child sponsorship in Canada. While less precise than a conventional study of representations within mass-mediated content, an emphasis on processes of subjectification allows for an analysis of child sponsorship that is broader in scope and that fits better within the framework of discourse analysis. Consequently, rather than envisioning the components of sponsorship as a series of progressive phases of meaning-making (from production to reception) that convey particular representations of poverty and development, they are studied as unique sites of identity formation that are embedded in a broader field of discourse that links them together.

Set within the historical and contemporary contexts of child sponsorship (Chapter Two), each of these central components – sponsorship programs (Chapter Three), sponsorship promotional material (Chapter Four), and sponsors (Chapter Five) – is analyzed in relation to the discourse of development. Drawing on the theoretical framework of developmentality (Chapter Two), these analyses link the conventional discourse of (international) development to processes of subjectification by examining the articulation between various iterations of the meaning of development. Specifically, sponsorship programs are discussed with reference to the connections between the perspectives and practices of international development and those of organizational development. Sponsorship promotional material is discussed with reference to the discourse surrounding child development, and the perspective of sponsors is discussed

with reference to the discourse of personal development. The analysis of each of these components is supported by data generated[8] through in-depth interviews with sponsorship staff and sponsors as well as through a sample of sponsorship promotional material. More information about the methods used in generating the data for the analysis of these components is located below.

Chapter Three examines the organizational context of child sponsorship with an emphasis on the production of promotional material and its relationship to organizational development. The analysis in this chapter is guided by the following question: What is the relationship between the discourse of development and the way sponsorship staff perceive and carry out their work? Data for this analysis were primarily generated from personal interviews with staff members of Canadian sponsorship programs. A total of 18 people were interviewed for this purpose in the summer of 2007 (see Appendix E for a list of these participants). Of these individuals, 14 are staff members of Canadian child sponsorship programs who, at the time, worked directly with the production of promotional material or supervised this work. Two are former staff members of child sponsorship programs. The remaining two are individuals who, at the time, worked in development NGOs not currently offering child sponsorship.

Interviews with the 14 current sponsorship staff members were conducted in order to shed light on the daily activities of child sponsorship programs in Canada, with a particular emphasis on the way sponsors are recruited and retained. More specifically, these interviews were used as a basis for analyzing the connections between personal or

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[8] The term "data generation" is borrowed from Jennifer Mason (2002). Contrary to the more traditional use of "data gathering", it emphasizes the active construction of data by the researcher rather than the "passive" acquisition of information that is somehow out there for the researcher to discover. This terminology acknowledges that data are always influenced by the perspectives and motivations of the researcher even before analysis begins.

institutional understandings of international development, the specific duties of sponsorship staff, and the overarching goals of the organization. In this way, participant responses simultaneously serve as descriptions and interpretations of everyday organizational practices, expressions of personal identity and institutional culture, and reflections of the interview process itself. The polysemous nature of participant responses both makes possible and complicates an analysis of child sponsorship programs that focuses on the way development discourses produce, and are reproduced through, specific organizational practices. The analysis is complicated because, in this context, one must do more than give voice to the participants; instead, it is necessary to critically interrogate both the limits of "appropriate" responses and the particular formulation of individual responses. Consequently, a situation is created in which participants may not necessarily agree with the interpretations of their responses presented here. This is unfortunate but difficult to avoid in any critical analysis. However, since the intent is to look beyond both personal and organizational failings in the critique of child sponsorship, it is hoped that this indiscretion is forgiven. After all, what is principally evident from participant responses is the complexity with which they address child sponsorship, its role, and its limitations. It is this complexity that leads away from a critique of sponsorship as an organizational dilemma and toward a critique of sponsorship as one aspect of a particular rationality that helps (re)produce systemic global inequality even as it improves the quality of life of some people.

Between one and four staff members were interviewed at each of the following organizations: World Vision Canada, Plan Canada, Christian Children's Fund of Canada, Compassion Canada, Canadian Feed the Children, and Food for the Hungry Canada.

These organizations were selected primarily on the basis of their size as determined by annual revenue at the time of the interviews.[9] With the exception of a Catholic organization called Chalice, these six organization are the largest and highest profile organizations offering child sponsorship in Canada (both at the time of the interviews and today). Even with a 2007 revenue of about 13 million, Chalice was not selected due to its apparent low public profile outside the Catholic church.[10]

The 14 current sponsorship staff participants were recruited by sending an introductory letter to the appropriate contact person at each organization.[11] These letters were followed up with phone calls in which the general objectives of the research were explained. Each organization then selected individuals to be interviewed; every organization that was contacted agreed to provide at least one interview participant. All interviews were conducted by the researcher during working hours at the head offices of the organizations involved.[12]

At the time of the interviews, staff members worked in the following areas: three in senior management positions that directly or indirectly monitor the production of promotional material, five in marketing or communications positions, three in donor relations positions, and three in program positions (meaning that they deal directly with

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[9] Approximate 2007 revenues as reported to the Canada Revenue Agency: World Vision Canada – 398 million, Plan Canada – 77 million, Christian Children's Fund of Canada – 37 million, Compassion Canada – 25 million, Canadian Feed the Children – 20 million, and Food for the Hungry Canada – 4.7 million. See Chapter Two for some additional information about these organizations. Chapter Two also contains a brief discussion of the difficulty in determining what it means to have the largest sponsorship program. Another prominent sponsorship agency, SOS Children's Villages, had a 2007 revenue of about 2.5 million, which would have placed it next on the list in terms of size. However, its sponsorship program functions somewhat differently than those of the other organizations (it primarily provides housing for orphaned children), and so it was left out of the study.

[10] As indicated by the low page rank on Google and the lack of significant TV or print advertising.

[11] Information about these contact persons was obtained by calling the main contact number of each organization and explaining that I was looking for research participants. Please see Appendix D for a copy of the letter.

[12] With the exception of one organization, all the head offices are located in or around Toronto, ON. Food for the Hungry Canada has its head office in Abbotsford, BC.

the partner agencies overseas). Due to different organizational sizes and divisions, these job areas do not reflect a precise description of work-related responsibilities; for example, the separation between communications and donor relations is not terribly clear. Instead, these categories were selected on the basis of job title and participant self-identification. Although interview participants were selected by the organizations involved, the range of professional responsibilities of the participants appears to represent most, if not all, of the core workload within sponsorship programs.

In addition to the 14 current staff participants, two former staff members were interviewed because they responded to my call for sponsor participants (described below).[13] One of these participants worked in a program management position for one of the same organizations from which the current staff members were recruited. The other former staff member worked overseas with the partner organization of one of the same organizations from which the current staff members were recruited. They were both interviewed in the fall of 2007 at the same time as the other sponsor participants were interviewed, but several months after the other staff member interviews were conducted. These interviews followed the same interview schedule used for the 14 current sponsorship staff members. The responses of these former participants were interpreted (and integrated into the analysis) in an equivalent manner to the current staff participants.

Finally, two staff members were interviewed from Save the Children Canada and UNICEF Canada, neither of which currently offers child sponsorship (although Save the Children Canada had a residual program still running at the time of the interview). At the

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[13] One of these participants contacted me to see if I wanted to hear about her experience working for a Canadian child sponsorship program. The other participant happened to be a child sponsor as well as having worked for the overseas partner of a Canadian child sponsorship program; this participant was only interviewed once but was asked questions regarding both her experiences as a staff person and as a sponsor.

time of the interview in 2007, Save the Children Canada had cancelled its long-standing

sponsorship program. However, it maintained a relationship with the sponsors it had

recruited prior to cancellation. At the time of the interviews, both participants worked

producing, or overseeing the production of, fundraising material. These interviews were

conducted in order to provide comparative background on the production of fundraising

material for international development, and consequently, neither participant is directly

cited in this study. Both of these participants were recruited in a similar manner to the

current sponsorship staff participants although they were informed that their responses

would not appear in the final project.

All staff interviews lasted between one and two hours and were loosely structured

around a set of open-ended questions dealing with participants' roles at the organization,

their thoughts on the benefits and challenges of child sponsorship, and their perceptions

of the world in general. Although the interviews were conducted in a conversation style

allowing the participant to direct the topic as much as possible, they all began with the

following three questions: Could you please describe what you do here? Would you mind

telling me how you came to work here? How would you describe child sponsorship to

someone who does not know anything about it (see Appendix B for a copy of the entire

interview schedule)? This last question was also used as an opening question for the

interviews with sponsors; it was intended that this allow for some consistency between

staff and sponsor discussions of child sponsorship. The interviews were recorded and

later transcribed. Quotations from participants within this project are slightly edited from

their verbatim transcription. Utterances such as "uh", "um", "ah", and "you know" are

removed as are any explicit verbal tics (repetition of the same words that do not convey

any additional meaning). This format is intended to improve the readability of responses. No remuneration was offered to any of the interview participants.

Throughout the study, pseudonyms and non-specific job descriptions are the only distinguishing features to differentiate participant responses. Any quotations that suggest a participant's organizational affiliation are altered to protect the identity of the participant. These measures are necessary to protect the confidentiality of participants and to address any unforeseen negative consequences as a result of their participation. Assurances of confidentiality were also necessary to ensure open communication during the interview process and to secure interview participants in the first place. Given the selection procedure of the current staff participants, extra attention was taken in securing informed consent. Because they were asked to participate in the context of their jobs, staff participants were informed that they could elect not to participate at any time without any consequences and that they could elect to participate but have their responses not appear in the final version. All staff participants elected to participate fully.

Chapter Four analyzes sponsorship promotional material as the principal medium that connects organizational practices of child sponsorship to the thoughts and actions of sponsors. The analysis in this chapter is guided by the following question: What is the relationship between the discourse of development and the mediated interactions between sponsorship programs and sponsors? This analysis of promotional material focuses on the way discourses of child development articulate with those of international development in order to ethically position the practice of sponsorship for sponsors. Data for this analysis were generated from a sample of sponsorship promotional material collected in 2007 (see Appendix A for a list of the items in this sample). This sample represents items

used both to recruit and retain child sponsors and includes televised ads, magazine inserts, brochures, newsletters, direct mail appeals, web pages and sample sponsor updates. More precisely, this sample consists of 5 long-format (one hour) ads aired on television (and recorded by the author), four short-format (30 second to 2 minute) commercials available on YouTube (uploaded by the respective organizations), three newsletters, seven brochures, one magazine insert, three sample mail-outs to sponsors, and six screen captures from organization websites. The organizations represented in the sample are World Vision Canada (ten items), Plan Canada (five items), Christian Children's Fund of Canada (four items), Compassion Canada (four items), Food for the Hungry Canada (three items), and Canadian Feed the Children (three items). Although dating the origin of each item is difficult, all items in the sample were still in active circulation by the end of 2007. This sample was selected purposively.

In contrast to a sample that selects items randomly in order to provide an analysis that is more generalizable to all items, a purposive sample includes items reviewed and intentionally selected by the researcher on the basis of pre-existing analytical criteria. There are a number of subtypes of this version of sampling, sometimes called non-probability sampling, and it is the most common form of sampling used in qualitative research (Patton, 2002; see also Kemper, Stringfield, and Teddlie, 2003). Use of a purposive sampling method coincides with a discourse analytic approach where the objective is not to create a generalizable argument to establish the "facts" related to a certain population of people, items, etc. Instead, purposive sampling allows the researcher to select the "best" sample of material for the purpose of examining the connections between the content and the broader discursive contexts within which it is

produced and consumed. Consequently, while an effort was made to select a relatively representative sample of sponsorship promotional material, there was no intention of providing a sample that is completely representative (if this were even possible). Instead, the selection criteria were based on the goals of providing a sample that exhibits the common marketing strategies of child sponsorship programs (typical case sampling) and that includes items deemed by this research to be particularly relevant to the research questions (intensity sampling) – in this case, items that focus on the purported benefits of sponsorship for the sponsored child as well as for the sponsor.

This sample is not used in an attempt to summarize the entirety of sponsorship advertising across all organizations. There are many different kinds of sponsorship promotion, and no one organization is exactly like another (although there are many similarities). Neither is this sample used to present an argument regarding the imagined effects of this advertising and its imagery on the minds of Canadians. While some general inferences can be made about the implications of sponsorship on Canadian worldview, it is problematic to assume any specific influence of individual sponsorship advertisements. After all, unless the viewer of an ad is asked directly, it is impossible to adequately describe what any individual advertisement means to a viewer, or what the effect of this meaning on the viewer will be (Hall 1981; 1997).

The discussion presented in this chapter does not, consequently, follow traditional lines of content analysis, in which images and text from advertisements are commonly broken down into their constituent semiotic elements or assessed for their latent meanings. Rather than focussing on the images or texts present in specific sponsorship ads, this chapter presents a discussion of some of the general patterns in the way

sponsored children, and their relationship to sponsors, are represented. The sample of

sponsorship promotional material is used as a basis to highlight some general

characteristics of sponsorship promotion and to investigate the way the discourses of

development are constructed and deployed through these characteristics. In particular,

sponsorship advertising is examined with an emphasis on how representations of

sponsored children, and of sponsorship in general, are ordered and displayed such that

sponsors are required to fill-in-the-blanks, as it were, with respect to their relationship

with these children. This means that even though advertising is the focus of this chapter,

the purpose is not to present and analyze specific ads, and the fact that individual ads and

their associated images are not reproduced in this chapter is intentional. This decision is

based on a desire to highlight the discursive *contexts* involved in interpreting sponsorship

promotional material in general rather than examine the *effects* of any particular

advertisement.

In this project, the term "promotional material" is often used instead of, or

interchangeably with, "advertising". Both terms are meant to convey the entirety of the

mass-mediated content that is witnessed by or sent to the (potential) sponsor/donor. This

includes not only what are traditionally seen as ads, such as direct mail appeals,

brochures, or TV commercials, but also the letters, reports, and reminders sent to current

sponsors. While a little more awkward, the former term is useful in that it appears to

encompass some elements that the latter term neglects. In particular, it is easier to explain

all communication to sponsors as a form of promotional material in that, even though

they are not traditionally seen as advertising, the letters, brochures, reports, etc. still serve

the purpose of promoting the program to the sponsor so that they continue their sponsorship.

Chapter Five examines child sponsorship from the perspective of the sponsor with an emphasis on how sponsors make sense of sponsorship and their involvement in it. The analysis in this chapter is guided by the following question: What is the relationship between the discourse of development and the way child sponsors perceive themselves and their actions in relation to sponsorship? Data for this analysis were generated from personal interviews with people who sponsor, or have previously sponsored, children through Canadian NGOs. Thirty-one current and former sponsors living in Canada were interviewed in the fall of 2007 (see Appendix G for a list of sponsor participants including some descriptive information). Interviews with sponsors were conducted in order to highlight the articulation between understandings of international development (the transformation of the child's life) and personal development (the transformation of the sponsor's life).

Sponsor participants were recruited using posters placed in churches, libraries, community centres, and on the local university campus as well as advertisements in the local paper and online (see Appendix F for samples of the poster and the newspaper / website text).[14] Three of the interview participants were also recruited through referrals from other participants. This recruitment resulted in a group of participants comprising five former and 26 current sponsors.[15] Twenty five of the participants are women, six are

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[14] Advertisements were placed in the classified sections of the websites: Craigslist Victoria and Kids in Victoria.

[15] All of the participants were residing in Victoria, B.C., at the time of the interview. Victoria is a large, multi-cultural city on the west coast of Canada.

men, and eight were interviewed as couples (for a total of 27 interview sessions).[16]

Participants represented a variety of different ages although the vast majority were older

than 30 (only two participants were under 30 and 11 participants were older than 60).

Participants sponsored children through a wide variety of Canadian sponsorship

programs: 16 participants sponsored children through World Vision, nine sponsored

through Plan, two sponsored through both World Vision and Christian Children's Fund at

the same time, and the remaining four participants sponsored through Christian

Children's Fund, Compassion, Watoto, and African Children's Choir (one sponsor per

organization).

All sponsor interviews were conducted by the researcher and lasted between one

and two hours. With few exceptions, the interviews took place in the home of the

sponsor.[17] The interviews were structured around a set of open-ended questions dealing

with participants' thoughts and feelings about their sponsored child, about the process of

sponsorship, and about their conceptions of global poverty and international development

(see Appendix C for a copy of the interview schedule). As with the sponsorship staff

group, sponsor interviews were conducted in a conversation style beginning with the

questions "How would you describe child sponsorship to someone who does not know

anything about it? What made you decide to sponsor a child? How would you describe

your relationship with your sponsored child?" These and the remaining questions were

designed to be as open ended as possible with the goal of eliciting a wide range of

responses describing participants' perceptions of child sponsorship, the global South, and

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[16] Most couples sponsored a child or children together. However, in one case, each partner in a couple sponsored a different child and were consequently asked questions separately although they were in the room together.
[17] Three interviews took place in coffee shops.

their role in the work of international development. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.[18] Throughout the project, pseudonyms are used to help protect the confidentiality of participants.

A note on terminology

Much of this project deals with language, such as the language used to discuss wealth and well-being, the language used to talk about particular parts of the world, and the language used to describe certain categorizations of people. In many ways, it is this language itself, its relative value(s) and its particular manifestation(s), that is the subject of analysis. Consequently, there are a host of controversies and challenges in the selection of terminology for such a project, and ultimately, there are decisions that must be made. With the preface that it is not possible to please all parties (or perhaps it is just not possible in a project of this scope to address everything that could be taken into consideration), the following section briefly discusses the logic behind some of the language used in this project.

This project uses the term "international development" or sometimes just "development" to refer to the broad assortment of mainstream ideas and practices that address issues of global (Southern) poverty. As noted above, the analysis presented in the following chapters largely follows a postdevelopment perspective, and consequently, looks at development as a discourse. This has (at least) three significant implications. One, based on the critical appraisal of discourse of development, there seems to be a general agreement among postdevelopment scholars that the very idea of development is

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[18] Quotations from participants are modified from their verbatim transcription in the same way as staff responses.

bankrupt. In following this perspective, this means that one must not only seek to interrogate the concept and its practices, but also to work towards its removal from use. This latter point is challenging, however, and there is a certain value in looking at the issue of terminology in development in terms of short and long term goals. While the very idea of international development in its current incarnation should be confronted, and hopefully discarded at some point, this is not a realistic goal for the short term. The term development resonates with professionals and laypeople alike if for no other reason than the fact that many practices are presently conducted in its name. In fact, it is a demanding, if not impossible, task to talk about global poverty in other terms nowadays (which is part of the argument being made both by postdevelopment scholars and this project). Add to this a desire to avoid essentializing everything that falls under the label development as equally bankrupt, and we encounter a situation in which the term development needs to be retained, at least for the present.

Two, even when the word development is used without the term discourse in this project, the intention is still to recognize that what is being discussed is not a taken-for-granted "reality" but a particular (and predominant) constellation of meanings and actions. The threat here in using the term development is to end up reifying the very concept that one seeks to deconstruct. Because of this threat, it has become increasingly common in some of the critical literature on development to continually place the term in scare quotes (e.g., Crush, 1995; Rist, 2002; Sachs, 1992). This practice serves to help remove the gloss of ordinariness and immutability from the word and to show one's concern for its continued uncomplicated use. However, as the presence of persistent scare quotes can be irritating to read, this project only uses them in the beginning in order to

indicate support for this practice. Moreover, it is doubtful that scare quotes alone would be sufficient in this regard; rather, careful attention to language use around the term development is more important (and is an objective of this project even if not always successful).

Three, when used in this project, the term development – or discourse(s) of development – is not solely intended to refer to international development. It is, at times, meant to encompass related meanings of development, such as organizational or biological development. This lack of specificity is not a mistake; rather, it is the intentional product of the theoretical framework adopted in this project (see the latter half of Chapter Two for discussion on this topic).

This project uses the terms North and South to describe the somewhat artificial, but still common, conceptual division of the world into what are thought of as wealthy ("modern") countries and poorer countries. The (global) South refers to what has alternatively been called the Third World or the developing world (developing countries or less developed countries) in contrast to the North, the West, the First World, or the developed world (developed countries). Other formulations of this division also appear now and again, such as majority world / minority world, two-thirds world / one-third world, developing countries / overdeveloped countries. None of these terminological binaries are adequate to encompass the breadth of the geography or the heterogeneity of the people(s) involved. They are all subject to problems of essentialism, and they all fail to express the complexity of the situation.

That said, many people from both sides of this conceptual division – including the interviewed participants – still understand and talk about the world in terms of this

conceptual shorthand, and so for the sake of producing something generally understandable, this project continues to use this division. The terms North and South are used to represent this categorization not only because they are increasingly common in the critical literature on global poverty and inequality but also because they avoid some of the bias associated with the traditional terms (e.g. developed and developing for example) while being less obscure than some of the other terms (e.g. Majority world and minority world). Ideally, one would use scare quotes around these terms to highlight their socially constructed nature; however, as with the term development, scare quotes are only used in the first instance of these terms due to their effect on readability.

In a similar vein to the terms North and South, the labels black and white are occasionally used in this project. It goes almost without saying that the use of these labels can be problematic because it may be taken to reinforce socially-constructed categories of race and because it may be seen to exclude some categories such as Hispanic and Asian peoples. However, the intent of using these labels is not to find accurate terms regarding these "racial" categories (as such terms simply do not exist). Instead, the point is to highlight how *perceived* racial categories have played, and continue to play, a formative role in the conceptual divisions that structure our world. Despite the ostensibly colour-blind rhetoric of much development discourse nowadays, processes of racialization are central to the operation of practices such as child sponsorship. These processes continue to highlight particular socially-salient traits, such as skin colour, and link them to historical (and paternalistic) narratives of race and social progress. Links to these historical narratives are often obscured, however, as representations of the South and its

people are strategically repackaged to serve contemporary needs (see Chapter Four for more discussion on this topic).

The labels white and black are used, consequently, not because they necessarily represent the racial categories, or even the actual skin colours, of the people involved in child sponsorship. Rather, they serve as a general reminder that processes of racialization are at play even as they are made invisible by the contemporary operations of the discourse of development (and are, therefore, largely absent from participant responses). Furthermore, the labels white and black have a particular resonance in the critical literature on race and are thought to serve, however inadequately, as a stand in for all perceived racial divides.

Chapter Two: The Developmentality of Child Sponsorship

> …the notion of child sponsorship exists primarily as a marketing myth. Costly, time-consuming and hampered by the logistical difficulties posed by some of the poorest and most remote places on Earth, child sponsorship succeeds far better as a fundraising engine than it does as a vehicle for providing benefits to the children whose faces sustain it. (Anderson, 1998a: 1-9)

> Child sponsorship is one of the most powerful and seductive philanthropic devices ever conceived… For Many Americans, who donate an estimated $400 million a year to child sponsorship organizations, such appeals appear to offer a simple way of sharing their unparalleled affluence. But when the Chicago Tribune sponsored two young boys in the African nation of Mozambique, they found that child sponsorship as depicted by Save the Children is a myth. (Dellios, 1998: 2-8)

If the *Chicago Tribune'*s "The Miracle Merchants: Myths of Child Sponsorship" series tries to make one thing abundantly clear, it is that child sponsorship is a "myth". According to *Tribune* reporters, it is a myth not only because sponsorship advertising regularly misrepresents the actual living standards of sponsored children and the realistic extent of sponsorship benefits, but also because there is little direct financial connection between sponsor and child. "Poor as they were, none of the Tribune's sponsored children resembled the desperately sick or malnourished boys and girls whose images are a staple of fundraising appeals by child sponsorship organizations.… Nor, as it turned out, were any of their lives much changed by their sponsorships" (*Chicago Tribune*, 1998: 2-2). This allegation that sponsorship agencies often inflate claims regarding the individuals they help and the work they accomplish is underscored by the argument that the "'magical bond' between sponsors and child also proved to be mostly fiction" (2-2). After all, it is not uncommon for field staff to direct, censor, or even compose the letters sent to sponsors or for the names of sponsors to be withheld from sponsored children and

their families. In addition to this, some of the children sponsored by the *Tribune* "were never told that their sponsorships had ended. A few never understood they had been sponsored at all" (2-2).

These issues of misleading marketing practices are related to another component in the "myth" of child sponsorship – the fact that "there is no guarantee that a sponsor's dollar will ever reach that sponsor's child, and no way of knowing whether it ever does" (Dellios, 1998: 2-8). This point, which is acknowledged by one group of sponsorship executives (2-8), is reiterated extensively in the *Tribune* series. The reporters noted that, in at least one case, sponsorship officials "were unable to say how, or even whether, the money donated by the *Tribune* had directly benefited the sponsored children" (2-8). This may sound quite alarming, but it is not some shocking secret within the development community. The vast majority of sponsorship programs pool money from sponsors and fund community-level projects that (hopefully) benefit the community but that may or may not directly help sponsored children. Supporting development projects at the community or regional (as opposed to the individual or national) levels[19] is a common practice among development NGOs and is not only accepted but also recommended by many "development experts". Because of this, however, it is not usually possible (or perhaps just not administratively feasible) to accurately track the direct benefits of sponsorship on individual children in the way that sponsorship advertising implies. This has not always been the case.

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[19] In recent years, the increasing popularity of micro-credit programs has changed this dynamic somewhat. Micro-credit will be discussed in Chapter Six along with other "alternatives" to sponsorship.

In May of 1982, an issue of *New Internationalist*[20] magazine was published with

the title "Please Do Not Sponsor This Child: There Are Better Ways to Help". The entire

issue, which spawned follow-up articles in 1985 and 1989, dealt with the perceived

problems of child sponsorship at the time. Among the many critiques listed – including

such things as the administrative expense of maintaining sponsorship programs, the

controversial role of religion in sponsorship, and the reinforcement of stereotypes and

paternalistic sentiment – was the problem of creating disparity at the local level. This

disparity was the result of sponsorship benefits going to some children and not others,

and according to the authors, it led not only to envy and resentment within the

community but also to inefficient and unsustainable development outcomes. As Stalker

(1982) writes,

> [h]elping an individual is divisive - and is particularly damaging in societies
> which are already sharply divided in all sorts of ways: rich and poor, black
> and white, high caste or low caste, literate or illiterate. Nor is trying to help
> an individual likely to succeed. Catapulting even one person out of poverty is
> a daunting task - especially on $20 a month. And while there will be some
> successes … they will be few and far between (n.p.).

Before the mid to late seventies, child sponsorship predominantly functioned on a

so-called check-to-child model, in which funds flowed (relatively) directly from the

sponsor to the child. By the eighties, this practice was coming to an end, and many

sponsorship programs were in the process of transitioning to a primary focus on the

community (at least in the way money was spent). Together with a relatively new and far-

reaching emphasis on participatory development strategies at the local level, the criticism

about sponsorship causing disparity was likely a motivating factor in this transition. The

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[20] The *New Internationalist* is a magazine that primarily covers issues of global justice. It has a circulation of more than 75,000 people worldwide, and is based in the UK with editorial and sales offices in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan (*New Internationalist*, 2008).

idea of *individual* child sponsorship, however, had not fully lost its original connotation (nowadays, individual child sponsorship mostly refers to collecting funds from one sponsor per child as opposed to using the image of one child to collect donations from multiple sponsors[21]). Consequently, the indictment of child sponsorship as "a sure-fire way to attract money," but "not such a good way to spend it" rang true at the time (Stalker, 1982: n.p.).

Things are different now, at least in one sense. Currently, funds raised from sponsorships are mostly indistinguishable from – and are often combined with – other development assistance on the ground. This is convenient and even advantageous from a community development standpoint, but it is problematic from a marketing perspective that seeks to sell the idea of individual improvement. Although sponsorship organizations have altered the way they distribute donations since the early eighties, the fundraising component of sponsorship is largely unchanged. It still emphasizes the direct personal and financial connection between sponsor and child that was the hallmark of early formulations. Consequently, the gap between sponsorship organizations' development practices and their fundraising messages has become wider over time, at least with respect to the direct benefits received by the sponsored child.[22]

It is the separation between what is suggested in sponsorship advertising and what actually happens to sponsorship funds that is repeatedly taken up by the *Tribune* reporters. So it seems as though the popular critique of child sponsorship has come full circle to some degree. One of the issues raised as a major problem of sponsorship twenty

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[21] This latter practice can be taken to the extreme, using a "representative" child to raise money from hundreds or thousands of sponsors.
[22] More accurately, the gap is likely just as wide because of other issues with older sponsorship advertising (such as the disparity between stated benefits to sponsored children and what was actually achieved with the funds) and has simply shifted to a different configuration.

years before the "Miracle Merchants" series was published has returned, albeit with the opposite implication. In other words, the focus on providing individual aid to sponsored children that precipitated one of the strongest early criticisms of sponsorship is now the missing element that makes present-day sponsorship programs "mythical".[23]

How can this inversion in the practice of child sponsorship – and the critique of it – be accounted for? What did child sponsorship look like when it started, and what does it look like today? What motivated many sponsorship programs to change the way they operated, and why was this change in development practice (from the level of the individual to that of the community) not mirrored in the fundraising models of most organizations? Moreover, what factors lie behind the shift in critique of child sponsorship programs as exemplified in the *New Internationalist* and the *Chicago Tribune* articles? Finally, what does this critical shift indicate about the way international development is conceived and about the organizations and individuals involved in it? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in the present chapter, [24] which will set the descriptive stage for the analyses presented in the remainder of this study.

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[23] The *Tribune* seems to be relying on a common-sense definition of myth in this context, intending it to describe the illusory or even fictional character of child sponsorship. However, there is another meaning of the term myth coming from semiotic analysis (see Barthes, 1972[1957]) that is ironically appropriate in describing this aspect of child sponsorship as well. Specifically, this meaning of myth highlights the way in which the present pattern of sponsorship fundraising has become naturalized as way doing the specific work of development. See the concluding section of this chapter for more discussion on this topic.

[24] Details regarding the mechanics of sponsorship were taken from scholarly publications and publicly-accessible documents; as well, they were confirmed through interviews with sponsorship staff members. The discussion regarding the prominence of child sponsorship, and the relative size of the organizations involved, is primarily based on Registered Charity Information Returns and the annual reports or financial statements of NGOs offering child sponsorship. Information about specific sponsorship programs, including such things as their histories and objectives, was located on their respective NGO websites.

Histories of child sponsorship

If there is one "true" origin of child sponsorship, it appears to be lost in the mists of time or to the vagaries of marketing personnel. Almost every major sponsorship agency claims an original and independent foundation of the concept. The narrative surrounding this foundation is remarkably consistent across organizations, and is almost always rooted in the personal life story of the founder. In most instances, the founder is exposed to the suffering of (distant) children, often through travel or missionary work, and is deeply affected by their plight. This experience is transformative and leads the person, a true humanitarian at heart, to start an organization to help the particular children in question. The initial suffering witnessed by the founder was usually a product of violent conflict and the aid to children is allotted accordingly, but the organization soon expands its mandate to encompass more children (not just those affected by the specific conflict in that specific location) and more causes of suffering (particularly deprivation related to chronic poverty as opposed to acute conflict). At some point – not necessarily from the very beginning – the idea of individual child sponsorship is "discovered" as a revolutionary means of securing funds, and it begins to define most aspects of the organization. Numerous examples of this narrative can be found among the leading child sponsorship agencies.[25]

The oldest organization that currently offers what is understood today as child sponsorship is Save the Children.[26] Founded in London in 1919 by the teacher and

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[25] The histories provided below are amalgamated summaries of the histories provided on a variety of official Save the Children, Plan, Christian Children's Fund, and World Vision websites.

[26] Not all national Save the Children organizations offer child sponsorship. Save the Children Canada used to have a sponsorship program but now no longer offers individual child sponsorship (although it maintains a relationship with a number of sponsors from the time when it still offered individual sponsorship). The American branch of Save the Children still offers sponsorship. The history provided here is an

activist Eglantyne Jebb (and her sister Dorothy Buxton), this organization began as means to provide aid for the children of continental Europe in the aftermath of World War I. The inspiration for this organization came both from her experiences during an "aid mission" to Macedonia immediately after the First Balkan War and from disturbing reports of the conditions of children in Vienna and other war-torn cities following WWI. The Save the Children Fund quickly expanded its programs and resulted in many "sister" organizations in countries outside the UK, coming to Canada in 1921 and the U.S. in 1932. Save the Children US, which was established to help poor children in Appalachia, claims to be the first instance of a sponsorship program in 1938 – a program in which individuals could sponsor schoolhouses and provide the children who attended them with "meals, books and school supplies" (Save the Children US, 2008).

In 1937, Plan came on the scene. Initially called Foster Parents Plan for Children in Spain, it was founded by John Langdon-Davies and Eric Muggeridge to help children affected by the Spanish Civil War. John Langdon-Davies, a British Journalist, encountered a small boy named Jose who had a note from his father attached to his shirt. The note read: "'This is Jose. I am his father. When Santander falls I shall be shot, whoever finds my son, take care of him for me'" (Plan UK, 2008). Moved by this event, Langdon-Davies – along with his relief-worker friend Muggeridge – set up the organization to house, feed, and care for the displaced or orphaned children of Spain. The organization grew from this initial setting to help children all over Europe during and after World War II (and, consequently, came to be called Foster Parents Plan for War Children). Starting in the 1950s, Foster Parents Plan expanded into the global South and

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amalgamated summary of the histories provided on a number of Save the Children websites (Save the Children international, Save the Children Canada, Save the Children US, and Save the Children UK).

into the business of development and poverty alleviation. According to Plan International (2008a), as it is now known, "Langdon-Davies conceived the idea of a personal relationship between a child and a sponsor - a model that puts the child at the centre, and today remains the core of what we do." Canada gained its own incorporated Plan office in 1968.

Christian Children's Fund (CCF), or what is now known as ChildFund in most countries, was founded by the Rev. Dr. J. Calvitt Clarke, who was also a founding member of Save the Children US a few years earlier. Clarke, influenced by his travel and relief work in Armenia as well as the reported troubles of Chinese children as a result of the Sino-Japanese War, created the China's Children Fund in 1938. Dr. Verent Mills also plays a central role in the narrative of CCF history. Mills, who was a missionary in China and became the third Executive Director of CCF, barely escaped the invading Japanese army and managed to single-handedly lead a large group of orphans out of harm's way to a new orphanage supported by CCF. Initially aiding children in China and then Asia, CCF expanded into Europe after WWII and then into other parts of the world in the 1960s and 70s. The organization changed its name in 1951 to reflect this broader scope. According to the Christian Children's Fund US (now ChildFund International) (2008), "[b]y 1941, Dr. Clarke had unveiled his plan for individual, person-to-person child 'sponsorship,' and donors began sending US$24 per year, per child. This new CCF concept enabled people to help who were willing to send smaller amounts of money on a regular basis to help an individual child – pioneering the philosophy of child sponsorship" (n.p.) In 1960, CCF Canada became the first "official international affiliate" outside of the U.S. (Christian Children's Fund, 2008: n.p.).

Currently the largest[27] network of organizations to offer child sponsorship, World Vision "began with the vision of one man – the Reverend Bob Pierce" (World Vision International, 2008). While on a mission to China in 1947, Pierce was confronted by a teacher who introduced him to an abandoned little girl needing help. Piece gave "his last five dollars" to support the girl and said he would send money every month for her care. This experience was a "turning point" for Pierce, who then decided to start an organization "dedicated to helping the world's children". Once World Vision was formed in 1950, the "first child sponsorship programme began three years later" (World Vision International). In the same year World Vision was founded in the U.S., Pierce came to Canada "to discuss what he had seen and learned in Asia", and a World Vision office was opened in Toronto in 1957 (World Vision Canada, 2008).

A very similar story is presented by almost every single child sponsorship program (for more examples, see Children Incorporated, 2008; Compassion Canada, 2008a; Watoto, 2008). The similarities between these origin narratives are not terribly surprising,

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[27] It is somewhat difficult to determine which child sponsorship programs are the largest in Canada (or elsewhere for that matter). After all, is a program "larger" because it has more sponsors, more sponsored children, more assets, higher revenue specifically from child sponsorships, higher overall organization revenue, higher actual expenditures on development projects (revenue minus marketing and administrative overhead), or simply a more recognized name in the sponsorship industry? It is not easy to answer this question, but what is clear is that World Vision Canada has the largest child sponsorship program in Canada by any of these measures with about CAN$352 million in revenue in 2011 (all figures based on returns to the Canada Revenue Agency). Plan Canada is also a clear number two with about CAN$142 million in revenue in 2011 while the third spot goes either to Compassion Canada with CAN$46.5 million or to Christian Children's Fund of Canada with CAN$47 million in 2011 revenues. The situation becomes less clear for the remaining major sponsorship programs, which have 2011 revenues of CAN$19 million (Chalice), CAN$15 million (Canadian Feed the Children), CAN$7.6 million (Food for the Hungry Canada), and CAN$5 million (SOS Children's Villages). There are a host of smaller sponsorship programs in Canada and not all of them function on the same model as described in this section. However, the vast majority of sponsorship programs operate in the same fashion.

Globally, the sponsorship situation looks slightly different. Although figures are difficult to come by, the World Vision network is still by far the largest followed by Plan International. Other worldwide organizational networks offering sponsorship are ChildFund International (the partnership network of Christian Children's Fund of Canada), Compassion International, ActionAid International, Food for the Hungry International, Save the Children International, and SOS Children's Villages International. Some large sponsorship organizations, like the US Children International, are not part of an international network.

however. On the one hand, it is far too simple a task to meet poor children in the world. The founders' emotional reaction to such an experience is equally predictable and reflects the homogeneity of their backgrounds relative to the children at least as much as the exceptionality of the encounter itself. On the other hand, an easy explanation for the similarities between these stories is the value they provide in terms of the public image of the organization. It is not unusual, after all, for the public images of organizations or businesses to be built in part upon the mythologies constructed around their founding (think Henry Dunant and the Red Cross or Bill Gates and Microsoft). Not only do the origin stories of sponsorship agencies imbue the organizations with an almost romantic-heroic character, but they also provide a convenient narrative with which donors can identify, metaphorically at least. The notion of a single founder and his or her quest to help a particular child mirrors the donor's desire to make a real difference in the life of at least one child. The hardship endured by the founder – along with the transformative moment in which he or she decide to act – reflects the financial considerations faced by potential sponsors and ultimate decision to "do the right thing". All things considered, then, one must be careful not to completely separate the historicity of origin narratives from their present use as a marketing element of the organization.

Apart from the question of their accuracy, these origin narratives highlight a number of the historical transitions that many child sponsorship programs, and by extension the practice of child sponsorship in general, have gone through. The most important of these transitions are the shift from a focus on orphans, abandoned, or displaced children to a broader focus on all children irrespective of their family composition; from a focus on individual children and their particular needs to a focus on

families, communities, or even regions and their collective needs; and from a particular

geographic focus on children in a single area like Spain, the U.S., China, or Korea to a

focus on children in any and all poor countries in the South. These related transitions did

not occur in an easy chronological order or at an equivalent pace across all organizations,

but by and large, they represent some of the major turning points in the history of child

sponsorship. While there are surely many factors that influenced these organizational

changes within sponsorship programs, it seems likely that both decolonization and the

associated proliferation of the discourse of development in the postwar years played

major roles.

Many prominent child sponsorship programs, including World Vision, Plan, Save

the Children, and Christian Children's Fund, began their existence with the particular

goal of helping orphaned or displaced children. Over time, this emphasis broadened to

incorporate all children in need. Nowadays, there is only one major sponsorship program

primarily dedicated to helping orphans and abandoned children; it is run by SOS

Children's Villages.[28] Since the beginning of the so-called modern era, the welfare and

education of orphans in the North has been seen as a distinct social problem to be dealt

with through both state intervention and charitable efforts, although many early

orphanages were concerned with the reputation of the mother as much as the care of the

child (Donzelot, 1979; see also Jacobi, 2009). Because of this long history, the care of

such children in other locales was likely seen as both a natural and a worthwhile

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[28] While there are many smaller organizations that offer child sponsorship exclusively or predominantly for orphans or abandoned children, the only large-scale organization to do so appears to be SOS Children's Villages. However, the sponsorship model used by SOS is similar to those of other major sponsorship organizations in that sponsorship funds are not used directly to support a particular child but pooled from all sponsorships to cover the costs of the organization's, or their partner's, expenses. SOS Children's Villages makes use of multiple sponsors per child (SOS Children's Villages Canada, 2008).

objective of a charitable organization, one that would have little difficulty garnering support from Northern individuals. During the postwar era, however, the paternalistic discourses of charity and humanitarianism that had predominated internationally during the later colonial periods shifted to incorporate the relatively new, but equally paternalistic, discourse of economic development. As Sachs (2000) describes it, "the moral concern for people was eclipsed by the economic concern for growth" (5). Consequently, where political, religious, and humanitarian interventions were once the prevailing models for overseas involvement, an emphasis on long-term poverty alleviation came to the fore. This emphasis would have made the transition from orphans to all impoverished children seem like a logical and necessary course of action. After all, development was initially conceived of as an economic problem at the national level, requiring solutions that would remove constraints to the "natural" progression toward economic prosperity. In this light, supporting orphans would never be regarded as such a solution, but general education among children might. Within a liberal discourse of development, the adequate preparation of children for economic life – despite supposedly inadequate material (or cultural?) backgrounds – is a truly powerful tenet.

This logical expansion to non-orphaned children, which makes perfect sense in terms of the development discourse, was and still is problematic in terms of the marketing of sponsorships. The same features that would have made fundraising for the care of orphans a relatively straightforward business – the motivation to help a lonely child with no one to care for him or her – might actually impede present-day fundraising efforts in that most sponsored children have parents or guardians to care for them, making them appear less in need of support. This may help explain the elision of parents

within sponsorship advertising.[29] Even though sponsored children are often a part of supportive families living in reasonably healthy communities (how else could a development project involving them be feasibly managed?), child sponsorship still conjures up images of completely destitute and forlorn children.

The programmatic shift away from a principal focus on orphans was later accompanied by the transition away from the direct care of an individual child. Giving up the so-called check-to-child model mentioned earlier, many sponsorship programs began to focus their spending on projects aimed at broader groups such as neighbourhoods and communities. This process extended over a long period and occurred at different times for different agencies. It is difficult to find child sponsorship programs nowadays that provide direct benefits to sponsored children to the exclusion of non-sponsored children in the same area (excepting the occasional birthday or Christmas gift, which in some cases is described as being sent directly to the child). That said, there are a few prominent sponsorship programs that say they provide direct benefits to sponsored children in the form of exclusive goods and services (i.e. goods and services not offered to non-sponsored children in the same area); none of these say they provide direct transfers of cash to children or families. Children International (an American NGO) and SOS Children's Villages are probably the largest organizations to still follow this model, through which they purport to provide specialized goods and services based on the needs of individual children (for example, see SOS Children's Villages Canada, 2008). Other programs principally fund projects at the neighborhood, municipal, or regional level from which sponsored children are assumed to benefit. World Vision, for example, sets up and maintains what are known as ADPs – Area Development Projects – with sponsorship

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[29] See Chapter Four for more information about this argument.

funds. These projects often have multi-year funding commitments to stay working in a particular area providing infrastructure, goods, and/or services to all individuals, not just sponsored children and their families. Compassion appears to work on a hybrid model in which the sole focus of sponsorship funds is on benefits to children rather than communities. However, Compassion still pools sponsor donations, uses local partners to administer projects, and provides services to registered but not-yet-sponsored children (see Compassion Canada, 2008b; Compassion International, 2010)

As with the shift away from orphans, the transition to community-level projects was also likely related to the growing importance of the development discourse after WWII, but in a different aspect of it. Rather than the concern with a larger impact related to the ideas of development economics at the time, the impetus for a shift to a broader group focus is probably a consequence of the general movement within the development industry toward community-level participatory development strategies. This movement, which occurred throughout the 1960s and 70s, highlighted the importance of inclusive, holistic development planning and implementation processes at a level other than that of the nation-state (Turner and Hulme, 1997; Rist 2002).

There are two important features of this transition to a community-level focus by sponsorship programs. One, it occurred quite a bit later than the shift away from orphans, and contrary to the latter, it was in all likelihood a product of pressure by experts working in the field of development at the time. A community-level emphasis, preferably involving lots of input from stakeholders, was seen as a best practice in development projects (Rahnema, 1992; Parpart, 2000). As evident from the *New Internationalist*'s critique from the early 1980s, any direct transfer of benefits to individuals, even needy

children, was seen as ineffective, inefficient, and even deleterious. Two, this revised emphasis on community-level development strategies once again strayed from what was, and still is, seen as the preferred marketing image of child sponsorship. The idea of the special bond between sponsor and child based on the sponsor's generous support to that *particular* child is not very compatible with a funding model centered on community-level projects that do not privilege sponsored children. While a community-level approach to the spending of funds makes perfect sense within the evolving discourse of development, this same approach creates tension in the principal work of child sponsorship programs, the raising of funds. Nowhere is this tension more evident than in the critique of the "myth" of sponsorship by the *Chicago Tribune*.

In addition to the use of a check-to-child model, most early sponsorship programs had a particular geographic area in which they worked. For example, Christian Children's Fund was originally China Children's Fund, Plan International started as Foster Parent's Plan for Children in Spain, Save the Children Fund focused on Europe and Russia in the aftermath of WWI, Children International was originally Holy Land Christian Mission, and World Vision initially offered sponsorship only in Korea. This geographic focus was mostly located at the country or regional level but was not necessarily confined to what would now be considered poorer countries or regions. Notably, no early sponsorship programs were focused on Africa or Latin America, two areas that now receive the lion's share of attention from sponsorship programs. Instead, many organizations, such as Save the Children, Plan International, and World Vision, began their work in zones of conflict, particularly those in or related to the North. This makes sense given the time periods involved and the early focus on orphans or displaced children. Currently, the vast

majority of sponsorship programs are firmly entrenched in their association with the global South.[30] This present emphasis on the South is evident in both the marketing of child sponsorship and the actual transfer of funds abroad.

Arguably, this geographic shift to the South could be attributed to the rise of the welfare state, with its accompanying increase in living standards, and to the cessation of conflict in the North. It can safely be said, however, that this wholesale shift in focus was also related to the way in which Southern "underdevelopment" was constructed as a problem after WWII. It was during this period, which coincides with the end of the colonial era in Africa, that a basic worldview emerged broadly defining the North as prosperous and complete and the South as poor and lacking (Escobar, 1995). Inevitably, this worldview resulted in changing considerations of what were legitimate and necessary objectives for charitable institutions in the North. Consequently, the geographic transition of sponsorship programs to the South mirrored, or simply accompanied, the shift in emphasis that led away from a focus on orphans: the apparently urgent need for broad-based economic development interventions in the South.

Although not specifically a transition in organizational focus among child sponsorship programs, there is another shift in the history of sponsorship practices that deserves some mention. This shift could be described as a movement away from a focus on missionary work and the saving of souls to a focus on humanitarian or development work and the saving of lives (read: bodies). While many NGOs that offer child

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[30] This does not mean that these organizations no longer fund projects in the U.S., Canada, or Europe because this does still happen. Some of the larger programs even offer sponsorships of American or (Eastern) European children. Presently, it is possible to sponsor children from inner cities, First Nations' reserves, or the Appalachian region of the US through Children Incorporated, a large child sponsorship program based in the US. Incidentally, Appalachia is the area first targeted for sponsorships by the US branch of Save the Children in the 1930s.

sponsorship are "faith-based", these organizations now commonly state that their

overseas aid involves no religious strings per se. While the notion of Christian charity

still occupies a weighty role in their image and their marketing of sponsorships – and the

faith of their employees is sometimes an issue – most sponsorship programs do not

currently require that children are or become Christian in order to be used in fundraising

or to access benefits from sponsorship-funded development projects.[31] The story is likely

not quite as straight-forward as this, a topic which will be discussed in later chapters, but

the important point here is the changing way in which religion, specifically Christian

evangelism, is legitimately incorporated into the work of sponsorship programs.

As with the other transitions discussed above, this point may also be related to the

growing importance of the idea of development in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Prior to the proliferation and acceptance of the ostensibly secular discourse of

development, much of the work related to overseas aid was in the hands of churches and

their missions (Bornstein, 2002). In many locations abroad, the division of labour

between colonial regimes and religious representatives was quite clear despite some

apparent conflicts, with the latter taking on the role of providing education and welfare

services in return for support with conversion efforts (see for example Dirar, 2003; Pels,

1997). At "home", people aided in this process through tithing or other donations to

churches and through more conspicuous acts of religiously-oriented charity. For example,

"[b]efore the Second World War in Europe one could 'buy heathen children', through

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[31] Regarding the issue of faith and image, one does not need to look for an example further than the
Christian Children's Fund of Canada, which has retained their name despite most of their international
partner's switching to the more religiously neutral ChildFund brand. Regarding the issue of employee faith,
World Vision requires its staff to acknowledge their agreement with the religious tenets of the organization
before working there. Finally, of all the major sponsorship programs, only Compassion (2008b) explicitly
states that sponsored children will receive "regular Christian training" (n.p.).

'slave societies' (slaafkensmaatschappijen), a practice dating back to the slave trade when missionaries could buy children and raise and baptize them in mission homes. Also when there were no more slave markets one could still purchase a heathen child for 21 DM, to whom one could give a baptismal name and as a receipt receive a photo of, for instance, an African boy in a straw skirt" (Nederveen Pieterse, 1992: 71-2). An obvious if somewhat obscure forerunner to child sponsorship, this early practice of paying to save the souls of heathen children highlights not only the changes in aid relations between the North and South but also the curious similarities between colonial or missionary relationships and current development practices. While some of the changes are reflected in the lack of overt and coercive proselytization by most aid agencies including sponsorship programs, the similarities are evident, once again, in the promises made through sponsorship marketing. Indeed, as one prominent Christian child sponsorship spokesperson puts it in an infomercial: "I [Jesus] am there in those children waiting to be loved, I am in those children waiting to be rescued, I am there in those children waiting to be served. Whatever you do to them, you do to me. Jesus, as St. Francis says, mystically comes through these children, and if we embrace them, as Mother Theresa says, we are embracing Jesus" (World Vision Canada, *Heart*, n.d.). Another program words it with even less subtlety: "Compassion is passionately motivating Christians like you to become missionaries to one child – a child in need of love, encouragement, education, healthcare, and most importantly, the life-changing salvation that comes only through Jesus Christ" (Compassion Canada, *Releasing*, n.d.)

As noted, the transition from an emphasis on saving souls to saving bodies reflects the secularization of international relations that occurred in conjunction with the end of

the colonial period. This process of secularization may have shifted the relative importance of civilizing (read: developing) versus converting Southern people(s), but it does not seem to have significantly altered the subjects or mechanisms involved. The racialized relationships that once rationalized the ability of white Christians in Europe to purchase of the souls of black, "heathen" children in Africa are strikingly similar to those that presently allow white Canadians to purchase the lives of black, poverty-stricken children through sponsorship. It is important to keep in mind, consequently, that through all the changes in global relations over the past hundred years, the world is still starkly divided along racialized boundaries that facilitate the very conditions which seem to justify the practice of child sponsorship.

The historical transitions discussed above may be a little broad, but they still help shed light on the emergence of child sponsorship as it is commonly found today. They highlight the fact that sponsorship is the product of a number of interconnected elements, each having some association with the changing discourse of development and that of colonialism which preceded it. To summarize, the most important of these elements include the early localized efforts by non-profit organizations to provide aid to children with no one to care for them, the rapid decolonization and redefinition of many Southern countries resulting in a starkly perceived contrast between the North and South, the discrediting of early foreign aid approaches prompting a move toward community-centred initiatives, and the maintenance of a religious or moral overtone among sponsorship organizations coupled with a need to separate themselves from the explicit paternalistic baggage of colonial-era charity. The articulation of these elements, while each making sense in their specific contexts, has formed a contemporary global practice

that is generally difficult for many to understand, thus opening itself up to a history of somewhat contradictory critiques. As noted earlier, much of this confusion stems from a substantial but underappreciated separation between the raising of funds through child sponsorship and the use of those funds. However efficacious child sponsorship may be at raising money, the marketing of sponsorship is at odds with what is seen as the legitimate use of those funds abroad and, therefore, fosters the misconception that child sponsorship is so much more than an extremely effective fundraising technique. In order to shed some light on this issue, it is useful to know a little more about the contemporary organizational and promotional context of child sponsorship.

Contexts of child sponsorship

First of all, it is important to note that the majority of child sponsorship agencies are better described as NGOs or NGDOs (Non-Governmental Development Organizations) that use child sponsorship as a fundraising strategy. This reflects the fact that many of these organizations began their existence without the use of child sponsorship as it is known today. It also represents the reality of development spending by these organizations or their partners in the South, which is almost never focused directly on sponsored children and their individual needs but on community-wide projects that may or may not directly benefit these children. Finally, it takes into consideration that, in many cases, these organizations currently receive a lesser but significant portion of their revenue from sources other than child sponsorship, such as government grants.[32] Consequently, it is somewhat inaccurate to describe them as child

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[32] It can be very difficult to determine how much of an organization's revenue comes specifically from child sponsorship. However, Canada's second largest sponsorship program in terms of overall organization

sponsorship agencies even when these organizations have largely come to be defined by child sponsorship, at least in terms of their public images in the North.[33]

Apart from this semantic issue, the separation between raising funds and spending them within child sponsorship is evident in the international and national structures of most sponsorship programs. The NGDOs that run these programs are often part of an international network of independent organizations (although they may share the same name such as Plan or World Vision). These networks are most often comprised of organizations in the North that principally raise money and their partner organizations or local affiliates in the South that principally spend it. Each of these organizations often has a separate management and board with individual priorities set at the national level.[34] Many Northern sponsorship organizations are themselves often divided up into thematically and spatially distinct groups such that those individuals who prepare televised ads may not have any regular contact with those who deal with the responses to those ads or those who prepare the mail-outs to send to the newly recruited sponsors. These offices are predominantly staffed not by individuals who would be considered development professionals but by people who are educated in marketing, commerce, communications, or business administration and who were often previously employed in the private sector. This staffing arrangement is commonly reinforced through the

revenue, Plan Canada collected only 63.7% of the organization's 2009 revenue from child sponsorships (Plan Canada, 2009). Christian Children's Fund of Canada, Canada's fourth largest sponsorship program, collected only 49% of its 2009 revenue from child sponsorships (Christian Children's Fund of Canada, 2009)

[33] That said, the term "NGDO that uses child sponsorship" is a little weighty even though it is more accurate. This project favours the term "sponsorship program", which is flexible enough to indicate that sponsorship can be the sole purpose of a particular NGDO or simply a specific program within an NGDO. The terms "sponsorship organization" or "sponsorship agency" is used now and again in this project, however, because it is common usage, and it is nice to have some variation in wording.

[34] Apart from a useful international division of labour, the importance of having national organizations may be related both to charitable tax laws and to the perceived importance of having "local" staff, management, and oversight in terms of organizational reputation. See Chapter Three for a discussion of these and other organizational issues.

pervasive use of a particular style of language, one that is rooted in business with its concern for market share, brand image, and the servicing of clients (sponsors in this instance). While some of the consequences of these organizational arrangements will be discussed in a later chapter, it is sufficient to note for now how this set up structurally differentiates the process of fundraising from the on-the-ground development work it supports.

The organizational structures of sponsorship programs are designed to support an elaborate, extensive, and above all, effective fundraising machine. This machine draws its operating power from the wallets of "average" Canadians who provide pre-determined and ongoing monthly donations, often drawn directly from VISA cards or bank accounts. According to the connotations of sponsorship promotional material, if not the fine print, these donations are earmarked for the care of a particular sponsored child. Through marketing communications, sponsors are often led to believe that their donations – and only the ongoing nature of these donations – provide the essentials for a happy and productive life for their sponsored child. Each year, this personal appeal entices hundreds of thousands of Canadians to begin and maintain sponsorships.[35]

The actual picture is different from what many people expect, although not necessarily different from what sponsorship programs explicitly state in much of their carefully-worded promotional material. As noted already, the monthly donation collected from a sponsor in Canada is, by and large, neither transferred directly to the sponsored

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[35] Based on 2009 revenue figures, the top five largest sponsorship programs in Canada collect funds for close to a three quarters of a million sponsored children, which likely places the number of sponsors in Canada at somewhere around half a million (because many people sponsor more than one child). With the cost of sponsorship around CAN$35 a month per child, this results in a staggering 315 million dollars a year in sponsorship revenue. Worldwide across these organizations and their partners, there are likely around five million sponsored children (or around 2.1 billion dollars Canadian a year in global sponsorship revenue).

child nor even directly to the sponsored child's family or community. Instead, donations from all of the programs' sponsors are pooled together with any additional funds the organization has raised and sent to partner organizations in the South in support of their ongoing development projects. Because these development projects are often multi-year endeavours, sometimes with funding from multiple sources, they are financially approved in advance and guaranteed funding over the life of the project (inasmuch as anything is guaranteed within the non-profit sector). What this essentially means is that all the children who live in the project area, including those waiting to be sponsored or those who have lost their sponsors, will benefit from what the project offers. So, despite sponsorship appeals that seem to indicate children are desperately awaiting sponsorship to receive help, this is rarely the case. Furthermore, while sponsorship marketing promises to provide everything from clean water to education to medicine, the sponsorship programs that raise the funds from Canadians do not always, or even often, set the priorities of the development projects in question. As is common within development practice nowadays, project objectives are determined, in consultation with all the stakeholders, by the local people or organizations that will actually be carrying out the day to day work of the project. The overall focus of projects, however, can sometimes be set at the funding level, and this is especially true of bilateral grants funnelled through NGDOs. This means that while a sponsor may think their child is getting a daily ration of food, the project in his or her community may be currently building a community centre or providing entrepreneurial training to local craftspeople. In most cases, sponsorship donations provide exactly the same thing as non-sponsorship donations – a source of funding for existing development projects in the South.[36]

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[36] That said, sponsorship funds are usually more stable and long-term than many other forms of donation,

All five of the largest child sponsorship programs in Canada follow this model to some extent. The president of World Vision, Canada's largest child sponsorship program by a substantial margin, writes that they "pool your donations with gifts from other sponsors and supporters. The programs we operate with those funds help your sponsored child, as well as other children in their community" (World Vision Canada, 2010b). Plan Canada, the second largest sponsorship program in Canada, makes a similar disclaimer on their website. In response to the question: "Does my sponsorship contribution go directly to one child?" they reply, "No. Sponsorship contributions are pooled centrally and used to fund programs benefiting sponsored children, their families and their communities" (Plan Canada, 2010). The remaining three largest sponsorship programs – Compassion Canada, Christian Children's Fund of Canada, and Chalice (formerly known as Christian Child Care International, a specifically Catholic child sponsorship program) – function on a similar model in that sponsored children do not receive special benefits above and beyond what other children in the project area can receive (except in terms of communicating with their sponsors and having the possibility, in some cases, of receiving additional monetary gifts). Contrary to the other four major sponsorship programs, Compassion Canada states that they do not focus on community development projects and only fund partners who provide specific services to children in the form of education and meals (Compassion Canada, 2008a; Compassion International, 2010).

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and sponsorship is often thought of as having an educational component for the sponsor, teaching them about development and other cultures as well as fostering compassion. This argument regarding the educational (and psychological) value of sponsoring a child will be discussed in later chapters. The same may hold true for sponsored children, but there is precious little information about this topic. There is a definite need for additional study on the benefits and drawbacks to being a sponsored child, especially those parts that focus on the relational aspects of sponsorship.

It is this model of sponsorship that has produced a substantial degree of confusion among both sponsors and the public, and it is this model that ultimately led the *Chicago Tribune* to criticize child sponsorships programs for not providing direct benefits some twenty years after the *New Internationalist* criticized them for doing exactly that. So, what changed in these intervening years? In aligning themselves with what came to be considered proper development practices – not fostering local disparities or providing short-lived, hand-out-style solutions to poverty – child sponsorship programs faced a dilemma regarding their marketing strategies. They could continue focussing on the individual connection between sponsor and child or switch to a more accurate but much less effective strategy of soliciting sponsors for communities or projects. Although some programs did try out and adopt the latter strategy, the majority of sponsorship programs opted to retain the emphasis on "individual" child sponsorship as a meaningful personal and *financial* relationship between sponsor and child. Whereas it may be a meaningful personal relationship between sponsor and child, it is more realistically described as a financial relationship between sponsor and organization. At some level, however, this distinction highlights not as much the fictional nature of child sponsorship but the fundamental difference between what constitutes legitimate development practice and what produces good fundraising results.

Child sponsorship in the context of (neo)liberalism

The general shift in development thinking toward participatory, community-level approaches may have precipitated both the *New Internationalist* critique and, ultimately, the change in the way sponsorship programs carried out their development work if not

their advertising, but it cannot completely explain what the *Chicago Tribune* wrote in their special edition. The *Tribune*'s concern with investigating the correlation between advertising promises and direct benefits to sponsored children highlights a different kind of logic than what motivated the *New Internationalist*'s critical appraisal. There were substantive changes in the development discourse over the course of the 1980s and 90s that could help illuminate the disparity between these two critiques. In particular, the revitalization and reimagining of classical liberal thought during this period likely played a major role in the perception of legitimate child sponsorship practices. Commonly referred to as neoliberalism or advanced liberalism, this revival of (primarily) economic liberal principles places a strong emphasis on individual ability and responsibility along with privileging free-market values such as choice, competition, accountability, and efficiency.

There is a great deal of academic work on the effect of neoliberalism on development (for example, see Chang and Grabel, 2004; Craig and Porter, 2006; Edelman and Haugerud, 2005), but what is important here is the re-legitimization of particular kinds of individual assistance and a devaluing of particular kinds of community-oriented development.[37] (Neo)liberal thought tends to stress individual connections to the economy above communal bonds and puts forth a vision of childhood as a preparatory period in which the child is made ready for future economic life. Consequently, this viewpoint tends to see specific aid to children – particularly in the form of food, medicine, and above all, education – as creating (future) equality of opportunity among a class of individuals not yet deemed responsible for their economic

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[37] The "discovery" and subsequent wide-ranging implementation of individual micro-credit as a "solution" to development problems is a perfect example of this trend. See Chapter Six for more discussion on this issue.

situation. On the other hand, community-based projects, especially those not seeking to train locals in some aspect of their livelihood, are viewed with more suspicion as potentially removing the individual incentives to attain economic independence and prosperity. In (neo)liberal thought, these perspectives on aid are combined with individualized rather than systemic understandings of poverty, and consequently, with a tendency to look for personal misconduct or organizational malfeasance as an explanation for continuing poverty or poor aid efficacy.

This emphasis helps explain how the reporters of the *Chicago Tribune* could present such a scathing assessment of child sponsorship programs despite the fact that, in many instances, these programs were following widely-accepted development practices as well as using the most effective (albeit potentially misleading) advertising strategies they knew. It helps explain how the *Tribune* located the problems of child sponsorship in the organizations that offer it (and not in any innate nature of the practice itself) and the solution to those problems in administrative efforts to improve the advertising and reporting practices of sponsorship programs (and not in the need for some fundamental economic and representational restructuring at the global level). Ultimately, it helps explain how the "mythical" nature of child sponsorship could be presented as equally disturbing to the sponsors it supposedly deceives as it is to the children it purports to help.

For *Tribune* reporters, calling child sponsorship a "myth" seems to highlight the failed promises of sponsorship programs and the illusory character of the sponsor-child relationship. An alternative understanding of the term myth, however, highlights something very different but equally important to the critique of child sponsorship. For

semioticians such as Barthes (1972[1957]), myths are not simply fictional stories that relate to life. Instead, myths are a "type of speech" that not only represent the site of ideology but also help people make sense of cultural phenomena by structuring the connotative meanings of signs (Barthes: 109). The result of mythical speech, then, is the perceived naturalization of essentially arbitrary (or at least artificial) meanings, such as those commonly associated with children, development, or sponsorship. What this alternative meaning of myth implies for a critique of child sponsorship is that, rather than sponsorship being seen as a fiction which deceives sponsors, it can be understood as a form of communicating information about the world that naturalizes particular explanations of global poverty, its causes, and its solutions.

Taken one step further, this alternative understanding of the mythical nature of sponsorship helps explains the reason why the articles comprising the *Chicago Tribune* series on child sponsorship are so relevant to the present project. While these articles provide a useful, if somewhat dated, description of common sponsorship criticisms that serve to introduce each chapter, they represent more than a simple counterpoint to the analyses presented in this project. The explanations and recriminations contained within these articles also represent a mythology of sponsorship critique, a naturalization of particular ideas of what is wrong with sponsorship, and by extension, what can be done to improve it. By unpacking some of the narratives within these articles, and highlighting the logic of their critique, this mythology is exposed. Exposing this mythology, at least in theory, is an essential first step to begin re-imagining a critique of sponsorship that does not start and end with individual or organizational error.

In explaining how child sponsorship operates as a fundraising practice in the North, the preceding discussion not only sets the stage for an analysis in the following chapters that focuses largely on the (mediated) relationship between sponsorship programs and sponsors but also highlights the (neo)liberal context within which sponsorship operates. Exploring some of the links between (neo)liberal thought and development practice, the next section lays the theoretical foundation for this project.

Governmentality and the Analytics of Development

In order to explore the connections among (neo)liberal thought, the discourse of development, and the practice of child sponsorship, this study makes use of the concept of developmentality.[38] This concept, which is introduced in more depth below, draws theoretical inspiration from Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality. Somewhat simplistically, developmentality can best be described as a perspective that uses the discursive connections among difference meanings of development in order to help situate actors within contemporary global relations of power. Following Foucault's later work, the focus of developmentality chiefly revolves around a concern with the ethical constitution of (Northern) liberal subjects. In the case of child sponsorship, this perspective facilitates an analysis that is as much about exploring the way sponsors (are encouraged to) imagine themselves as it is about the way sponsored children are represented.

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[38] This is not the first use of the term "developmentality" in the literature (for example, see Deb, 2009; Fendler, 2001; Ilcan and Phillips, 2006; Lie, 2005; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2010). See below for more discussion.

One of Foucault's most widely appropriated ideas (Larner and Walters, 2004b: 3), the concept of governmentality connects many of the elements of his later work, such as pastoral power, bio-politics, and technologies of the self. It is sometimes seen as the lynchpin that ties together his seemingly disparate concerns with the genealogy of the state and that of the subject (Lemke, 2002). By exploring the connections between the government of others and the government of the self, the perspective of governmentality helps trace the particular relationships between freedom and control that characterize contemporary life in modern liberal states. It is Foucault's (2003[1978]) term for describing a "deep historical link" among a variety of trends that changed the political, economic, and social environment between the 16th and 18th centuries in Europe (243). It is also his term for the rise to prominence of a "new" expression of power relations, in contrast to "older" expressions such as sovereignty and discipline, that was the end result of this link.

Because of the breadth and complexity of the concept of governmentality, it is necessary to highlight and adapt some of the ideas in this perspective so they can better be used to target issues relating to child sponsorship; the product of this process of adaptation is referred to here as developmentality. The necessity for new terminology in this field is debatable. However, it is nevertheless useful to distinguish the focus of the present study from the wealth of literature on the "analytics of government" (Dean, 1999: 20), and there are significant differences in points of departure between governmentality and developmentality. These differences are rendered even more important due to the fact that developmentality, as with governmentality, is more of a perspective that guides analysis than a concept that provides explanations (see Rose, 1999: 21). This will become

apparent as developmentality is explored in more depth below. Before that, however, a review of the literature on governmentality will serve to set the stage.

Foucault's (2003[1978]) most succinct description of governmentality in English is found in a like-titled transcription of a lecture first presented as part of a 1977-78 course on "Security, Territory, and Population".[39] Foucault begins this text by contrasting the ideas of sovereignty presented in Machiavelli's *The Prince* to the fledgling discourse on the "art of government" in the 16th century (229). With this comparison, he wants to highlight the emergence of a new concern in the government of people, a concern that takes up not only the problem of controlling people within certain territories but also the problem of optimizing such things as their productivity, health, and even happiness. In particular, he is discussing a transition from what might be considered the territorial state, in which the power of the "prince" is supposedly drawn from the territory of the principality and acts on those subjects confined within it, to the administrative state, in which governors operate to ensure the "right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end" (La Perriere as cited in Foucault, 2003[1978]: 236). This transition in the perceived problem of government, and thus the focus of state management, resulted in the formation of a body of knowledge dealing with the relationship between people and all the things that make up their everyday lives. This new science of political economy, with its emphasis on statistics and its understanding of the economy as a separate field of existence with its own rules and challenges, differed greatly from the kind of advice to governors that came before.

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[39] The entire content of this course is now available in English and provides some very useful context for this excerpt (see Foucault, 2007).

For a variety of historical reasons that Foucault (2003[1978]) discusses at some length, the discourse around the "art of government" was initially unable to compete with the juridical model of sovereign power at the time. It was not until the 18th century with the introduction of the theme of population that governmental power really emerged as a dominant feature of life in Europe. This interest in population "as a datum, as a field of intervention, and as an objective of governmental techniques" (243) both materialized out of the "new" science of political economy and solidified its transformation away from a minor discourse on governmental priorities to the dominant regime of knowledge supporting state intervention. As the theme of population rose in importance, it came to displace the model of the family that had long been structuring relations between governors and governed. No longer was the family the model of power wherein the sovereign was the metaphorical parent to the subject-child and the economy was understood in terms of proper family management. Instead, the family became a significant site of intervention of governmental techniques[40] firmly rooted in an understanding of the population as the object of government and the "ultimate end of government" (241). That is to say, "[i]n contrast to sovereignty, government has as its purpose not in the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, and so on" (241). Foucault (2008; 2003[1979a]) has referred elsewhere to the emergence of this overarching concern for, and intervention in, the welfare of the population as "the birth of biopolitics".

The biopolitical theme of population together with the emergence of political economy resulted in a rupture in the dominance of structures of sovereignty and

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[40] For an insightful analysis of this process, see Donzelot (1979).

discipline that had been at the root of power relations in Europe for centuries. This does not mean, however, that there was any kind of smooth evolutionary process whereby sovereignty was replaced by discipline which was in turn replaced by governmentality. Rather, "one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security" (Foucault, 2003[1978]: 243). This triangle does not have even sides though. While power relations based on problems of sovereignty and discipline are still evident today, particularly in the legislative and judicial systems, governmental concerns have become the pre-eminent feature of power relations. One could say that, during this period, all power relations became reorganized under "the general problematics of government, which concerns the best way to exercise powers over conduct individually and en masse so as to secure the good of each and of all" (Rose, 1999: 23).

This growing significance of government results in a sweeping "governmentalization of the state", which in Foucault's mind, is both different from and more important than the "statization of society". In order to make sense of this statement, Foucault assumes the reader is familiar with his understanding of the terms "to govern" and "government", which are not directly related to the actual body that runs the state. Instead, he is referring to an older usage of the term that draws on the meaning of government as the control of and concern for individuals by themselves as well as by heads of family, companies, organizations, in addition to states. This usage addresses the will to act so as to affect the actions of others to achieve a desired end. Government, then, is "the conduct of conduct", where the first instance of conduct is the verb form meaning to direct and the latter instance is the noun form meaning behaviour. "Putting these

senses of 'conduct' together, government entails any attempt to shape with some degree of deliberation aspects of our behaviour according to particular sets of norms and for a variety of ends" (Dean, 1999: 10). As Foucault (2003[1982a]) words it, to govern "is to structure the possible field of action of others" (138). This understanding of government situates Foucault's analysis of the governmentalization of the state much more in the realm of power than politics (inasmuch as there is really a distinction). In looking at how new concerns about the welfare of populations and individuals were coupled with new interventions to guide their behaviour in light of these concerns, Foucault demonstrates a very different focus from that of political theorists who address state formation. That is to say, he is more interested in how states have uniformly, and almost universally, taken up characteristic ways of seeing and addressing problems in relation to their citizens than in how they have simply come to be an organizational feature of the global landscape. Without such an understanding, one may get caught up in the minor differences between the "governing" practices of states at the expense of noting the shocking similarity in the way they define and deal with the problems of government.

All of the above points are neatly if not clearly summed up in Foucault's (2003[1978]) definition of governmentality, which he says has three related meanings:

> 1. The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflection, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security"

> 2. The "tendency" that governmental power has come to be the preeminent form of power (over discipline and sovereignty), which manifests itself through "specific governmental apparatuses" and "whole complex of knowledges"

> 3. The result of changes in states leading to the present era of administrative, governmentalized states (244).

This very concrete, historical definition of governmentality from his sole discussion explicitly dedicated to the subject only hints at the broader understandings that are so commonly found in the literature. Fortunately, Foucault discusses governmentality in numerous other places (for example, see Foucault, 2003[1982a], 2003[1982b], 2003[1984a], 2007), and a number of scholars have summarized and expanded his work on the subject (for example, see Barry, Osborne, and Rose 1996; Bratich, Packer, and McCarth, 2003; Burchell, Gordon, and Miller, 1991; Dean, 1999; Dean and Hindess, 1998; Larner and Walters, 2004a; Lemke, 2001, 2002 and 2007; Rose, 1998 and 1999; Rose and Miller, 1992). Mitchell Dean (1999), for example, notes that there are two broad meanings of governmentality in the literature. Apart from the specific genealogy of governmental thought and practice outlined by Foucault in his essay, Dean notes a broader meaning that simply "deals with how we think about governing, with the different mentalities of government" (16).[41] These mentalities are products of bodies of social and cultural knowledge, such as the human sciences, that organize our individual and collective action to meet certain ends. Consequently, the "analysis of government is concerned with thought as it becomes linked to and is embedded in technical means for the shaping and reshaping of conduct and in practices and institutions. Thus to analyse mentalities of government is to analyse thought made practical and technical" (18). This recognition of a broader meaning of governmentality that focuses on both thought and practice outside of the particular historical context discussed by Foucault is an important factor in its extensive diffusion throughout the literature. It allowed for the application of

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[41] Dean (1999) uses the term "mentality of government" as the possible source behind Foucault's neologism governmentality; other scholars, such as Colin Gordon (1991), describe it in terms of "governmental rationality". The difference appears largely immaterial as the concepts are described in basically the same light. That said, I tend to favour the latter terminology and, therefore, most often discuss the "rationality" rather than the "mentality" of development.

the governmentality perspective to a wide range of contemporary issues dealing with a specific kind of behavioural regulation. This broader meaning draws together many of the implicit elements within governmentality, such as a particular way of formulating problems and devising solutions, a particular understanding of power and its relationship to ideas of freedom, and a particular concern for optimizing the lives of individuals and collectivities.

Mentalities of government are able to organize practices through their relationship with the production of truth (Dean, 1999). Foucault (2003[1980b]; 2003[1971]) states explicitly that his "problem is to see how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth" (252), and that "governmentalization is… this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth" (266). As noted in the introduction to this project, a Foucauldian understanding of discourse sees truth as a product of power relations and, therefore, contingent upon the social and cultural context in which it is produced. In the case of present mentality of government, a number of core (neo)liberal tenets are granted a privileged space in relationship not only to what is considered true but also, consequently, to what is considered both useful and good. For example, "that it is necessary to attempt to properly manage the economy is one feature of the mentality of national governments that is completely taken for granted" (Dean, 1999: 16). While it would be possible to make a long list of what are thought to be core liberal tenets, such as the notion of individual rights of the citizen in relation to the state or the importance of individual responsibility within the economic marketplace, it is more instructive to see liberalism not so much as a coherent philosophy but as "a characteristic way of posing

problems" (49). In particular, liberal problematizations appear to draw on certain notions of freedom as a way to determine what constitutes legitimate justification for, or critique of, governmental practices. This view highlights the shifting nature of liberal thought over the past several hundred years, including the newest variant in neoliberalism, at the same time as acknowledging its continuity with respect to the importance placed on individual freedoms and responsibilities. As Nikolas Rose (1999) reminds us, "[o]nly a certain kind of liberty – a certain way of understanding and exercising freedom, of relating to ourselves individually and collectively as subjects of freedom – is compatible with liberal arts of rule" (63).

Freedom plays a crucial role in Foucault's thoughts on power in general and in the perspective of governmentality in particular. Foucault (2003[1982a]; 1990[1978]) discusses relations of power primarily as productive rather than repressive. Power works through production because, fundamentally, power represents the ability of individuals to choose and to act on those choices. Expressions of power are present, therefore, in all individual actions however minor as well as the consequences of those actions on others. As Foucault (1990[1978]) notes, power "is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (93). Because every action alters the actions of others, however, the collective actions of all individuals serve to constrain the overall possible field of actions. It can therefore be said that power allows action but also operates to delimit it. Significantly, power delimits action not by force – Foucault calls this domination – but by constraining the free choices of individuals through discursive processes of demarcating legitimate choices from

illegitimate ones. Even though the field of action is constrained in this way, freedom is

still "the condition for the exercise of power" (2003[1978]: 139). In other words,

> The characteristic feature of power is that some men can more or less entirely
> determine other men's conduct – but never exhaustively or coercively. A man
> who is chained up and beaten is subject to force being exerted over him. Not
> power. But if he can be induced to speak, when his ultimate recourse could
> have been to hold his tongue, preferring death, then he has been caused to
> behave in a certain way. His freedom has been subjected to power. He has
> been submitted to government (2003[1979b]: 200).

Through this understanding of power, Foucault links his thoughts on freedom and

government. In part, then, governmentality describes the emergence of freedom as the

fundamental organizing feature of power relations. While the element of freedom has

always been present in power relations, it has never been more central to arts of

government. "[M]odern individuals are not merely 'free to choose', but *obliged to be*

free, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice" (Rose, 1999: 87, emphasis in

original). This movement toward an understanding of government through freedom,

rather than in spite of it, has been a particularly liberal undertaking whereby people "were

to be 'freed' in the realms of the market, civil society, the family" only to be

simultaneously subjected to "the invention of a whole series of attempts to shape and

manage conduct within them in desirable ways" (69). This shaping and management is

not a top down process but something in which individuals take an active part.

Consequently, the goal of liberalism is to accomplish the ends of government, now

reformulated in terms of the welfare of the population, not through force or intimidation

on a broad level but through encouraging people to regulate themselves in order to reach

some personal state of health, wealth, or happiness. The liberal dream was to "produce

individuals who did not need to be governed by others, who would govern themselves

through introspection, foresight, calculation, judgement and according to certain ethical

norms. In these ideal individuals the social objective of the good citizen would be fused with the personal aspiration for a civilized life: this would be the state called freedom" (78). While this dream has been reoriented over time as the focus of liberal critique has shifted, it has always maintained this dual, and sometimes paradoxical, characteristic of individual freedom and collective welfare.[42]

Foucault (2003[1982a]; 2003[1979b], 2003[1971]) often discusses this dual emphasis on the individual and the population in terms of what he calls the Christian pastoral or pastoral power. This form of power stems from the sheep-shepherd metaphor found in early Christianity. The Christian pastoral represents the spiritual leader's concern, like that of the shepherd, for both the material continuity of the entire flock as well as the eternal salvation of each individual soul within the flock. This dual attention is rejuvenated and appropriated by those interested in the art of government around the time when the theme of population emerges as a major force. The result is a paradoxical mixture of individualizing and totalizing expressions of power that Foucault terms pastoral power and that he believes is a central element in the governmentalization of the state. In simple terms, pastoral power is the simultaneous concern for the welfare of the community and the individual. It is also the expression of this concern through the development of specific bodies of knowledge and the implementation of a variety of techniques of intervention aimed at the individual for the supposed good of the population. In reality, however, the relationship among power, knowledge, truth, and ethics means that these interventions are often as much about (self)control as they are about welfare, assuming one can even draw so clean a distinction between the two (for

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[42] See Dean (1999), for a discussion of the tension in liberalism as it "seeks to balance the bio-political imperative of the optimization of the life of the population against the rights of the juridical-political subject and the norms of an economic government" (49).

example, see Cruikshank, 1996). This connection leads Foucault (2003[1982b]) to discuss governmentality in other terms as well, namely as the interaction between technologies of domination of others and technologies of the self.

For Foucault (2003[1982b]), technologies of domination[43] "determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends"; in other words, they represent practices that make people objects, many of these practices being present in the human sciences (146). On the other hand, technologies of the self are practices that "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, immortality" (146). In describing the interaction between the two, Foucault (2003[1983]) gives the example of educational institutions, whose leaders seek to directly manage the conduct of their members through such things as institutional culture or codes of behaviour while simultaneously teaching them to manage themselves (123).

While technologies of the self obviously existed before the specific genealogy of liberal governmentality that Foucault (2003[1978]) traces, he wants to highlight how they have been transformed over time according to different rationalities regarding the relation of the self to itself. In particular, he notes how they have transitioned from an emphasis on caring for oneself (found in ancient Greek and Roman cultures) to an emphasis on knowing oneself (beginning in early Christianity) and renouncing oneself – through what might now be understood as confessional practices for example. Importantly, the component of self-renunciation has now largely been discarded while the element of

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[43] Foucault (2003[1982b]) also refers to these as technologies of power. This is a little confusing as he often attempts to somewhat differentiate power and domination (for example, see Foucault, 2003[1984a]: 27).

verbalization of one's perceived history, current feelings, and future desires has flourished (think of the growth of psychology and counselling practices) (Foucault, 2003[1982b]). Consequently, a novel "relation of the self to itself" is present and interacts uniquely with the "relationship to the other" that is implied in technologies of domination; it is this unique interaction, and its effects, that Foucault (2003[1984a]) refers to as governmentality (41). Furthermore, it is this unique interaction that "constructs a relationship between government and the governed that increasingly depends upon ways in which individuals are required to assume the status of being the subjects of their lives, upon the ways in which they fashion themselves as certain kinds of subjects, upon the ways in which they practice their freedom" (Burchell, 1996: 29-30).

Governmentality, then, lies at the heart of both politics and ethics for Foucault. It represents not only the ways in which people are constrained and controlled in society but also the particular ways in which they are set free as individuals and invited to use this freedom to improve themselves (or enjoy themselves) for the supposed benefit of all. Under (neo)liberal arts of rule, individuals are simultaneously constituted as citizens of states and subjects of government, but these are not coterminous. Their role as citizens is in furtherance of their status as governed and not the other way around. This is Foucault's insight – that modern forms of power may function through the state and its institutions, but they do not predominantly stem from it. Instead, they circulate through the myriad of daily practices in which individuals, in their freedom, choose to take part. This circulation is not arbitrary or coincidental; it is the direct product of a way of thinking about the relationship between individuals and the political collectivities they form. It is through the conception of freedom within this relationship, and the specific choices that it allows,

that individuals are both subjected to power and defined as ethical beings. This way of rethinking power and its effects displaces the often paramount role accorded to the state on a national level of analysis; it also allows for a different way of understanding the field of international relations, including such things as imperialism and development.

Global governmentalities

While the burgeoning field of governmentality studies has more often than not ignored the international realm, this neglect has been challenged in recent years. In the introduction to their important collection on *Global Governmentality*, Larner and Walters (2004b) trace the uneven extension of Foucault's ideas to the supra-national level. They note that apart from a handful of studies covering such topics as citizenship and the interstate system (Hindess, 2000; 2002), European integration (Barry, 1993; 1996), or New Public Management (Salskov-Iversen, Hansen, and Bislev, 2000), the field "pushed most consistently 'outside' the nation-state" deals with the relationship between governmentality and colonial power (Larner and Walters, 2004b: 6). The resulting concept of "colonial governmentality" has become a popular way of shifting the analysis of colonialism away from the traditional understanding of colonial rule as a monolithic and oppressive field of power with largely homogenous purposes and consequences (for example, see Dutton, 2009; Pels, 1997; Scott, 1995). In its place, there is an understanding of colonial relations as changing to incorporate a "distinctive political rationality… in which power comes to be directed at the destruction and reconstruction of colonial space so as to produce not so much extractive-effects on colonial bodies as

governing-effects on colonial conduct" (Scott, 1995: 204).[44] However, this does not mean

that sovereign and disciplinary power did not circulate at a global level during the

colonial era (nor continue to circulate after it supposedly ended). In fact, it is the

"complex [and one could say novel] intersections of sovereign and biopolitical idioms of

power" that most defines the function of governmentality on a global level (Dillon, 2004:

78).[45] This logic fits well, after all, into the traditional understanding of the dual purposes

of colonialism: to expand state influence and wealth and to undertake a civilizing

mission. This same logic also transposes into the field of present-day humanitarian and

developmental interventions, which may express security or economic interests on the

individual and national levels but which are also "held in place by a notion of cure,

improvement, civility and good governance: a need to overcome misery by eradicating

the barbaric and the uncivilised" (Dutton, 2009: 308-309).

In trying to come to grips with these articulations of sovereign and governmental

power in the (post)colonial context, Tanya Murray Li (2007) traces how attempts to

improve rural life in Indonesia have turned local, political issues regarding land and

resources into broad technical problems to be dealt with by experts, effectively rendering

them non-political. Li notes how the "will to improve" is inherently located within the

field of governmental power (stemming from the biopolitical focus on population) and

how this will is constantly being expressed in ways that are delimited by the boundaries

of expert knowledge. Part of her insight into this dynamic is her focus on where the

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[44] This argument by governmentality scholars emphasizing the liberal, biopolitical imperatives of colonial relations dovetails, and in some cases draws on, the work of some postcolonial writers, who discuss the myriad of resistances and hybrid states that are adopted by colonial subjects (for example, see Bhabha, 1994; Stoler, 1989).

[45] See also Dean (2001), Hindess (2001), Helliwell and Hindess (2002), and Valverde (1996) for discussions of how liberal modes of government can effectively *legitimize* removing freedoms in some societies, usually those considered uncivilized or undeveloped.

governmental forces that articulate this "will to improve" run up against the limits of knowledge and action regarding the population as well as the limits of technical intervention in light of such things as law, custom, and political resistance. She analyzes these limits of governmentality, these particular iterations of a concern for the development of the population, by "combining attention to the rationale of improving schemes with the investigation of what happens when these schemes entangle the world they would regulate and transform" (270).

Li's (2007) approach to studying development interventions using a governmentality perspective mirrors much of the work done by other Foucault-inspired development scholars (for example, see Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997; Rist, 2002), particularly those who commonly fall under the label of postdevelopment.[46] As with studies of (post)colonial life, it is only recently that it has become popular to highlight the way development commonly works against those who are most vulnerable through the semantic processes of categorization, explanation, and justification as much as through self-interested trade arrangements and repressive state practices. Although they make extensive use of Foucault's ideas, such as the productivity of power and its inherent relationship to knowledge and truth, most postdevelopment scholars do not officially adopt a governmentality perspective as Li does.[47] There have, however, been a number of scholars in addition to Li who combine an interest in international development activities with an explicit governmentality perspective, some of whom even use the term developmentality (for example, see Deb, 2009; Ilcan and Phillips, 2006; Lie, 2005; Rojas, 2004; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2010; Watts, 2002). For

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[46] See Chapter One for a brief review of some postdevelopment scholars.
[47] This may be due to the timeline of these studies with respect to the wide availability of Foucault's later work or may reflect the perceived political rather than cultural thrust of governmentality.

example, John Lie (2005) looks at how the World Bank uses its Comprehensive

Development Framework and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (which replaced

structural adjustment programs) as mechanisms of international regulation through self-

government. His use of the term developmentality in this context reflects a relatively

straightforward extension of governmental themes of "the conduct of conduct" into the

realm of international development. Lie highlights the continuity of effects between the

earlier emphases on the conditionality of aid and later emphases on participation, both of

which are "gate keeping principles in the current arrangement of aid relations between

donor and recipient institutions" (1). By focussing on this continuity, Lie largely restricts

his analysis to the (comparable) regulatory effects of new strategies of government in the

global South. Mawuko-Yevugah (2010), while integrating a much more focused use of

developmentality that includes insights from postcolonial theory, still largely follows Lie

in examining the influence of governmental power on people in the South.[48]

  While all these Foucault-inspired critiques of development underline the strategic

construction of categories of knowledge, they often have in common this orientation

toward understanding how these categories affect the lives of people in the South. This

emphasis is, of course, entirely warranted, but it can have the effect of sidelining how

these same development categories influence the thoughts and actions of people in the

North. By no means is this area neglected by academics in general; for example,

postcolonial scholars have thoroughly analyzed the constitution of colonial subjects both

in the colonies and in the "home" country (for example, see Bhabha, 1994; Fanon,

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[48] Mawuko-Yevugah (2010) looks extensively at the discursive construction of Africa and its effect on development interventions. While this goes beyond looking at the intersection between governmentality and international development solely in terms of (self-)regulation, his case study deals with Ghana and is, therefore, largely concerned with the South.

2008[1952]; Hall, 1997; McClintock, 1995; Mohanty, 1991; Said, 1979 and 1994) and many studies have investigated the impact of particular representations of poverty, race, development, and other cultures (for example, see Lutz and Collins, 1993; Moeller, 1999; Nederveen Pieterse 1992; Smith, 2003; Sontag, 2003).

Two prominent examples of research that draw on the concept of governmentality to help describe the construction of (ethical) subjects in the North are Samantha King's (2006) work on breast cancer survivorship and the politics of philanthropy and Barbara Cruikshank's (1996; 1999) work on poverty, self-help, and citizenship in the US. Both of these projects highlight the way in which particular modes of self-government, principally meaning self-regulation, are bound up in discourses of what it means to be a good citizen under modern (neo)liberal arts of government. They also both address, however, the way in which these discourses "shape identities", "cultivate political subjects", and "produce knowledges and truths" about breast cancer and the poor respectively (King, 2003: 296). What is valuable about this latter emphasis, which is a natural extension of the perspective of governmentality but which is often neglected in favour of the former, is how the accepted value of independent, "positive" action such as voluntarism, participation, and philanthropy is denaturalized and relocated within specific strategies of government. Instead of seeing the "Race for the Cure" or self-esteem programs as always-already "good", these practices are understood as an inherent facet of (neo)liberal arts of rule that focus on the production of compatible and amenable citizen-subjects.

Lynn Fendler (2001) also uses a governmentality perspective to examine the constitution of (neo)liberal subjectivities in the North.[49] Not only does she discuss how the present "educated subject" – the child in this case – is constructed through particular epistemological, curricular, and pedagogical discourses, but she also draws attention to the role of developmental psychology in this process (120). In doing this, she brings to light the influence of a different kind of development discourse, that of child development, and how this discourse governs the production of curricula that are "developmentally appropriate" (124). Also making use of the term developmentality[50] albeit in a slightly different context than discussed above, Fendler investigates the way that the discursive construction of "normal" child development influences contemporary educational practices resulting in an importance being placed on flexibility in both process and effect. Far from an emancipation from regulation, this emphasis on flexibility helps construct very specific types of educated subjects who are "response-ready and response-able" and who therefore fit well into contemporary (neo)liberal society.

From governmentality to developmentality

The aforementioned gap in the governmentality literature between studies of personal (or child) development in the North and studies of international development (largely examining effects in the South) is a fertile ground for new theorizing. Not only does a connection between these subjects seem to follow directly from Foucault's work

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[49] See Hultqvist and Dahlberg (2001) for more work that combines a governmentality perspective with an emphasis on the construction of the child in (neo)liberal society.
[50] Here, she is using it in a sense similar to that of Stenner and Marshall (1999), who discuss developmentality with respect to the mentality of developmentalism that pervades considerations of the human life cycle. Their work is the earliest reference to developmentality I was able to find in the literature; Stenner and Marshall, however, make no reference to governmentality or Foucault.

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on governmentality as the intersection between technologies of domination of others and technologies of the self, but it also draws on a crucial element of critical race theory, that element which discusses the relationship between the representation of racialized Others and construction of whiteness in the North (for example, see Delgado and Stephancic, 2001). As an equivalent process of racialization to that which affects many Southern people(s), the construction of whiteness associated with the discourse of development relies on a broader notion of development than is usually employed by critical development scholars.[51]

Accordingly, these two features inform the way governmentality is taken up in the present study on the practice(s) of child sponsorship. As noted above, this project adapts some of the points of governmentality to better fit the context and, therefore, adopts the relatively new label of "developmentality". This term is used to indicate the way in which the problem space of development, rather than that of government, is conceptualized and results in a myriad of practices, and justifications of practices, that only make sense within a particular model of human relations. Consequently, as opposed to referring primarily to a governmental analysis of international development, developmentality can be understood as a way of repositioning the idea of development (whether economic, personal, biological, etc.) in order to "think otherwise" about the issue.[52] That said, these

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[51] Here, I am thinking primarily of the way postdevelopment writers, such as Escobar (1995) and Sachs (1999), discuss the discourse of development as a novel formation after WWII that is largely focused on the South. Instead, I would like to include a consideration of how various meanings of development (economic, personal, biological, etc.) interact to produce similar governing effects on people in the South and in the North. As is sometimes noted, it is not these governing effects that are a novel feature of post-WWII life, in many ways they are an extension of colonial relations, it is only the rationalization for these effects that has changed.

[52] In this sense, the present use of developmentality is both similar to and different from other uses of the term in the literature. I make a conscious effort to break from the way Lie (2005) and Mawuko-Yevugah (2010) make use of the term if not from their general alignment to what can be considered "developmental rationality". Lie (2005) is unclear about how his use of developmentality differs from a straightforward

two terms are not so far apart given Foucault's use of a broader notion of government and his analysis of biopower within it. In many instances, the telos of (neo)liberal governmentality is basically synonymous with a particular understanding of development as the improvement of the welfare of the population. Consequently, the developmentality perspective is intended to directly mirror governmentality in most aspects, but there are a few central elements that shift (or in some cases simply narrow) the scope of governmentality.

The first of these elements relates directly to this broader understanding of government adopted by Foucault. This expanded usage highlights the perceived continuity of form and purpose among different levels of government (that is: self, family, organization, state, etc.). This concept of continuity is important in that it allows Foucault to connect the government of the self with the government of others and in that it reveals the influence of pastoral power. Recall that pastoral power represents a simultaneous concern for the welfare of the entire population and all individuals within it, a concern for "all and each" as Foucault words it (2003[1979b]). This dual concern, which is reflected in concrete practices that invite, encourage, and cajole individuals to act in ways seen as simultaneously beneficial for themselves and the larger group, helps obscure the regulatory effects of governmental techniques. The perceived continuity of government appears to be analogous to that found among different "levels" of development (that is: personal, biological/lifespan, organizational, economic, international, etc.), each of which invites, encourages, and cajoles people into taking part

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governmental analysis of development practices. While Mawuko-Yevugah (2010) expands on governmentality with reference to postcolonial theory, something that I also try to do in this project, our two purposes, and therefore our end points, seem very different. The quote about thinking otherwise is from Foucault (2003[1980a]: 179).

in practices that betray a deep connection among these levels (or perhaps one should say discourses). Far from being independent of each other, the various uses of the term development articulate with each other in important ways. Just as Foucault describes the totalizing and individualizing effects of power in light of the Christian pastoral, this articulation results in a diffusion and naturalization of global power relations based on a common conceptualization of the problems of development.

The articulation of the development trope across various sites is related to a metaphorical relationship founded upon the all-too-straightforward association between social life and maturational or evolutionary processes. In this way, particular practices of economic development, social development, personal development, and so on, are rationalized using an organic model of progress that features such things as directionality (growth has a purpose, a more advanced end state, and follows a number of well-defined stages to get there), continuity (there is some degree of "permanence through change" during this process), cumulativeness (every stage depends on the previous one for proper functioning and every stage is necessarily more advanced than what came before), and irreversibility (generally, in the "natural" order of things, it is not possible to go back to previous stages) (Rist, 2002: 27). To this list, one might add universality, which is a – if not *the* – key discursive mechanism allowing for the expression of governmental power over issues of development, whether economic, personal, or otherwise. The prevalence of these features within the various discourses of development has resulted in, among other things, an image of all societies as

> moving naturally and consistently 'up', on a route from poverty, barbarism,
> despotism, and ignorance to riches, civilization, democracy and rationality,
> expressed at its highest in Science. This is also an irreversible movement
> from endless diversity of particularities, wasteful of human energies and

> economic resources to a world unified and simplified into the one most rational arrangement. It is therefore movement from badness to goodness and from mindlessness to knowledge (Shanin, 1997: 65).

The idea that societies develop through well-defined stages that simultaneously mirror the evolution of the human species and the maturation of the individual human body/psyche has long been taken for granted.[53] Not only has this idea justified the treatment of whole societies like children but it has also firmly located the "mature" form of society, and therefore the goal of all societal development, in the North. Even with contemporary modifications, this value-laden image of societal progress has been surprisingly durable and forms the basic connotation of all that falls under the label of international development, so much so that it is challenging to semantically separate the terms development and progress.

Analysis of the metaphorical underpinnings of societal development is not new to international development studies (for example, see Esteva, 1992; Porter, 1995; Rist, 2002), but what is commonly left out of these discussions is an understanding of the equivalent metaphorical processes that occur in other uses of the term development and the connections that link them together. The common features of the organic metaphor foster broad, thematic linkages between such things as the development of the child and the development of society (think of the banality of phrases linking children to the future of society or comparing colonial subjects to children needing guidance) and the development of individuals, companies, or organizations and the development of the national economy (think of the use of protectionist policies in international trade or the value placed on entrepreneurial "personalities"). In fact, a host of projects and programs,

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[53] In terms of international development, Rostow (1960) is the classical example, but the roots of this perspective go back much farther to the Enlightenment-era thought of Kant and Hegel if not before.

both in the North and the South, have been initiated and justified on the basis of this

metaphorical manoeuvre. It is not simply a shared metaphorical language that is of

interest, however. What is important is how particular rationalities are constructed from

such shared concepts, and how these rationalities inform specific practices. For example,

tax breaks are often *directly* rationalized using the language of *indirect* collective

improvement. As *Canada's Economic Action Plan* (Government of Canada, 2010) states:

"Tax reductions are an essential part of the government's effort to stimulate the economy.

Permanent tax reductions also help create a solid foundation for future economic growth,

more jobs and higher living standards for Canadians" (n.p.). In this way, the increasing

"responsibilization" of the individual under neoliberal platforms is often justified via the

(supposed) economic link between personal and collective development.

This emphasis on the unique character and consequences of each articulation of the

development trope directly follows from the governmentality approach, which highlights

the way that everyday practices are distinctively located within broader concerns of

government. As with governmentality, developmentality offers a perspective that

attempts to draw connections between the daily actions of individuals and the formation

of specific discourses that structure these actions through the construction of truth and,

ultimately, the determination of ethical conduct.[54] This emphasis on everyday practices

and the rationalities behind them is a critical element in following a Foucauldian

theoretical framework.[55] In this light, then, a developmentality approach is more about

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[54] As with Li (2007), this approach focuses on the way certain conceptualizations of the problems of development are "rendered technical" and the resulting interventions appear natural and apolitical.
[55] According to Foucault, the point "is not assessing things in terms of an absolute against which they could be evaluated as constituting more or less perfect forms of rationality, but rather examining how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices or systems of practices, and what role they play within them, because it is true that 'practices' do not exist without a certain regime of rationality" (Foucault 2003[1980b]: 251)."

locating and analyzing particular articulations and their significance than it is about justifying the overarching impact of the development metaphor. In the present study, this element of developmentality guides the analysis by privileging certain kinds of questions, such as what are the connections between developing a (sponsorship) organization and helping to improve the lives of (sponsored) children (Chapter Three), how does the notion of "proper" child development in modern liberal society influence the location of children and sponsors in sponsorship advertising (Chapter Four), and how is the relationship between developing or improving oneself and helping others incorporated into child sponsorship (Chapter Five).

It is obvious from these questions that the objective of a developmentality perspective is not as much about understanding the regulatory aspects of child sponsorship as it is about understanding the coordination among the goals of government on individual and international levels. While governmentality studies have tended to emphasize the management of populations through the self-management of individuals, it is important to remember that "government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the *welfare* of the population, the *improvement* of its condition, the *increase* of its wealth, longevity, health, and so on" (emphasis added, Foucault, 2003[1978]: 241). The fact that the purpose of government is basically synonymous with that of development, for Foucault, makes it possible and desirable within this framework to study not only the way individuals regulate themselves (as a facet of the regulation of others) but also the way they develop themselves (as a facet of the development of others). The significance of an emphasis on development (as in improvement) rather than

government (as in management) is that it brings into greater focus the productive nature of power and the ethical dimensions of liberalism.

The discussion of the "improvement" as opposed to the "management" of individuals and populations leads into the second element of developmentality that distinguishes it from governmentality. This element relates to the understanding of governmentality as the "encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self" (Foucault, 2003[1982b]: 147). As part of the thematic link among different uses of development, the perspective of developmentality similarly ties together technologies of the self, particularly those practices focusing on self-improvement, with the development of "Others". While still recognizing the connection between technologies that expressly seek to control the actions of others (i.e. all individuals in society) and those that are supposed to improve the individual, this formulation slightly shifts the emphasis to practices that specifically address the *improvement* of others in relation to the improvement of the self. As noted above, the purpose of this altered emphasis is to highlight the positioning of *ethical* action within contemporary arts of government while still identifying the discursive narrowing of the *legitimate* field of action.

This formulation also shifts the focus from a national frame of reference that juxtaposes individuals with their larger imagined community[56] to an international one that links in-groups to (representations of) out-groups. With the infusion of the socio-psychological and postcolonial concept of the Other (see Bhabha, 1994; Lacan, 2006[1977]; Levinas, 1969; Said, 1994), attention moves from the traditional problem of the relationship between individuals and their larger political body to the problem of the

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[56] This well-known phrase is borrowed from Anderson (1991).

relationship between individuals and people from different economic, cultural, and political groups. Not only does this focus on Others incorporate racialized and religious divides into the field of governmentality, but it also draws attention to the significant role that liberal discourses of charity play within global relations of power and wealth.[57]

A critical theory of race is not new for Foucault even though he is commonly (and sometimes understandably) accused of Eurocentrism (for examples, see Foucault, 2003[1976]; Foucault 1990[1978]; for debates, see Kurasawa, 1999; Stoler, 1995; Young, 1995). Even though most of his writing dealt with what he called the ancient and classical periods of European history, Foucault was a well-known for his anti-humanist critiques, which are generally sceptical of all attempts to categorize the complexity and diversity of human life. However, the concept of governmentality does not, at first glance, lend itself to a critical analysis of racialization processes. What is not clear from this perspective, as noted above, is the abstract (and one could say artificial) separation of people into in-groups and out-groups (with relatively stable and unequal relations of power) and the importance of this division for both regulatory and developmental efforts. The injection of a focus on Others into Foucault's theorizing around governmental techniques implicitly addresses this difficulty, which is one reason why the concept of colonial governmentality was thought to be necessary. In apparent contrast to much of the literature on colonial governmentality, however, an emphasis on Others could also be seen to privilege the importance of development discourses to the analytics of government because the discussion of racialized Others in contemporary Northern

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[57] In this way, the developmentality perspective follows from, and expands on, the concept of "colonial governmentality".

cultures more often than not revolves around developmental rather than regulatory themes.

The inclusion of race plays a central role in the shift from governmentality to developmentality. This role is rooted in the geographically and historically-constructed boundaries in the world, boundaries that necessarily come into play when the level of analysis switches from national to international. This role is also rooted in the commonly-neglected processes of racialization that have been, and are still, inevitably involved in practices that focus on the welfare and improvement of populations, whether these are the civilizing activities of colonizers or the developmental activities of NGOs. Finally, this role is intertwined with, and at least party indistinguishable from, that played by the concept of the Other (insofar as Othering processes are almost always racialized and processes of racialization are almost always Othering). Processes of racialization – through their relationship to the concept of the Other – are brought to the fore in the present adaptation of governmentality not as much in order to highlight the way race is deployed in overt discussions of Southern people(s) and their development. Instead, processes of racialization are employed in order to draw attention to the way the very categories of development (North and South or sponsor and child) are products of racialized historical practices.

In addition to bringing issues of ethnicity and racialization to the fore, the infusion of the concept of the Other into governmentality highlights the role played by Christian evangelism in the motivation behind development efforts. Within some, if not most, of the evangelical community involved in international development, there is a common overlap between the motivations to "help" other people through development efforts and

through exposure to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This connection apparently manifests itself in two ways: one, individuals working for Christian NGOs often see their development work as an expression of their faith,[58] and two, the transformation (understood as improvement) of development subjects is seen as a parallel process in the transformation of their faith (Bornstein, 2002). Consequently, this perspective on development and the spread of the Gospel reflects a division of the world into the categories of Christian/non-Christian or evangelized/unevangelized that mirrors the division into those of developed and "undeveloped". The importance of this link between Christian evangelism and international development is that the ethical justification for the development of others is often linked to their status as Others. That is to say, it is the status of development subjects as Others that allows for them to be objects of developmental and evangelical techniques simultaneously. Moreover, it is the simultaneity of this link that helps constitute Northerners who are seen to be good because of their religious motivations and not in spite of them.

One final but crucial consideration with respect to the theme of Others in theorizing development and governmentality deals with the discourse of charity in liberal thought. The idea of charity occupies a significant position in the moral calculations of liberal philosophy in that it corresponds to a broad area of literature dealing with obligations related to distributive justice (for example, see Rawls, 1971 and 1999; Fabre, 2007; Kelly, 2005). This literature revolves around what people's ethical obligations to others should be in terms of redistributing their wealth, and consequently, what is owed to others as a matter of course and not an aspect of charity. This distinction defines what

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[58] Bornstein (2002) also makes the interesting observation that faith is used as a disciplinary technique in central NGO offices.

could be considered generous or not depending on the extent to which a person is morally

obliged to redistribute his or her wealth. For example, even though taxes in Canada are

used in part to help the destitute or unemployed, Canadians likely do not feel that paying

their taxes is an altruistic gesture because it is obligatory. On the other hand, when they

give money to a shelter or a food bank, this donation is considered charitable and

therefore generous because it goes beyond what is considered ethically necessary (despite

the perceived obligation of society to provide for the subsistence of its citizens). This

relationship between generosity and obligation is usefully explained with reference to the

literature on gift-giving.

The discussion around the dynamics and significance of gifts has a long history in

anthropological, sociological, and philosophical scholarship. In particular, there is

extensive literature surrounding the procedures and consequences of gift-giving and its

connection to the social or economic relationships between giver and receiver.[59] One of

the main debates in this literature centres on the creation of a burden of obligation on the

part of the receiver that, in part or in whole, nullifies the generosity of the initial gift by

requiring reciprocation (Derrida, 1992). This burden of obligation is not only a problem

for the receiver, because he or she is seen to lose status relative to the giver at least until

the gift can be reciprocated, but it is also a problem for the very idea of the gift itself. The

argument goes as follows: if the main character of a gift is the altruistic intention of the

giver and if the giver is aware of the obligation created by a gift, then he or she is not in

fact acting altruistically by giving a gift (because indebting someone to you is not

commonly seen to be a generous thing to do). By definition, then, the giver has not

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[59] There are many complex issues and debates surrounding gift-giving that fall outside the scope of this
project (see Schrift [1997] for a general introduction to this literature). What is presented here is a very
basic summary of one of these debates.

actually given a gift at all (because his or her intention could not have been completely

altruistic). Furthermore, when the receiver reciprocates the initial "gift", he or she is not

really giving a gift either. Because this new receiver-turned-giver is obliged to

reciprocate, the intention behind the new "gift" is not altruistic (and it is therefore not a

gift). This paradox has come to be referred to as the "aporia of the gift".[60] For the present

purposes, this paradox simply illustrates the fact that it is difficult to understanding

something as a gift – as something that is an expression of generosity – when it creates an

obligation in others or is itself the product of an obligation.

This debate regarding gift-giving helps illuminate the role that charity plays within

liberal frameworks of redistribution.[61] Apart from a few radical liberals or libertarians

who believe that all redistribution improperly skews economic incentives, most liberal

commentators argue for some level of obligatory redistribution as a matter of justice (or

fairness) in order to counteract brute luck. The level and manner of this redistribution is

hotly debated, however, and many (if not most) liberals argue for only sufficient

redistribution to ensure minimum quality of life and basic equality of opportunity (Fabre,

2007). Irrespective of the actual extent of formalized redistribution of wealth within a

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[60] The term "aporia of the gift" comes from Derrida (1992). This paradoxical understanding of the gift as something that negates itself has been contested on several grounds. For example, it is seen to reproduce the very economic vision of life, rooted in exchange theory, that it is trying to critique (see Bourdieu, 1990[1980]; Cixous, 1997[1975]; O'Neill, 2001b). When Mauss (1954) described the reciprocal nature of giving, it was not an analysis aimed largely at an individual's perspective of the gift, which is something that could be said of Derrida's (1992) study. Rather, Mauss was examining the function of gift-giving for society; he concluded that the bonds of obligation created through gift-giving are a crucial part of achieving social solidarity. The act of gift-giving, consequently, may instill in the receiver a feeling of obligation to reciprocate, but it is this interpersonal reciprocity (the interaction between two concrete individuals rather than two economic agents) that help maintains social relationships in the face of the individualizing pressures of capitalism.
[61] Charity is often considered a special instance of gift-giving related to the nature of the gift (to fulfill a basic need for someone who cannot fulfill it themselves), the intention of the giver (altruistic because no reciprocation is expected), or to the particular relationship between the giver and receiver (a relationship of pre-existing economic difference).

society, it is only redistribution above this obligatory amount that is considered charitable and generous (precisely because it is not deemed ethically necessary).

What is important about the level of this trade off between obligation and generosity is that there is almost always felt to be a lesser degree of obligation to Others than to those within one's own political (as well as cultural or racial) group. In other words, arguments about obligatory redistribution at the international level are almost always more tenuous within liberal theory than those at the national level (for arguments, see Fabre, 2007; for example, see Fishkin, 1986; Lomasky 2007). This means that any redistribution of wealth to Others is much more likely to be deemed charitable – to be considered a gift – than to those of one's own imagined community. This quality of Otherness has at least two implications. First, for charitable donations to be charitable, there cannot be any perceived connection between, for example, one person's poverty and another's wealth. For example, if a person's poverty is understood to be a result of exploitation, then assisting them should be seen as a matter of justice and not charity. Consequently, liberal models of charity at the international level implicitly disregard such connections. Second, because most charitable gifts cannot be reciprocated, the receiver could be seen to be forever in debt to the giver and so continuously lower in status (a feature which is undoubtedly evident in most forms of development assistance). This is one way in which charity can be understood as a method of maintaining the social order as much as ameliorating it, and it illustrates the famous etymological link between the words present and poison (see Mauss, 1954).

The moral positioning of the charitable gift within liberal thought illustrates a key aspect of developmentality: namely, the perceived ethical value of (privately-given)

development assistance precisely because of its association with Others. By emphasizing the particular (racialized) relationship between (Southern) Others and (Northern) selves rather than the relationship between the self and others (within the same politico-cultural body), the term developmentality highlights the fact that individuals in the North, through their development-related charity, are able become better people than they otherwise could be without the existence of Others.

In shifting the concept of governmentality towards an analytics of development, the concept of the Other is so important because it helps illuminate some practical and theoretical difficulties in liberal ethics. While it is not without its own problems,[62] the concept of the Other is particularly useful in that it facilitates an understanding of governmentality wherein development does not simply represent the welfare of the population within which one is located (and, therefore, define ethical action in light of one's relationship with this population only). Instead, the idea of development in all its manifestations is part of numerous parallel processes involving individuals from many different ethno-political collectivities, such that the importance of development discourses stems from these differences rather than transcends them. For example, the fact that the majority of sponsored children are from the South (and usually seen to be darker-skinned) while the majority of sponsors are from the North (and usually seen to be lighter-skinned) is more than a coincidence. This typical relationship between selves and Others within development aid expresses more than a geography of economic inequality;

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[62] The main problem with the concept of the Other, in terms of the present argument, is the way it is often used to essentialize and individualize the self and others (see O'Neill, 2001a). This means that instead of adding a vital element of complexity to the theory of governmentality, the concept of the Other is merely replacing one theoretical arrangement for another that is no more beneficial. In this case, the concept of hybridity, seen as the problematization of boundary fetishism (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001), would be a plausible alternative. For better or for worse, however, I have chosen to retain the use of the concept of the Other because it does a good job of drawing attention to the influence of ethno-political categorization on perspectives of charity and development.

it reflects an organizing principle of ethical action - one that offers selective and disproportionate access to the ability to "do good" in contemporary (neo)liberal society. After all, governmental power functions not because of the direct politico-economic imbalance of power between leaders and followers but because some actions come to be seen as indisputably proper and legitimate such that individuals will practice them freely. Developmentality can be summed up, consequently, as a specific extension of governmentality that orients analysis toward the ethical connections among different development discourses and what these connections tell us about the (re)production of unequal relations of power on a global level. In particular, developmentality is a perspective that emphasizes the role played by these interconnected discourses of development in the constitution of (neo)liberal subjects.

The concept of developmentality guides the analysis presented in the following chapters on sponsorship programs, sponsorship promotional material, and sponsors. As noted above, the perspective provided by this concept is more a tool for structuring observations about child sponsorship than a way of explaining how it or other practices "actually" operate in Northern societies. Consequently, the purpose of using the concept of developmentality is not to forge a new theoretical domain but simply to help look at the practice of child sponsorship in a new light.

Chapter Three: Organizational Development within Development Organizations

This chapter examines the organizational context of child sponsorship programs. In particular, it explores the connections between the institutional structures and everyday practices of sponsorship programs and the promotional material that they produce. Drawing on interviews with staff members at several major Canadian sponsorship programs, this chapter presents an argument suggesting that the perceived ethical value of these programs is related more to their capacity for organizational development – primarily revenue generation in this context – than to their ability to 'bring about' international development. As with most topics covered in this project, the *Chicago Tribune*'s special report on child sponsorship provides a good place to begin.

"I am not a missionary, I am a businessman." According to Jackson and Tackett (1998) of the *Chicago Tribune*, this phrase was often used by Joseph Gripkey, a former CEO of Children International (CI) (2-4). Gripkey took over the American organization, then known as Holy Land Christian Mission, in 1973. With the help of Jerry Huntsinger, an experienced child sponsorship marketer, Gripkey transitioned the organization from a small operation providing "love baskets" to widows and orphans in Bethlehem to a "philanthropic powerhouse" (Tackett and Jackson, 1998: 2-3 and 2-4). Pursuing a low-price, no-money-down version of child sponsorship, CI ended up collecting some US$65 million in donations from more than 200,000 sponsors in 1996 (Jackson and Tackett: 2-4). In return for his services, Gripkey earned more than US$190,000 in 1992 alone, so much that the charity had an external company process the payroll for its executives because it "did not want other workers to know what they were earning" (2-4). Despite

noting this concern, the *Tribune* reporters are not expressly critical of the amount of

Gripkey's compensation.[63] Instead, they discuss the discrepancy between the publicized

amount of Gripkey's salary, about US$120,000 plus an US$18,000 expense allowance,

and the amount listed on internal records, some US$50,000 more (2-4). For the *Tribune*,

this discrepancy appears to underscore some of the central problems of child sponsorship,

namely a lack of adequate transparency regarding sponsorship costs and benefits,

insufficient oversight of donated funds, and inefficient or inappropriate use of those

funds.

These problems with child sponsorship, which are largely perceived to be

organizational in nature, are highlighted again and again throughout the *Tribune* series.

For example, the reporters found that Children International's claims regarding the

benefits of sponsorship were often "overstated" with none of the children they saw

having experienced any extraordinary transformations in their daily lives as a result of the

sponsorship (Tackett and Jackson, 1998: 2-3). While the children did receive some useful

goods and services for their participation in the sponsorship program,[64] these were far

from the miraculous and life-altering benefits advertised by CI (2-4). In some cases, the

goods and services provided were redundant, unusable, or simply inappropriate for

children, such as jeans or shoes several sizes too big, sheets and blankets in a tropical

area where no one uses them, a "barefoot doctor" with no training and no supplies, plastic

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[63] Even though the *Tribune* does not go into depth discussing executive compensation within non-profits, it was, and still is, a hot topic. As indicated in Canada Revenue Agency records, many CEOs of major charities in Canada earn in excess of CAN$300,000 per year, including the head of Plan Canada. While earning less than some of their American counterparts – the CEO of World Vision Canada earns just under CAN$200,000 compared to his American equivalent who takes home about half a million a year – Canadian NGOs have been under pressure to explain or alter their policies regarding executive compensation (see World Vision, 2010b).

[64] Children International is one of the only major child sponsorship programs to give goods directly to sponsored children and their families, and not make the same goods and services available to non-sponsored children in the area where they or their partners work.

dinnerware when the family already has a set given by CI the previous year, or some

nails and plywood sent as a child's birthday gift (Schmetzer and Crewdson, 1998: 2-8).

Added to these concerns about what constitutes a "benefit" of sponsorship and how

this differs from the ideas conjured up in promotional material is the problem of costs.

According to the experiences of *Tribune* reporters, many of the goods and services

provided by CI do not seem to come close to the amount donated by sponsors. For

example, after receiving an extra $25 dollar gift from a *Tribune* sponsor, CI gave the

sponsored child a jogging suit worth $13 in local stores (Tackett and Goering, 1998: 2-5).

This is in line with what was stated by a local head of CI that "between $70 and $80 of

each $144 annual sponsorship fee reaches the Philippines" (Schmetzer and Crewdson,

1998: 2-9). Unfortunately, this is significantly less than the circa 80% that CI says goes to

"worldwide charitable programs", and at the time, CI was unwilling to open their books

to the *Tribune* in order to explain the discrepancy (2-9).

Lack of adequate transparency and oversight was also presented as a problem for

the American branch of Christian Children's Fund (CCF). *Tribune* reporters discussed

how difficulties with poor management and fraud at the South Texas project site of one

of their sponsored children "raises questions about how Christian Children's Fund

monitors funds and sets priorities" (Jackson, 1998: 2-11). In addition to infighting and

misuse of funds by the local CCF affiliate that resulted in its collapse and the suspension

of any kind of benefits for the sponsored child, CCF almost found itself in court in 1996

because one of its managers in the same area had funnelled sponsorship monies into his

own development company (2-11 & 2-12). Rather than following up with an open

investigation, however, "CCF pushed to settle the South Texas matter quietly" (2-12).

Internationally, the situation does not seem much better. The *Tribune* report tells

the story of Maria Cleidiane, an eight-year-old Brazilian girl who was sponsored by one

of the reporters. When the reporter arrived to visit Maria, she was ill with multiple

bacterial infections and severely malnourished despite the fact that the local Brazilian

project that oversaw Maria's sponsorship received more than US$21 per month on her

behalf (Crewdson and Goering, 1998: 2-14). Rather than providing local children with

food and health care as CCF claimed in correspondence with sponsors, the project used

sponsorship funds to buy computers, a telephone line for Internet access, and lessons for

teens in computer use (2-14). It seemed obvious to the *Tribune* reporters that something

was wrong with the case of Maria; after all, CCF assured her sponsor that she would get

hot meals and health check-ups, neither of which occurred. CCF's head of foreign

operations did not think there was anything really amiss with the project, however,

stating that CCF and its affiliate "did not fail Maria by any stretch of the imagination" (2-

15). Apparently, he had been (incorrectly) told that the project did provide meals and that

it ensured medical care (at least for children under six). He admitted that he had not seen

or approved any kind of budget, though. According to him, CCF is a "decentralized

system" and project budgets are something for which each "national office" is

responsible.[65]

From these and other examples in the *Tribune* series, one is seemingly led to the

conclusion that the "mythical" nature of child sponsorship is largely an organizational

problem.[66] Administrative malfeasance or ineptitude is seen not only to underlie the

disconnect between advertising messages and project spending but also to result in a

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[65] Recall that such "national offices" are usually separate, independent organizations even though they may share a name.
[66] For a discussion of the "mythical" nature of sponsorship, see Chapter Two.

dearth of positive outcomes. However, if organizational environments and their failures are seen to be at the heart of the problems with child sponsorship, then the stage is already set for a discussion of the solution – greater transparency, better oversight, and more targeted development assistance. While this discussion is undoubtedly necessary, such a formulation of problem and solution leaves out many important questions about how child sponsorship functions, particularly those questions related to the broader contexts of international development work and (neo)liberal conceptions of society. Consequently, this chapter attempts to go beyond the normative critique of sponsorship presented in the *Tribune* series. Using the lens of developmentality introduced in the previous chapter, this chapter explores the relationship among the structures and practices of these organizations, the specific understandings of development that inform these structures and practices, and the ethical framework within which these understandings operate. In other words, the analysis in this chapter is guided the question: What is the relationship between the discourse of development and the way sponsorship staff perceive and carry out their work? Through investigating how child sponsorship staff employ discourses of development in their work, it is possible to highlight how sponsorship programs position and justify their efforts in trying to address global poverty.

In order to help address this question, this chapter primarily draws on in-depth interviews with 14 current and two former staff members of child sponsorship programs.[67] Between one and four staff members were interviewed at each of the following organizations: World Vision Canada, Plan Canada, Christian Children's Fund of Canada, Compassion Canada, Canadian Feed the Children, and Food for the Hungry

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[67] See Methodology section in the Introduction for more information on the rationale behind these interviews and the specifics on how they were conducted. See Appendix B for a copy of the interview schedule used.

Canada. At the time of the interviews, staff members worked in the following areas: three in senior management positions that directly or indirectly monitor the production of promotional material, five in marketing or communications positions, three in donor relations positions, and three in program positions (meaning that they deal directly with the partner agencies overseas). Interviews lasted between one and two hours and were loosely structured around a set of open-ended questions dealing with participants' roles at the organization, their thoughts on the benefits and challenges of child sponsorship, and their perceptions of the world in general. Throughout this chapter, pseudonyms and non-specific job descriptions are the only distinguishing features to differentiate participant responses. Any quotations that suggest a participant's organizational affiliation are altered to protect the identity of the participant.

The problematization of child sponsorship

As a point of departure for the rest of the chapter, let us first turn to a question inspired by Foucault's (2003[1984b]) concept of problematization. What is the problem to which child sponsorship is most commonly presented as a solution? At first glance, this seems to be an easy question to answer. The problem sponsorship is supposed to address is the poverty of the child and their community, or more specifically, the lack of development that is supposedly at the heart of this poverty. In sponsorship advertising, children are generally portrayed as malnourished, sick, under-educated, and in desperate need of external support. Sponsorship organizations offer to provide what these children are missing for a relatively small monthly sum. Consequently, the problem of "underdevelopment" is supposedly solved, or at least mitigated, through the provision of

funds that sponsorship delivers. This understanding of sponsorship is reiterated by staff

members, who commonly describe sponsorship in terms of what the funds can purchase

for the child and their community. However, if sponsorship funds are used in the same

manner to accomplish the same things as other sources of development funding and are

often indistinguishable, in fact, from this funding in the field, then it seems to be the

provision of funds that is understood to be the solution to "underdevelopment" and child

sponsorship simply an effective means to secure those funds. Seen in this way, child

sponsorship is first and foremost a response to a fundraising challenge and not a

development problem. In fact, the *direct* problem to which child sponsorship is a solution

is not that of "underdevelopment" in the global South, it is the problem of how to

effectively raise money from a Northern audience for a cause that appears remote

geographically and personally. If child sponsorship is primarily a fundraising tool while

still being presented as a solution to the broader problem of "underdevelopment", then

this implies that the problem of "underdevelopment" itself is constructed in such a way

that money, or what this money can purchase, is the solution.

Before going on to flush out this argument or discuss its implications, it is

important to note that this assessment of child sponsorship as primarily a fundraising

practice necessarily excludes two commonly-cited aspects of sponsorship: one, the

supposed benefits to the sponsored child related to the relationship itself (i.e. getting

letters and extra gifts from your sponsor or knowing that someone far away wants to help

you), and two, the supposedly awareness-raising properties of sponsoring a child that

might lead to a better informed and more compassionate Canadian population.[68] While

neither of these aspects should be entirely discounted, there is no substantial evidence

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[68] This second point will be discussed in more depth in Chapters Four and Five.

that points to these as anything but peripheral to fundraising purposes of sponsorship. In addition to the problems of disparity at the local level that initially led sponsorship away from a more direct funding approach, the first aspect is not likely a significant factor for many sponsored children. While some may have positive benefits from this direct relationship, this is apparently not the norm. A Plan International study concludes that "claims (e.g. in materials for sponsors) about the positive effects of sponsorship on children's growth, self-esteem and ability to communicate and participate in community development cannot be generalized. Despite the care taken by some NOs [National Offices] to qualify these claims, the use of such messages should be re-assessed" (Plan International, 2008b).

Sponsorship promotional material is the topic of the next chapter, but even without an in-depth analysis, it is possible to illustrate one of the key messages of sponsorship advertising – that sponsoring a child is a way of alleviating poverty and helping children and communities develop. Using carefully-worded appeals, sponsorship programs commonly describe the bleak situation of some children in the South and then offer sponsorship as the "best way to help" these children or children like them (Plan Canada, *Susan*, n.d.). Though not all material follows this format, it is such a common theme that examples are easy to provide. In a televised segment entitled *Heart of a Child* (n.d.), a Plan Canada spokesperson clearly describes what the expected result of sponsorship will be – freedom from poverty.

> Now is your chance to be part of something extraordinary. Plan is here now ready to help but we cannot do it without you. That is the simple truth. You have met the children. You have seen how desperate their situation really is, but you have also seen how, through sponsorship, you can help a child and their family free themselves from the crushing grip of poverty (Plan Canada, *Heart*, n.d.)

This sentiment is spelled out in more depth in a Plan Canada (n.d.) brochure.

> Your gift of $33 a month – about a dollar a day – will mean so much! It
> means preventing diseases like malaria. It means new wells, and water that is
> safe to drink. It means more schools where children can learn to read and
> write. Most of all, your sponsorship means a better future for one special
> child – your sponsored child! …By sponsoring a child through Foster
> Parent's Plan (Plan), you will help ensure that their community is
> strengthened to provide access to basics, such as clean water, healthcare, an
> education, and protection against life-threatening diseases. (Plan Canada,
> *Susan*, n.d.)

In discussing the sponsorship and poverty, World Vision Canada does not shy away from
using the term solution. In one brochure provided to new sponsors, World Vision makes
reference not only to the community-level nature of the work being funded but also to the
way this work links sponsorship with the solutions to poverty.

> By becoming a child sponsor, you have stepped forward to show you care.
> Your commitment, along with other Canadian sponsors, is a partnership with
> World Vision and your sponsored child's entire community. Together, we
> help provide long-term solutions to poverty that will enrich your sponsored
> child's life – and touch your own life as well. Thanks to you, your sponsored
> child will receive essentials of life, including things like: Health and
> Nutrition… Food and Agriculture… Education… Clean, Safe Water (World
> Vision Canada, *You*, n.d.)

One of the organization's recurring spokespersons, Alex Trebek, states it more directly in
an introduction to the infomercial *Sponsor a Child, Change a Life*.

> If you had a chance to make a lasting difference in the world, to do something
> extraordinary, would you do it? Well, today you are going to have that
> chance, the chance to personally rescue one boy or girl and give them health,
> hope and a future. Right now, there are kids living in horrific situations that
> you cannot even begin to imagine. They are hungry, sick, neglected, and yes,
> sometimes abused. Each day is a tremendous fight for survival, but there is a
> proven solution and it is World Vision child sponsorship. (World Vision
> Canada, *Sponsor*, n.d.)

Although not all advertisements state it so baldly that child sponsorship is a "proven
solution" to the difficulties that many poor people in the global South face, the
implication in most promotional material is clear enough. It does not seem terribly

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controversial, however, to suggest that this is the message of many, if not all, sponsorship ads. After all, sponsorship was commonly explained by staff members as a particular way of dealing with poverty in the South.

Although the interviews conducted for this study were semi-structured, and therefore somewhat informal, one question was consistently asked all of participants at the outset: "How would you describe child sponsorship to someone who does not know anything about it?" The purpose of asking this question was to establish a baseline indicator of how sponsorship is perceived by the individuals who promote it. What participant responses revealed, however, was an interesting disconnect between general descriptions of what child sponsorship is and specific explanations of what sponsorship staff actually do on a daily basis.

In many instances, the responses to this question reiterated what is found in sponsorship promotional material. Irving, a staff member working in communications, summed up this idea that child sponsorship is a program designed to address problems of development in the South.

> Child sponsorship is basically the idea that people in Canada can help change
> the lives of children in other countries through a reasonably small donation
> every month… We take that money and then what we do to create
> efficiencies is we pool that money together with other sponsors' money and
> we target specific communities in developing countries that are in very bad
> situations… and we try to change the circumstance of that one community by
> educating people, giving them opportunities, providing them with nutrition,
> their food, all that sort of stuff, and we target the children there because they
> are the best investment you can make. …they are going to continue to grow
> up and change their community, and our goal is that by changing the lives of
> these children we are going to change the lives of the community.

Jacqueline, who deals with communication between overseas partners and the organization, explained it in a similar manner.

When you sponsor a child, you are making a monthly commitment to, and we link you with, a child and will update you on their progress each year, and basically your funds are pooled at the community level with those of other child sponsors, and we are implementing a community development program so every child will benefit with educational support with either their school fees being paid or receiving educational materials, also health care and nutrition.

The same descriptive format – starting with the Canadian donor, outlining the path of funding, and then listing the possible benefits to the sponsorship child – was employed by many staff members, as in the following account by Gina, another marketing and communications specialist:

It is an opportunity for a Canadian individual or family to support people in developing countries through the act of embracing one child or one child's needs… We tend to kind of focus more on how that child's community can improve around that child so that they individually benefit; they get healthier; they have more opportunities. So, the sponsorship process allows that child in particular… to have improved health and well-being because this individual or family in Canada has chosen to give money in that way. So, to me, it is more of a focused way of donating.

These general descriptions of child sponsorship, which are largely similar to those of other interviewed staff, have several things in common. First of all, while they begin with a brief focus on sponsors and their financial commitment, they quickly go on to emphasize the possible benefits of sponsorship for the community and child. These benefits are enumerated with broad terms like nutrition, education, and health care and are presented as concrete solutions to the lack of these "basics" and appropriate responses to the lack of development. Although it will be evident later that much of the communication about sponsorship revolves around the sponsor and not the child, basic descriptions of sponsorship seem to point unerringly to the (imagined) outcomes for the child. In this way, child sponsorship is consistently, although indistinctly, tied to the Southern development projects it funds.

This connection seems logical and not terribly controversial, and it supports the idea that sponsorship is presented as a solution to poverty and "underdevelopment". However, this also highlights a second commonality among staff answers, one that will be mentioned here but discussed in more detail later. Within many staff descriptions of sponsorship, there is a curious mix of specificity and generality. What is particularly noteworthy about these answers is not only the apparent difficulty many staff members had in summarizing child sponsorship, but also the way they stress the possibility of many specific benefits without actually specifying anything at all. There is a strange oxymoronic quality to how staff detail the minor steps involved in sponsorship while simultaneously remaining vague on what happens (or might happen) in far away communities because of a sponsor's commitment. This ambiguity is not that puzzling actually. After all, the interviewed staff members are all working for Canadian sponsorship programs, and therefore, have little if any day-to-day contact with the projects being conducted in the South. What specific knowledge would they have of projects when their job is not to plan and execute development interventions but to acquire and retain sponsors? This aspect highlights a critical proposition for this project, that child sponsorship is primarily a fundraising tool *even though* it is routinely described as something else – a type of development intervention.

Child sponsorship as a fundraising tool

There are many reasons to see child sponsorship as a type of fundraising approach rather than – or at least in addition to – a specific way of addressing long-term poverty and its consequences. The most important of these reasons is something that has been

brought up several times before and is supposedly at the heart of the "mythical" nature of sponsorship – the disconnect within contemporary sponsorship models between fundraising efforts in the North and development efforts in the South. This disconnect resides in the incongruence between sponsorship promotional messages, which often imply a one-on-one financial relationship between sponsor and child mediated by a single organization, and the use of sponsorship donations, which most often support community or regional-level development projects that do not privilege sponsored children and that are carried out by local partners. Related to this disconnect is the way in which organizations are structured, both nationally and internationally, and the way in which organizational culture, language, and staffing play out within these structures. Before going on to flush out these issues, it should be noted that, contrary to the *Tribune* critique, this disconnect should not be seen as rendering sponsorship "mythical" (in the sense of being fictional or deceptive). Despite any incongruence between fundraising messages and project outcomes, child sponsorship cannot in fact be seen as a myth if it is understood as primarily a fundraising mechanism. In this case, it is true to itself inasmuch as its purpose is seen to be fulfilled by the raising of funds. The myth, if there is any, lies in seeing sponsorship as much more than a fundraising tool. That is to say, the myth of sponsorship is not about what it might fail to accomplish in terms of its promises but what it actually accomplishes in terms of its effects on individuals in the North. There will be more discussion of this theme in subsequent chapters.[69]

Notwithstanding the staff descriptions of sponsorship mentioned above, an understanding of child sponsorship as a fundraising mechanism is not a terribly controversial claim among many sponsorship staff members. As Gina stated, "the reality

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[69] See Chapter Two for an alternative interpretation of the meaning of the "myth" of child sponsorship.

is that sponsorship is one tool to bring money in to achieve our mission to improve the, to

lessen the impact of poverty on children and families." Margaret, a program management

specialist, explained this notion in slightly more detail:

> For us, sponsorship is more of a tool for fundraising rather than an
> implementation tool in the field. Our programs vary dramatically; we do not
> have a cookie cutter approach to a sponsored program in the field. Some in
> [one country] are very different than others say in [another country], so the
> programs are implemented according to the need as opposed to a boxed-in
> "this is what sponsorship must be". We basically eliminate that, but funds are
> raised based on sponsorship.

This description of sponsorship as a fundraising tool, technique, or mechanism was

not uncommon in many of the staff interviews, and it is reiterated in a prominent report

sponsored by Plan International. The researchers at the Institute of Development Studies

at the University of Sussex, who were contracted to carry out this study and who

interviewed staff at eight different Plan locations, concluded that sponsorship "is

perceived by most operational staff and volunteers [at Plan] as a fundraising rather than a

development activity" (Plan International, 2008b: 8). In other words, most operational

staff "perceive sponsorship mainly as an effective fundraising approach" (5). The report

also noted that Plan's offices in wealthy countries (known as National Offices or National

Organizations or simply NOs) "have been undergoing a transition from being primarily

focused on sponsorship and fundraising, to becoming development organisations with

staff capacity and knowledge of programmes. NOs vary in how far they have come and

how committed they are to this transition" (10). While the Sussex research found that

"[s]enior level staff are more likely to articulate the developmental benefits than

operational staff" (5), this was not always the case among the present sample of

participants. Brian, a senior manager, summed up his view concisely, saying that

"sponsorship is a funding model." Speaking candidly, he explained that he had "come to

the conclusion that most attempts at child sponsorship were clever marketing." He added

that "child sponsorship tells me nothing; it is just fundraising, just marketing… to say I

am a believer in sponsorship from a marketing perspective, yeah, it is a great marketing

tool, but from a helping the poor perspective, [I am] not that much of a believer." These

statements seem perplexing given the source, except that he was specifically referring to

the way that other programs address sponsorship. While he stated that his organization's

"marketing message is not much different than the marketing message of many

organizations in Canada", he said

> I am convinced that if you went and saw what we do, you would come back
> and say, "your marketing message is pretty accurate." I am also as convinced
> that if you did the same thing with other organizations, you would come back
> and say, "woah, woah, woah." You need to change your marketing message,
> or you need to change your programming because there is no match.

This dual admission and admonition on the part of one senior staff member not

only illustrates the common understanding among many such insiders that sponsorship is

primarily a funding tool, but it once again highlights the inconsistencies that plague, but

strangely do not disrupt, discussions of child sponsorship. Leaving aside the question of

whether or not the way his organization and its partners operate is somehow more

legitimate than other organizations, it is important to point out that the recognition of

sponsorship as a marketing tool by many interviewed staff occurred alongside the

aforementioned descriptions of sponsorship as a solution to development problems. The

obvious explanation to this contradiction is that sponsorship is commonly understood to

be simultaneously a fundraising and a development practice. It is seen to bridge this

divide by being the means through which the perceived work of development is

accomplished. Acknowledging the marketing effectiveness of child sponsorship,

Jacqueline noted that it is "a wonderful way to make a connection and to motivate donors

to give monthly." She subsequently divulged the role of her organization in relationship to this as one of facilitating development work through fundraising. In her words: "Our mission and our goal is to be a bridge and provide the resources to people in need and to give people in Canada the opportunity to help and to make a difference." This point both introduces the question of what really counts as the work of development (or what the work of development is to begin with) and foreshadows the discussion of how the problem of development is constructed in relationship to child sponsorship. Before moving on to this discussion, however, it is still necessary to examine the evidence for understanding sponsorship as first and foremost a fundraising technique.

Sponsorship as a fundraising tool: International divisions

At an international level, there are two main aspects of child sponsorship that encourage such an understanding. The first relates to the structure of NGDOs that use child sponsorship and the second relates to the way funds from sponsorship are used. As noted in previous chapters, sponsorship programs are almost invariably housed in organizations that are both independent of, and functionally differentiated from, the organizations that carry out the projects funded by sponsorship dollars. The vast majority of Canadian sponsorship programs, including all those interviewed for this project, are part of international networks of independent national organizations that (almost exclusively) raise money and then transfer that money to national or local partners in the South so that they can carry out development projects. James, a senior manager, stated it quite succinctly, saying "we in Canada and other national offices do not tend to be program deliverers." Jennifer, a marketer, explained "the way that we do it is that we

make a pledge to the field office. So, our offices are all kind of autonomous like our

office in [an African country]… and we send them money, but they run themselves."

With a slightly different structure, Petra's organization has

> what is called country office [sic], and those are staff that is paid by [our
> organization], and they are responsible for overseeing the partners. So, what
> we call a sponsorship program – a partner is responsible for that program.
> [interviewer: "so a local NGO maybe?"] A local NGO, OK, yeah… so we do
> not implement those programs; they are partner programs.

Within this framework, the amount of direct project oversight by Canadian NGDOs

seems to vary. Some organizations simply check annual accounts while others monitor or

evaluate projects sites and train local staff. However, the actual planning and running of

projects by the Canadian staff of these organizations is exceedingly rare. Margaret, who

works in programs, described the situation in her organization:

> We do not have overseas staff for the most part… so with that in mind, we
> have to be able to trust our partners that we affiliate with because, for the
> most part, we do not have day-to-day contact with them. So, we have to be
> able to trust they are going to manage a sponsorship program, or any other
> program, adequately. Our reporting ensures that – the fact that they have to
> send financial statements on an annual basis; we do random audits as well.

Margaret went on to clarify that it is the partners who produce the "development plans",

and "we fund it based on a child sponsorship model". This organizational division of

labour leaves many such Canadian NGDOs with little to do except raise funds and

account for the reasonable use of these funds.

A key to understanding the organizational nature of child sponsorship is to

understand how sponsorship money is used, and in many ways, this is a direct

consequence of the structural arrangement noted above. So, how are sponsorship funds

used? They are spent in the same way as other private donations and, often, in the same

way as other sources of funding, such as bilateral grants, that are targeted at child-centred

community development. A senior manager, Paul, explained "this is just an integrated funding model that we have got, and we will bring together all these different sources of funds. Sponsorship is the most important one, but we are able to bring that together with our other funding sources including government grants as well." This not only means that development projects funded, in whole or in part, by sponsorship more often than not look exactly like other such development projects, it also means that there is often no differentiation on the ground between sponsorship funding and other funding within any particular project. "Our programming" said Tamara, a program specialist, "is very linked on the ground with sponsorship. For a field office, there is no difference between Canadian CIDA money and sponsorship or USAID money. For them, it all goes into one program." In fact, when a Canadian NGDO using child sponsorship sends money to its overseas partners, there is no separation of sponsorship funds from other sources of revenue. Commonly, the only distinguishing influence that sponsorship has is in determining the geographic destination of the funds. As Jennifer noted, "our child sponsorship programs are, for the most part, very much integrated with other community programs, and it is not just working with the child. You are also doing agriculture and other education and health care, leadership training in the whole community, and that is part of our other programs we run as well."

This last point by Jennifer highlights something else that has been mentioned numerous times already, that sponsorship funds are used by and large to support long-term, community-level development projects. These projects are intended to benefit the entire community or region by gradually increasing the area's perceived level of development. Through this "developmental" increase, children in the area, whether

sponsored or not, are expected to indirectly benefit (and sometimes directly benefit through the payment of school fees or the purchase of school supplies for example). With respect to the basic sponsorship contributions by sponsors, sponsored children cannot generally expect to receive specific benefits denied to their non-sponsored siblings or peers. Once again, this is not something that is in any way denied by organizations or their staff; rather, it is often offered as a sign of good development practice. Paul stated it clearly when he said,

> we are an organization that is focused on children, but we do not work at it in terms of individual children. We take a community-based approach to our development. So, with child sponsorship, when you are sponsoring a child, it is not that you are just providing a hand-out to a particular child. [It is] more that we are working with the whole community, and sponsorship is a funding mechanism for supporting our development work in that community.

Petra, a donor services manager, explained this same idea with a simple example: "if there is a dentist going to the community, say, twice a year, the dentist will not only see sponsored children but other children in the community that need dental assistance."

Tamara echoed these statements, declaring

> the beauty is, again, [in] this new trend in sponsorship [is] that it is not going to one child; it is going to the community. So, it is not the one child [sic] is benefiting from the program and the next door neighbour who is not. They are equally poor. I mean the whole community is poor in these communities… The health worker is not going to say, "okay, you are not in the [project] community you do not get services"... That is the whole beauty of sponsorship now.

Susan, who also works in donor services but with a different organization, even commented that her organization is "moving away from just saying child sponsorship; we are saying child-centred community development program".

There are a couple of implications of this community-centred approach that relate to the fundraising nature of child sponsorship. Two comments serve to illustrate these

implications. The first deals with the lack of correspondence in terms of timing and

budget between ongoing projects and sponsor donations. In discussing the role of local

partners, Jennifer noted that

> they pick a community, and so *the money that we pledge based on the*
> *number of kids we think we can get sponsored* goes to help all the kids in that
> community. But the ones that are actually sponsored are the ones that get to
> write the letters back and forth to the donors and things like that, but we
> really try to as much as possible make sure that it is not half the kids are
> allowed to go to school and the other half are not (emphasis mine).

What this discussion of pledging expresses is that, in most cases, local partners create

project plans, usually spanning many years, for which they require stable funding.

Canadian NGDOs then agree to fund these long-term projects[70] using their revenue, most

of which is derived from sponsorship, creating a commitment that they promise to try and

fulfill. Logically speaking, this implies that the overseas funding commitments of

sponsorship programs are only loosely tied to the sponsorship of actual children in the

South – children, by the way, who benefit equally under this model whether or not they

are currently sponsored, up for sponsorship, recently unsponsored, or not even considered

for sponsorship. How could it be otherwise, in truth, given the administrative hurdles

involved and the ethics of project work in the South? Could projects operate on a

monthly budget corresponding to variations in the number of sponsors who either begin

or end a sponsorship of a child from that area? Could Canadian organizations even track

or transfer funds based on such variation? Should the projects of all local partners or,

even worse, the lives of individual children be subject to the volatility of sponsor lapses?

This aspect of sponsorship makes perfect sense; however, it also highlights the distance

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[70] In some cases, Canadian NGDOs offering child sponsorship simply agree to transfer funds, based on
current and projected revenue, to their national partners in the South within their network. These partners
then use the funds as they see fit (based as much as possible on the geographic distribution of sponsored
children and in accordance with network guidelines).

between the act of sponsorship as seen from the sponsor's perspective and the actual use of the donations in relation to the sponsored child.

The second comment addresses the issue at the heart of the disconnect between the fundraising messages of sponsorship programs and the development practices of local partners – the fact that many sponsors assume their donations go, in some way or other, directly to the child or their family even though this is not the case.[71] It also reiterates the idea that the community-centred development approach is the best method of doing development work.

> A lot of people think that their 33 or 35 dollars is going directly to the child in an envelope. We try to help people understand that, if you did that, it is probably not the best use of the money because the kid [or] the family would blow it on who knows what. And to give a family money does not do anything to change the circumstances in the world. All you are doing is driving up the inflation in the community, so it is actually not that good of an idea. So, the mechanics are that you pool that money together, and then you create a fund to help develop that entire community in an equal way. ...A lot of things people are interested to learn is that it is not just the sponsored children who are graduating, it is the whole community. So one child in the family might be sponsored, and that actually what we try to do, is one child in a family is sponsored, but then their five or six brothers and sisters are all going to benefit from the advancements that the household is making (Irving).

Funding community-level projects rather than dispensing money directly to sponsored children (or creating programs that solely benefit sponsored children) does not necessarily make sponsorship solely a fundraising tool. However, combining this approach with promotional material that emphasizes the personal connection between sponsor and child does widen the space between what child sponsorship is for sponsors in the North and what it actually supports in the South. This gap, in turn, highlights how the

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[71] Not only is this understood to be a problem by many of the interviewed staff, but it was also a frequent feature of the sponsor interviews conducted for this study.

financial and administrative components of sponsorship are only a very small part of what happens in the South.

While sponsorship programs are careful not to be expressly fraudulent in their marketing messages, and therefore never state directly that the money goes directly to the child or that the child will receive any specific benefits, their staff understand the need to focus on individual children. Beatrice, a communications specialist, explained that the "child is always a starting point and a way of simplifying the complexity and interdependence of all the projects that [our organization] is doing." One must remember, though, that "you have to be careful not to suggest that a particular child will receive any particular direct benefit as a result of having been sponsored." Beatrice ended this point with the thought that "sponsorship organizations are a victim of their own success". By this she implied that the individual emphasis of sponsorship marketing, that which makes it effective, works too well in that many of their sponsors believe sponsorship donations go directly to the child. Pascal, who works in marketing for a different organization, confirmed this dilemma when he said, "I would pose to you that over 90% of our donors suspect that the $35 a month goes directly to the child despite all our efforts to inform them through monthly email, through [newsletters], even through my appeals, that it is pooled at the community level and used to satisfy the needs of the community." Jennifer also discussed this issue and summed it very well, proclaiming

> I think that more transparency would be good, and I think that we probably would, as an industry as a whole, take a hit as far as numbers if we were obvious about that this is helping the child's community. But I think that we would be able to do better work overseas then, and just that we would have more integrity within ourselves because what we do not want is for child sponsorship to get a bad rap, right? And that is what is happening when we are telling donors one thing and doing another. I think we really just need to be up front about what we do, and part of that is maybe doing a bit more push

in educating our donors in showing them why it is better to help a child's family and a child's community.

This leaves sponsorship programs with a difficult challenge: having to educate their sponsors and potential sponsors about how their donations are used while not undermining one of the elements that make sponsorship effective. It seems that sponsorship programs try to accomplish this by simultaneously stressing the legitimate, beneficial nature of community-centred development rather than by playing down the individual component of sponsorship. In some cases, there is a recognition that this balance has not been done as well as it could be. For instance, Tamara proclaimed that her organization (or more accurately its partners) "is doing a way better job than many other NGOs. Because of the sponsorship money, we usually remain in a community for 10 or 15 years. You can do a lot of things [in that time]"; however, she also noted that "the bad thing we have not done is that we do not convey these messages [about the way donations are spent] to the public." In other instances, it is described as being a constant challenge both because of what is implied by sponsorship promotional material and because many sponsors apparently want their money to go directly to the child. As Susan commented, "when we tell [sponsors that] this money is pooled together and benefits everybody else, some sponsors say, 'no, this is my child; I want the 33 dollars to be given to him.' We say, 'no, no, no.' The money is not given to him it is kind of pooled together; the benefits are spread out. …So, it is constant educating." Paul echoed this, stating that "some people do have that expectation that they can send their money directly to their child, and they are disappointed when they find that they cannot, but… we are not going to be able to provide access to clean water and being able to invest in bore holes and that kind of thing if we are providing individual hand-outs. It is just not going to happen."

Whatever the case of sponsor expectations and whatever the actual situation is regarding the best method of development assistance, the simple fact that there is a substantial disparity between what many sponsors think happens to the money and what actually happens is indicative of the aforementioned disconnect. This lends support to the idea that most of the day-to-day practices that occupy child sponsorship programs are more related to fundraising than to "development", inasmuch as the two can be separated. What it does not mean is that sponsorship donations are poorly spent.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, a focus on long-term community-level projects that are locally planned and directed rather than on short-term, top-down, or individualistic interventions, is presently understood to be the most effective international development intervention (for example, see United Nations Development Programme, 2010). While this begs the question of what a development intervention is exactly and how useful these are in dealing with problems of global poverty and inequality, it is important to note for now that an argument to understand child sponsorship as primarily a fundraising tool is not the same as an argument to see sponsorship funding handled or spent differently. In other words, this chapter is not intended to put forward a critique aimed at necessarily changing the funding practices of sponsorship programs, especially not to make them more involved in the running of overseas projects or more in line with sponsorship advertising (that is, have funds go more directly to the child). Instead, it seeks to explore the irony embedded in a situation in which by following what they believe to be the best development practices, sponsorship programs and their staff end up distancing themselves from the very development work they purport to do. All of these points are well summed up in a statement by Jennifer.

In reality, in most organizations, the money does not go to that particular child. It goes to help the community as a whole, which we in the field or on the development side of things know is the best way of helping that child. But from the average Joe Blow donor [sic]... what they would prefer usually is for a check to be written in that child's name to that child, which we know would be the absolute worst thing that you could possibly do. But the best way of selling the child sponsorship program is by focusing on that one individual child, saying help this child rather than help this community of nameless faceless children, right? So, there is been some bad press about that, just about the way the relationship between the way child sponsorship is often marketed and the way that the program is actually run.

Sponsorship as a fundraising tool: National divisions

In addition to the international division of labour within child sponsorship, there are a number of elements within the offices of Canadian sponsorship programs that point to an understanding of sponsorship as a fundraising tool. The first of these elements relates to the organizational structures within many Canadian NGOs that offer child sponsorship. These structures reflect a division of roles and staffing that were, for the most part, not represented as unusual or problematic by the interviewed staff. Depending on the size of the organization, sponsorship programs usually consist of several people or groups of people that are differentiated by their responsibilities. There are those individuals or groups, often referred to as marketing personnel, who are responsible for the production of promotional material designed for potential sponsors such as TV spots, magazine inserts, or direct mail appeals (although this is itself sometimes subcontracted to for-profit advertising agencies). In larger sponsorship programs, these people are often separated from those who are responsible for the production of correspondence to current sponsors. They are also sometimes separated from those people who target corporate donors or major gifts. In James's organization, he explained that

we create our own marketing and [organizational] development strategy [independent of partner organizations]. Interestingly enough, it actually operates as two different business plans combined within the organization. [Interviewer: Two? You mean marketing and development?] Yup, two different business plans. Two different directors, one for each area. And those business plans reflect a three year strategic plan, but that strategic plan is entirely the Canadian operations. …The marketing team's responsibility is to go after a large number of donations. So, they are going after large volumes of donations – large quantity of donations. [Interviewer: The regular sponsorship program would fit into that?] That would be part of it, but not the only part. But just when you think of the marketing department, think large volumes of contributions. When you think of the development department, think of large value of contribution [Interviewer: So corporate donations or major gifts?] Corporate, major gifts, planned giving, exactly.

In many cases, there is another distinct person or group of people who are responsible for communications, which can mean anything from media relations to website content to "ensuring brand consistency" as Beatrice phrased it. All of these types of staff are usually separated from those divisions referred to as donor services, client services, supporter services, sponsor relations, etc. These individuals, who mainly work in in-house call centres, can themselves be divided into those who deal with the questions, requests, or data gathering of sponsors, potential sponsors, or other kinds of donors (such as those who buy from the gift catalogue). No matter the size of the organization, all of these kinds of staff are separated from, and usually independent of, those who work in programs. The work of those individuals referred to as program staff varies from organization to organization, but in general, these people do such things as represent the organization to other NGOs or government bodies and communicate with field offices or local partners (to select new projects or project areas to fund, to monitor and evaluate projects or project budgets, and quite often, to ensure the transfer of information and correspondence between sponsors and sponsored children).

On an important aside, this separation between program staff and other sponsorship

staff does not necessarily mirror the breakdown of organization expenditures found on

websites and in annual reports. These expenditures are normally divided into fundraising

expenses, administration expenses, and program expenses (i.e. services that are supposed

to help children). Almost all child sponsorship programs follow what is referred to as the

80:20 ratio; that is, about 80% of revenue is supposed to go to program expenses and no

more than about 20% should be spent on administrative and fundraising expenses.

Because of the way child sponsorship is set up and because of reticence to divulge

financial information, however, it is often difficult to confirm how much money actually

makes it to a sponsored child (or, more accurately, the project in his or her area). What

can be said is that there is no common definition of "program" expenses and no

regulatory body that checks on this statistic.[72] Brian confirmed this, saying "there is no

one policing that… and it is a nightmare to try and find out the accuracy of that." In fact,

many of those services listed as program expenditures either still occur in the home

office, such as telephone support staff for sponsors, or are used to pay for salaries, travel,

and office expenses abroad (something most people would still consider to be

administration).[73] Susan, who works in sponsor relations (and not in any development

project capacity), is candid in spelling it out:

> Can I be totally honest? Okay, 80%, no 80%, yes, we tell sponsors we spend
> 80%, but that includes actual overheads if you know what I mean, but that is
> not what the sponsor perceives, right? The way it is worded is it is not a lie,
> but it is not an outright truth. …It is the way you say [it], okay, it is true our

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[72] While charities must summarize the amount spent on fundraising, administration, worker compensation
and the like for the Canada Revenue Agency, these figures rarely match up exactly with the ones presented
in promotional material or even annual public financial statements (see Maren, 1997 for a critique of Save
the Children US's "pie chart").

[73] This issue of questionable program expenses was also brought up in the *Tribune* series in relation to
Christian Children's Fund (Jackson, 1998: 2-12).

department comes under programs, you know, so that is put under program expenditures, not under administration. So, that way it is 80:20, but that is what all organizations do …So, now do I explain that to a sponsor? I do not. I cannot explain because technically that is under program. We are not covering [up] anything even when we do our financial audits and year end statements. It comes under it, but you need to be an extremely good financial person to know exactly what those terms mean. Most people do not.

Apart from this rather unfortunate issue of transparency, the divisions within sponsorship staffing are important for a number of reasons. While it may seem natural and necessary to separate staff according to particular responsibilities, these separations tell us about how organizations conceptualize and prioritize what they do day to day. Not only does staff differentiation indicate something about how management understands the purpose of the agency, but it also commonly separates them physically into different offices, different areas, or different floors. This is important because, in many Canadian NGDO's offering sponsorship, the people who work in marketing, communications, and donors services are people who seem to come predominantly from backgrounds in marketing, communications, and the service sector, and these people far outnumber program staff, who occasionally but not always come from backgrounds in development studies. What this means is that many organizations offering sponsorship are stuffed to the brim with staff trained and aimed at raising as much money as possible from Canadian donors, and these individuals are functionally and spatially separated from those few individuals who have a good grasp of development work in the field.

James summed up the situation in his organization, noting simply that "the professional development expertise does not reside within the marketing or the development fundraising area". Explaining the situation in greater detail, Beatrice admitted that her organization struggled with this separation but, because of its size, could often overcome it. However, she also noted that

from what I know from other organizations, there is actually an over-tendency to separate it [marketing] out. You end up with people operating in silos, you know what I mean. Your youth program has this objective and this objective, and they would never talk to someone in marketing. And marketing's objective is raise this much money. The only time they would ever talk is if there is a youth event designed to raise money.

More to the point, Beatrice also talked about her personal history and how she came to manage communications at a Canadian NGDO offering sponsorship. Like many such people working in the marketing, communications, and donor services branches of these organizations, she had no formal education or experience in international development issues. Instead, she was hired because of her communications experience within the for-profit community. She said,

I do not come from a development background by any stretch of the imagination. I spent ten years working for a [business] and ended up doing a lot of communication but learning a lot about client service and customer service. So, very weird kind of split, and at the time I joined here, which was ten years ago, there was a position that was looking at both. The customer service side was useful because we were looking at communication and retention of our donors, and the communication side was valuable because what is the very biggest key to that, the single most important thing, is communication. So that is how I joined the organization. …So, I do not come from a development background at all, and when I first made the decision to come to work here, it was based on wanting to get into not-for-profit, and it was based on a fit with my skill set that could get me in there.

Beatrice's story is indicative of how people come to work for sponsorship programs. Paul, for example, came to manage marketing and donors services at a sponsorship program after working in the for-profit sector with a degree in business. Responding to the question of how he came to work there, he said, "I felt that I liked being in a professional environment, but I also wanted to be in an environment where I could make a difference." [74]

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[74] As of 2010, Plan Canada's CEO is Rosemary McCarney, a lawyer with an MBA. World Vision's long-time CEO, Dave Toycen, holds a Master of Divinity.

A business background is not limited to the marketers and communications experts at sponsorship programs. In 2009, Christian Children's Fund of Canada installed Mark Lukowski as Chief Executive Officer. Apparently, Lukowski is a good choice because of his "corporate background of innovation and process improvements at industry giants Motorola Cellular and Hewlett-Packard" (Christian Children's Fund of Canada, 2010). It is not necessary to read too much into this background, however, as the importance of fundraising to the organization is made very clear by CCFC: "Lukowski's track record of increasing revenue and reducing operating costs will contribute to a new era of growth for CCFC's child focused programs."

At first glance, this organizational division of labour does not seem to be too problematic, and one cannot fault the motive for someone working in business wanting to "make a difference".[75] After all, if you want to market something, why not hire someone who is trained in marketing? You can simply have some cross-division meetings to inform those working on the fundraising side of sponsorship (which is, once again, the only side of sponsorship that is recognizable as such) about what is happening on the ground. The Plan International (2008b) report mentioned earlier, however, highlighted this issue as a major difficulty. The researchers revealed that

> [s]ome NO [National Office] staff, particularly those involved in marketing and supporter relations, have limited exposure to programme realities and CCCD [Child-Centred Community Development] approaches, and this affects their ability to link sponsor engagement with CCCD and development education. Sponsorship and programmes in NOs are managed separately,

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[75] It should be noted, though, that wanting to make this transition is rarely a huge financial burden. Even though some organizations have policies regarding executive compensation that talk about discounted salaries for equivalent roles in business and industry (for example, see World Vision, 2010c), many sponsorship organizations pay their management in excess of CAN$100,000 a year. According to 2009 charity returns sent to Revenue Canada, Plan Canada employed seven people who earned more than CAN$120,000 a year and World Vision Canada employed at least ten such individuals.

although Plan's continued evolution means NOs are making efforts to broaden staff exposure to programmes.

Not only does the background and experience of marketing, communications, and donor services staff make it more difficult for them to produce promotional material that is educationally beneficial, but it also says something about the immediate goals of the organization and its programs. The fact that the marketing, communication, and donor services staff who make up the majority of Canadian offices are not "development experts" (and need not be development experts from the eyes of management) only makes sense from the perspective that these organizations – these independent Canadian organizations and not their partners – are principally focussed on the work of raising funds and not the work of development per se.[76] This understanding is reinforced through the type of language that seems to predominate in Canadian sponsorship offices.

Just as development studies has its own language with terms such as participatory, sustainability, and multilateral, so too does business with expressions like market share, revenue stream, and customer care. There is no easy way, however, to analyze the language use of an entire organization, and as with the often oversimplified concept of organizational culture, one must be careful not to assume any unified language practices or specific effects. That said, many of the interviewed staff repeatedly employed terms and concepts in their discussion of sponsorship that seem to be more at home in a business environment than in any kind of international development context. In

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[76] It should be noted that not all sponsorship programs in Canada are equivalent in this regard. Tamara agreed that "fundraising and communications and media are totally separate and advocacy teams are separate… we have a separate media relations person here and that person was independent I mean it is not a part of the marketing team". However, she also stated that "we have a communications team here and they do media relations work and raising public awareness and most of this work is done by program people not by marketing people". While it is important to recognize the variability within sponsorship programs, the difficulty with Tamara's statement is that a number of high-level communications staff from her organization are not, in fact, people with any specific background in development studies.

particular, this use of business or marketing language was evident in the often blurred

boundary between sponsorship as a way of supposedly linking sponsors to children and

sponsorship as a product produced by the organizations and sold to customers. In several

instances, James expressly referred to sponsorship as a "product", and Irving made

reference to donations as "investments". In discussing the future of sponsorship, Irving

also made the comment, "I know a lot of other organizations are committed to

diversifying the product offerings when it comes to international development". In an

example of the odd but frequent substitution of the term customer for donor/sponsor,

Susan expressed to need to "try to keep customers satisfied and keep them hooked into

the child sponsorship program". Pascal, however, provided some of the best exemplars of

how a particular kind of marketing rhetoric so often pervades the work of child

sponsorship in Canada. Using phrases such as "to maximize our spend" and "our spots

are stale-dated", Pascal's language exposes the way sponsorship is considered and

presented by staff outside of the promotional content itself. In explaining his daily job

apart from overseeing the production of ads, Pascal said he focuses on "how we drive a

supporter through the giving lifecycle if you will – so what we do in terms of acquisition,

how we maintain or convert them, how we direct them to other giving programs".

Referring to another sponsorship program, he also said,

> I know that they are, that they appear to be, very sophisticated in terms of
> their database marketing techniques. So, they can target their "gift for child"
> programs more easily than us. At least, that is my impression. They also have
> what appear to be more expensive packages. Where we will usually use a
> postcard or a card of some sort. They will have seeds or a ruler or an eraser or
> something to that effect. In my previous life, we referred to that as trinkets
> and trash, but if it works, which I imagine it does because they keep on doing
> it.

Use of such language that is heavily influenced by business and marketing is not necessarily unusual among large non-profits, especially when several interviewees noted the benefits of corporate experience to being hired in the fundraising sector, neither is it necessarily negative. Its prevalence, however, does suggest particular ways of viewing one's work and the work of one's organization, once again betraying an emphasis on the centrality of fundraising. It could also be expected to influence the day-to-day activities and interactions of staff.

Program staff trained or experienced in international development and spending more time in communication with field partners do not always seem to see eye to eye with the other staff in sponsorship programs. Gabrielle, a former program staff member at a large Canadian child sponsorship program, talked about how there are not only differences internationally between organizations that raise money and those that spend, but these differences also exist "in the same office, for example, there was always a constant, I would say heated, discussion between the group that raised money and the group that spends money." In particular, she commented that these discussions revolved around the portrayal of children in ads, where marketers "would always say sound bite and in this kind of sound bite you cannot give them the history of what is happening." This disagreement over the amount, tone, and relevance of included information is likely related to more than simply different backgrounds. Because the different staff groupings appear to have different written and unwritten objectives to their daily work, there is both a natural cooperation as well as a natural tension between these staff members.

The cooperation comes from what seems to be the logical differentiation of labour involved in the daily activities of sponsorship. Pascal explained one aspect of this

cooperation when he said, "what [my communications colleague] does is he will go in and soften the ground for me, and then I go in and ask for money". Jacqueline highlighted her "programmatic" role of keeping her marketing and communication colleagues informed about the status of projects and sponsored children. The tension seems to come from the fact that marketing and communications staff, who are in the majority, are primarily tasked with the job of maintaining and increasing revenues while a few program staff are there to ensure an effective transitioning of funds to partners. Moreover, despite there being a concern from management and some program staff about the portrayal of children in promotional material – a concern augmented by media criticism – marketers are still expected to bring in the funds necessary to meet the organization's overseas commitments. Irving commented on the result of these competing dilemmas: "generally I would say the bottom line wins. We start out with these grand ideas wanting to change the whole conversation [about sponsorship], and as we get down to the process, we realize this is not working we got to pull it off the air." Talking about the need to compete with other sponsorship programs to bring in the donations, he described the personal dilemma involved, remarking that "at the end of the day it comes down to our job performance". Pascal also mentioned the personal aspect of having one's job centre on fundraising, saying "it is always stressful the first two weeks after an appeal is dropped, where the response is how come we are not raising the money, what is going on". Talking about the high marketing costs involved in sponsorship, he went on to complain: "I can spend two dollars, but I have to raise ten, okay. And if I do not, then within a year or two I am looking for a new job." Tamara, a program manager, highlighted this issue by referring to the oft-discussed need by program staff to

> bring more reality into what they [sponsored children] are getting out of it [sponsorship], and they [marketing people] are scared. We have had ten [or] twelve meetings, and you can see the marketing just sitting on their edge. And I understand because we are all dependent on their money. If today they did not bring [enough funds], the field offices are waiting there, so you see it is a very nerve-wracking thing.

Tamara went on to say that "the marketing fear is that if they put too much global education into their messaging, their donor will not fund. And maybe they are right, maybe not. Who is going to test?" Through these comments, Tamara brings together the issues of the functional division of staff, and what are often seen as the negative marketing practices of sponsorship – too much desolation and not enough education.

Irving also referred to the use of controversial imagery, admitting that

> it is a perpetual problem we have not solved it in sixty years. …[Audiences] say that the images they have seen on TV for the last 45 years have not changed at all – it is flies-in-the-eyes-and-bloated-bellies. Well, the problem for us is, especially with our development people, we know that is not the reality. We know we are making a difference. We know people want to see the difference, but when you put on those sorts of more positive, more "here is the change" sort of stories, they do not drive results. So, to meet your bottom line, you have got to perpetuate your own problem. And by perpetuating your own problem, you are excluding people who might otherwise buy from you. So, it is a big circle, and we are not sure the way out.

This need to raise money as a priority, even in the face of using disagreeable or damaging content, draws attention to the unquestioned link between what are seen to be effective marketing strategies and those that generate the highest revenue. This formulation of the objective of sponsorship marketing, which is not simply an issue of difference in staff job descriptions but relates to the purpose of the entire organization, tells us yet again something about how the problem of underdevelopment is constructed in relation to child sponsorship.

Sponsorship as a fundraising tool: The value of misrecognition

Reviewing the argument up until now, the practice of sponsorship appears to revolve, at international and organizational levels, around the effective raising of funds even as it is commonly conceived of by organizations and their staff to be a realistic solution to the problem of underdevelopment. This implies that not only are Canadian sponsorship programs necessarily focussed on raising money, but also that from their perspective, this money is the solution, or funds the solution, to the problem of global poverty. These two factors go together to create the perceived situation in which the more funds raised the more "development" is done. While this relationship appears to be natural, what it accomplishes is to transfer the ethical value accorded to on-the-ground project work to the raising of money for such work. In other words, it fosters a state of affairs in which the work of international development in the South, i.e. helping the world's poor to "progress", is completely aligned with the work of organizational development in the North, i.e. increasing the size, the scope, and most importantly, the revenue of an organization. This circumstance not only has a substantial ends-justify-the-means impact on the content of sponsorship promotional material, but it also generates legitimacy for the entire practice of child sponsorship not because of what it actually is – a fundraising tool – but what it is misunderstood to be – a development method. As with Derrida's (1992) gift or Bourdieu's (1986) symbolic capital, the ethical value of child sponsorship comes disproportionately from its misrecognition as something other than an effective way to raise money. This misrecognition is facilitated by a discourse of development that consistently distances the perceived causes of global poverty and inequality while simultaneously individualizing the supposed solution. The real difficulty

with child sponsorship becomes apparent, however, inasmuch as the so-called problem of underdevelopment – the problem of global poverty and inequality – cannot in fact be addressed through straightforward injections of money or the projects these support. In this case, the funding that sponsorship provides is not the solution it is thought to be, and sponsorship as a practice, then, ends up having far greater ethical value than practical value. These arguments are discussed below.

Child sponsorship is a fundraising technique, and the organizations that offer it are focused on raising funds above all else. This does not mean that these organizations only fundraise; they are simply designed and staffed primarily for this purpose. This is not necessarily a recrimination; it is an explanation of the role that sponsorship plays in the so-called development industry. When she first started working for a sponsorship program, Tamara said that she had little respect for sponsorship. "How can they talk about a child as a product?" she wondered. However, as time went on and she saw how effective sponsorship was and how other agencies were continually threatened by lack of funding, she said that she changed her mind about sponsorship. The situation was straightforward, she said, "we need money… somewhere somebody needs the money". Despite the telling incongruence between pronouns, this statement does reiterate the idea that so far as development projects are essential to the short and long-term welfare of poor people in the South, funding these projects is equally important. As Brian plainly noted, "money drives development," but we need to keep in mind that "money is not the important thing everybody knows it takes money to do anything. … What is going to help them out of poverty, what is going to make them a fulfilled adult, is not the money but what that money provides for them." This statement by Brian highlights the two issues at

stake here: one, the conceptual linkage yet practical separation between funds that are raised and solutions enacted, and two, the (developmental) rationality within which these solutions (and therefore the funds that support them) are perceived to be both legitimate and valuable.

There is a recurring misrecognition, or perhaps what could be called a slippage, in the discourse around child sponsorship that pervades not only promotional material but also staff discussions of sponsorship. Relating to the disconnect that has been mentioned numerous times, this slippage seems to be a particular feature of sponsorship related to the conceptual overlap between raising money in the North and the development that it is supposed to produce in the South. In order to understand this slippage, it is useful to look back to the descriptions of sponsorship covered near the beginning of this chapter. Once again, what was noteworthy about these descriptions was the way in which they highlighted the supposed developmental benefits of sponsorship while being seamlessly intertwined with understandings of sponsorship as a fundraising tool. A few examples will serve to highlight this point.

Jacqueline told a story about a poor child she met while visiting a project abroad. After seeing the child, she said that she knew she wanted to sponsor him, but she followed this up with admitting to herself, "'you are silly' because I understand very clearly how it works, but you still feel that emotionally, 'I am going to sponsor [him]'". Why did she think she was silly? Because the little boy in question was already in the project area and would not get anything extra out of her sponsorship. Despite knowing that sponsorship is "just the way it is [the organization] marketed so that people feel that commitment to continue," she wanted to sponsor the boy anyway. This does not appear to

make sense. After all, she knew that she could "help" the boy in the same manner if she were to just give the money to her organization (possibly more so if the boy were sponsored by someone else as well). So, was this desire to sponsor solely related to an emotional reaction, or was there something else involved? It is possible that her reaction was fuelled in part by the illusion of direct connection that makes sponsorship such an effective tool in the first place.

Jennifer's very clear but ultimately inconsistent discussion of sponsorship demonstrates this possibility. Jennifer proclaimed that sponsoring a child

> is the best way of breaking that cycle of chronic poverty because they are the ones who are going to be growing up and running the countries or running the communities so if they have the proper education and nutrition and training and support, family support, community support, then that in itself will break that cycle whereas if they just grow up as their parents grew up you know chances are they will end up in the same kind of rut as their parents are in.

Shortly after this statement and in the context of a discussion around the community-level nature of the projects funded by sponsorship, she noted that we "know children do not exist in isolation, right? They exist as part of a family and as part of a community. So, in order to best help them, we have got to help the community and the family to raise their own children". Although not directly contradictory, Jennifer's comments exemplify the incoherence that often exists around the structure of sponsorship, the benefits for sponsored children, and the perceived developmental needs of the child or community. This confusion often leads to the conceptual equation between sponsoring a child in the North and development in the South.[77] Jennifer even summed it up at the end of the interview, effectively linking acquiring donors with "doing development". She said, "child sponsorship is really the way to get donors in the door, and it is a good way. I

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[77] This confusion also exists between helping a child "develop" through sponsorship and that child's normal biological development. This is discussed in the Chapter Four.

mean because, like I said, it is not like it is just a marketing tool. It is not at all. It is really

what we believe is the most effective way of doing development."

This slippage in the expression of child sponsorship was shared by Gina, who

declared that "the reality is that sponsorship is one tool to bring money in to achieve our

mission" and that the sponsored "child is a symbol of potential in the growth that a

community can experience when there is targeted support offered". As she later admitted,

however, "I do not know enough about what actually goes on in each community where

there is sponsored children, but I can pretty much assume that… the children that are

sponsored are in fact getting greater benefits and having more opportunities for improved

health." This assumption of "benefits" despite a lack of direct experience regarding

specific, or even general, project goals and accomplishments was a common feature of

staff discussions of sponsorship. Placed alongside a disclosure of sponsorship as "one

tool" and the sponsored child as a "symbol" rather than a target of aid, the recognition of

child sponsorship as directly equating to improvements in the child's life is a

simultaneous misrecognition of how sponsorship works. Even though sponsorship is

simply a financial relationship between sponsor and the Canadian organization (and not

between sponsor and child or even sponsor and project) and there can be no guarantee to

sponsors about the particular progress of any specific child, there is a tendency to

"assume" that the means (funding) are equivalent to an unspecified or generic end

(development). In other words, because of the structures and practices of the child

sponsorship model, it seems that the goal of fundraising is (mis)recognized by

organizations and their staff as essentially the same as that of development (reduction of

poverty, improved life, etc.). Once again, this (mis)recognition does not mean that

sponsorship monies are poorly spent; it simply means that the promise of sponsorship is often unrelated to, and therefore potentially undone by, the very practice of sponsorship itself.

If this situation is made possible through the disconnect between promotional messages and funding practices, it is made understandable (to those involved) through the circulation of a particular discourse of development. Despite the wide variety of staff perceptions around the causes of poverty and inequality in the South and the possibilities of dealing with these issues, a few things seem to be held in common. The first significant point relates to the variety of responses itself. While staff members were fairly uniform in describing the imagined benefits of sponsorship to the child and community, there was a diversity of responses around the question of why there are so many poor people and countries in the South. Apart from the kind of projects their organizations funded, there was also little agreement among the participants on what should or could be done to rectify this situation. This was the case even among staff at the same organization, which leads to the suspicion that not only is there a separation among staff as previously noted, but also that there is little in the way of a unified philosophy around development at these organizations. This difficulty echoes a statement made by Shelby Miller, a child development expert and someone who produced a report for Save the Children US. She notes that Save did not have "a commonly accepted and understood theoretical perspective" (as cited in Maren, 1997: 143). This point is in line with the argument that sponsorship programs and the NGDOs that host them are primarily fundraising organizations, and it highlights the amorphous nature of the development discourse that circulates within these institutions.

The discourse of development revisited

As noted earlier, there was a certain vagueness or generality surrounding staff discussions of what goes on in project communities in the South. Holding tight to key terms such as "education", "opportunity", or "capacity-building", this generality was able to address specific imagined deficiencies, or to encompass specific ideas of "progress", without actually specifying anything at all. At first glance, this could be mistaken for wilful ignorance, but that does not seem to mesh with the complexity of many of the participants' responses. On the other hand, this generality could easily be seen as a feature of the discourse of development itself. After all, Sachs (2000) explains that development means "everything and nothing"; as a concept, it has ceased to signify anything in particular except "good intentions" (9). This is despite the fact that it can be understood as nothing less than "a secular salvation story", which for fifty years "has been much more than just a socio-economic endeavour; it has been a perception which models reality, a myth which comforts societies, and a fantasy which unleashes passions" (7, 13). Esteva (1992) echoes this point by Sachs, noting that "there is nothing in modern mentality comparable to it as a force guiding thought and behaviour. At the same time, very few words are as feeble, as fragile and as incapable of giving substance and meaning to thought and behaviour as this one" (8). If this is the case, then the ambiguity about the precise developmental benefits of sponsorship is not merely related to organizational structure or personal background; instead, it is built into the way development is imagined and represented. From this perspective, expressing the precise use of funds

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becomes immaterial as what actually occurs on the ground is swept away in a cloud of "good intentions".

This capacity of the concept of development to mean "everything and nothing" is facilitated by another feature of its discourse, one that was repeatedly evident in the staff interviews. This feature deals with the separation of the problems of underdevelopment and, therefore, the work of development from the lives of people in the North. This separation takes the form of understanding the causes of poverty of people in the South to be uniquely associated with some aspect of their lives, be it violence, corruption, "improper" economic or agricultural practices, cultural viewpoints, etc. Similarly, the mechanism to deal with these problems is also to be found in the South, be it improving education or health levels, creating local economic opportunities, building social capital, etc. In discussing these issues, Jennifer explained that "we also believe that there are lots of wrong ideas [in the South]. …Because of their false ideas, that is what causes the poverty in their community." She went on to say, "we always go in to empower them to make the change. …Once you can change the way that they think about themselves and their world, then it is a completely different thing." This perspective was mirrored by Dorothy, who stated that "it is not a matter of not enough resources or not enough food per se. It is their mindset, and their mindset is that we have always been poor, we always will be, how are we ever going to get out of this, and then they wait for the rest of the world to come in and hand out stuff to them." The solution, then, lies in

> educating them. It is not about 'how to fish' or that they need to fish. It is 'why do you need to fish'. Figure it out; 'why do you think you need to do this' because we can show you how, but then we will leave and you will forget. So, you need to actually teach them, and they have to get it. They have to embrace it, and they have to get it. Otherwise, there is no transformation. It does not happen.

From a different perspective, Brian argued that the "root cause of poverty is due to lack

of opportunity" and added that "most poor people are born with an entrepreneurial spirit."

His idea for a solution, however, sounded very similar to those of Jennifer and Dorothy.

He said,

> Poverty is a cycle. …That cycle breeds fatalism. It breeds a lack of self-
> esteem, of self-respect. So, even though you might have within you an
> entrepreneurial spirit, you have lost the drive because you see no way out.
> And so, someone comes along in some mechanism, i.e. [child] sponsorship or
> the like, and takes you out of that cycle and shows you the opportunity to
> change your environment. Not changing it for you, but just introduces you to
> a different thinking. You are not lazy, you have just lost the drive.

This separation does not necessarily revolve around ideas of ignorance. Margaret said

that it was not her organization's place "to be the great white gods", and that the local

partners knew what was best for them. This may well be true, but it does not

acknowledge any *connection* between perceived (under)development in the South and

what goes on in the North. This lack of acknowledgment may not be extraordinary, but it

is central to the way development is discussed and the way sponsorship is structured. It is

also central to the reason why Canadian sponsorship programs, which are basically

fundraising machines, can understand (and represent) themselves as being directly

responsible for so much good in the world.

The separation, or what might be more descriptively referred to as the "Othering"

of poverty, that is commonly part of the discourse of development not only

compartmentalizes so-called poverty reduction strategies so that they appear "naturally"

confined to the South but also establishes the seemingly legitimate role of people in the

North. Because the causes and direct solutions to problems of global poverty are

disconnected from the North, the role of Northerners is logically limited to charitable

donations that are typically assumed to be generous for this very reason.[78] When

combined with the slippage in expressions of sponsorship noted above, this limitation

reinforces the idea that the funding provided by sponsorship is the best means of aiding in

the development of Southern peoples. This notion that economic growth facilitated

through foreign aid is the key to development is as old as the concept of international

development itself (Escobar, 1995). Even when developmental priorities broadened to

include the essential improvement of social contexts, the idea that this was something

accomplished in the South through financial support from the North remained pervasive.

Gabrielle, however, spelled out one problem with this line of thought. She said, "some

people think that they can make all the change with this money, and I think it is very

misleading… development is not that easy… We have to live in a different way if we

want to make change in the world."

The idea that the historical roots and current manifestations of global poverty are

inextricably linked to exploitative practices, and rationalizations of these practices, is not

new to the literature on poverty and development (for diverse examples, see Escobar

1995; Frank 1996; Sachs 1992; Wallerstein, 2004). However, it is the sustained exclusion

of these practices from the mainstream discourse on development that ensures

fundraising is perceived as an appropriate and *sufficient* Northern response to global

poverty. For example, the common elision of colonial histories – including such things as

resource extraction or even slavery for that matter – from many contemporary

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[78] After all, it is the quality of not being required which makes something charitable; what is obligatory is
not usually seen as generous. Consequently, for charitable donations to be charitable there is often assumed
to be no connection between, for example, one person's poverty and another's wealth. If a person's poverty
is understood to be a result of exploitation, then assisting them should be seen as a matter of justice and not
charity. See Chapter Two for discussion of this point.

explanations of global poverty helps make possible a view of the world in which the difficulties faced by ex-colonies can be attributed solely to internal factors.

Even when a connection between Southern poverty and Northern political and economic arrangements is acknowledged, then, this connection can be trumped by the way sponsorship is organized. Neither Pascal nor Irving come from backgrounds in development work, yet both explained poverty as a systemic problem related to the historical actions of "the West" and its present relationship to poorer regions. Irving noted that "the reason poverty still exists is because the West is not willing to sacrifice its position in the world – our society is built on the backs of these countries. …I think that is the thing no one will articulate no one wants to acknowledge." Discussing such things as unfair trade relations, Pascal echoed this statement, saying that "the rich West has allowed a number of countries to remain poor." However, neither he nor Irving felt they could express these thoughts in their professional capacity as marketing and communications staff. Pascal explained, "at this time, I have not seen any organization that is courageous enough to go out with that message for any length of time." Irving simply stated that there was no budget for material that presented these kinds of messages. After all, he said, "advocacy is not what our core business is."

The issue of advocacy with Canadian NGDO's in general and sponsorship programs in particular is illuminating. While some NGDO's offering sponsorship engage in advocacy work in Canada – which often takes the form of lobbying the federal government on various elements of multilateral agreements, fairer trade policies, amount and distribution of official development assistance, and so on – it is a very small proportion of what they do. As noted, this situation is due in part to the association of

advocacy work with politics and, therefore, something to be avoided in order to reach the widest donor base as possible and to maintain charitable status in Canada. This link between charity and political neutrality is another discursive feature that influences that formation and function of sponsorship programs. Many staff indicated that advocacy work has been an increasing priority at their organizations even though it still remains a very small part of their objective. As Pascal stated, "the reality is that we are all playing with 80:20 fundraising [ratio]; really... of that 20% how much of that is the organization going to dedicate to advocacy?" What is interesting about this statement is not simply the small amount thought to be available for advocacy if the will were there but also the fact that advocacy was assumed to fall under the 20% commonly reserved for administration and fundraising.

The exclusion of advocacy from the "business" model of sponsorship (often represented as a desire toward political neutrality) goes hand in hand with the idea that something meaningful in terms of poverty reduction can be accomplished without it. As global poverty and its contexts are distanced from sponsorship programs and their supporters, fundraising comes to be seen as more closely linked to the "real" work of development than things such as advocacy that occur in the North. Fundraising is thus granted a greater priority and legitimacy in Northern NGDOs. In this way, the peculiarities of the discourse around sponsorship and development work together to create a situation in which the (imagined) work of international development coincides with the (practical) work of organizational development.

The developmentality of child sponsorship programs

In physics, the concept of inertia is slightly different than its colloquial usage. Instead of simply referring to inaction or sluggishness, inertia refers to the tendency of an object to continue moving along its trajectory, resisting changes in direction and velocity. It is not unusual for large organizations, especially non-profit ones, to develop this form of inertia. Gabrielle expressed it clearly, saying "I think when organizations start to get bigger and bigger at some point they kind of definitely take a leave of why they began in the first place and a certain amount of wanting to exist for their own sake happens." Recognition of the fact that some organizations seem to "exist for their own sake" is not uncommon, but the interaction between development discourse(s) and the practice of child sponsorship adds a new dimension to this. What is a relatively understandable drive to maintain the security of one's position by assuring the continuing need for one's work takes on a different tenor when what is seen as one's ultimate objective (i.e. international development) is relatively poorly defined and the supposed means of securing this objective (i.e. development projects) is in the hands of other people. Combine this with a recurring misrecognition of child sponsorship as the direct means of securing this (interminable) objective, and raising money through sponsorship becomes tantamount to the "real" work of development in the South. Through these processes, the development of Southern peoples and their communities becomes ethically synonymous with the development of the sponsorship program itself.

This process results in a situation in which the Canadian organizations offering sponsorship are both the funnel through which funds are seen to be effectively reaching their goal (to "foster" development in the South) and the goal itself as the organization

partakes in the grand work of development. Jacqueline clarified the role of her organization, saying that "as an organization, we are simply providing that link giving the donors the opportunity to say, 'yeah, I see that need, and I want to do something to support that.' And we are saying, 'well, support us, and we will make sure your funds are used to do that.'" Susan, on the other hand, discussed her organization's role in a slightly different manner. Commenting on how to attract donors, she noted, "the secret is showing how we have progressed – what we have achieved – and saying this is what you can help us achieve." What these disparate statements highlight is the flexible understanding of sponsorship programs made possible by the shifting (re)presentations of sponsorship and development.

This ethical alignment of international development and organizational development also creates a situation in which the limitless raising of funds (and, consequently, organization growth) is rationalized, the competition that exists between sponsorship programs is validated, and more importantly, almost any technique that brings in revenue is considered justifiable. Irving proclaimed the first point clearly, saying "everyone wants to grow." He did qualify this statement, however, with an aside about needing to branch out past sponsorship. "We`re not going to jump to double digit growth rates in sponsorship," he commented, "because risk management and growth are so important to charities in this sector, we do need to look to diversifying our revenue sources."[79] A perfect example of the type of language often used to discuss sponsorship

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[79] A few different staff talked about the need to branch out into other techniques apart from sponsorship although all acknowledged that it was still one of their primary sources of funding. One of the main alternative, or perhaps it is more appropriate to say complimentary, forms of fundraising is the gift catalogue through which an individual in the North can "purchase" school supplies, vaccinations, farm animals, etc. and have them "delivered" to a community in the South. Alternatives to child sponsorship are discussed in Chapter Six, but for now, it is sufficient to imagine the logistical, not to mention ethical,

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programs, this statement hints at the overarching need not to maintain sponsorship because it is the best strategy for the children involved but to use sponsorship as one tool among many in the pursuit of more funding (both for the organization's overseas commitments and for the maintenance of the organization itself). On the whole, however, child sponsorship is acknowledged as "a win-win situation for both the children in the field and also *for us as an organization*" (Jennifer, emphasis added). Irving went on to talk about competition between programs.

> There is this chunk of the world that is interested in child sponsorship, and we are just fighting over this one little part. And how do I make [our organization] seem more appealing than [that organization]. And when [another organization] does something, we have got the steal the idea and be second in the market with it. Or we do something and [that organization] has to follow us in. So, we spend a lot of time and energy worrying too much about each other, which is a little bit ridiculous. …At the end of the day, we are all doing the same thing, so why are we competing with each other.

While some participants asserted that as long as people gave to the cause it did not matter to whom the money went, there was still a widespread understanding of competition between sponsorship programs. The recognition of similarity between the "products" offered often lead to a situation wherein programs had to differentiate themselves in the form and intensity of their appeals. James reiterated this point (also found in Irving's statement above); "if I am a Canadian consumer, there is a huge challenge for me trying to figure out what is the difference between all you guys. You look, feel, sound exactly the same, but why should I work with you versus that organization over there. And when they all look the same, then there is no decision point. It is whoever makes the loudest noise." This implies that the content of the promotional material is not only determined by the situation in the communities where sponsored children live and the need to create

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nightmare that would ensue from having any sort of direct correspondence between the purchases of such things by Northerners and their distribution in the South.

a product that grabs donors' attention, but it is also influenced by the desire to stand out from competitors and thereby maintain and grow the organization.

Discussing his organization's position on advertising, Paul expressed the need to be "respectful, truthful, and effective." Being respectful and truthful was stated as very important objectives; he insisted, "we are not using the poor as pawns to support our fundraising." However, he did stress that "we have to be effective." If there were any doubt about what he meant, he clarified that it was necessary to get an "appropriate response" from donors (read donation). Jacqueline made a similar point to Paul, saying "people are going to use the strategies that gain the most response." This understanding of what it means to be effective helps explain a great deal about the promotional material of sponsorship programs. In this context, efficacy is solely perceived in terms of how much money the material secures. In other words, the value of communications between organizations and donors is predominantly perceived in terms of their fundraising ability, which largely sidelines (or simply disregards) other aspects of these communications such as the "educational" component. It is not the truthfulness or respectfulness of sponsorship advertising that is brought into question here (although this issue is by no means straightforward); instead, it is the assumption that the indisputable role of these communications should naturally be raising as much money as possible. Even the very heart of child sponsorship, the emphasis on children, can be seen from this perspective to be as much an element of the priority of fundraising as it is the goal of intervention. After all, children are "the easiest way to hook a donor" (Pascal), "children sell; communities do not sell" (Brian), and "children appeal to donors; who does not want to help a child" (Margaret).

Producing promotional material that attracts donors is a top priority for many

NGOs that have set themselves with the task of funding development projects overseas.

However, when increasing revenue becomes ethically equivalent to the lofty yet vague

goal of international development, this priority becomes so dominant that the financial

draw of the material overshadows most other considerations. Despite Paul's initial

comment on not using "the poor as pawns to support our fundraising", then, sponsorship

seems to do exactly that. Arguments to this effect are presented in Chapter Four, but for

now, it should be noted that this understanding is not uncommon in the critical literature

on development, particularly with reference to what has increasingly been referred to as

"the pornography of poverty" (Plewes and Stewart, 2007).[80]

Conclusion: Powerless to "change the conversation"…

The predominant concern for raising money produces a situation in which

sponsorship promotional material is overwhelmingly aimed at attracting and maintaining

donors rather than challenging their assumptions to any significant degree. Even though

many staff expressed the need to be transparent and honest in their communications, it

was also recognized that their material must be sanitized in such a way that donors are

encouraged or cajoled but not confronted or offended. Margaret mentioned being "very

conscious of what our donors want to hear" although she also noted that this should not

"override our basic mission and our need to tell the truth and be transparent." Jacqueline

admitted that her organization "cannot use half the pictures because they are not

appropriate"; they are "too sad" even though "it is the reality". She went on to explain

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[80] The term "pornography of poverty" is generally taken to describe the use of extreme or sensational imagery to invoke compassionate (or voyeuristic) urges, but it also implies the (potential) exploitation of vulnerable individuals.

one of the most important elements involved in the creation of material such as annual

reports and success stories from the field.

> I always make a point to express thankfulness and gratitude, and I always make a point of speaking to them directly. So, I would not just talk about the child sponsorship program is providing [something]. I would say, 'through your generous support, we are [doing x, y, or z].' Again, including them in so that they feel that connection. So, it is not just what we're doing as an organization. It is what they are doing with [or] through us so that they are supporting this and they are a part of this.

This need to constantly reaffirm the generosity of sponsors highlights the character of

much sponsorship material. This may include the "classic" image of a child with flies-in-

the-eyes, but it will certainly include a statement about the role of the (potential) sponsor

as a wonderfully kind-hearted and as making an enormous difference in the world.[81] It

also illustrates, once again, the way programs feel compelled to interact with their donors

given the discursive and organizational separation found within development and

sponsorship respectively. These two features, the need to focus on the sponsor's largess

and its impact and the "Othering" of poverty found in the discourse of development,

often go hand in hand. In reviewing his organization's messaging strategy, Brian

remarked,

> we try very hard not to create a sense that you cannot enjoy your lifestyle in Canada. You have to somehow not be comfortable because all these kids are dying. I want to come along and say to you, 'You know what, enjoy your Tim Horton's coffee. In fact, you do not have to give it up. You do not have to give a coffee a day to help.' …We want to say, 'You know what, enjoy life. Enjoy whatever you have earned, but in that, just share a little bit with the poor. Do not give it all away. You do not even have to give until it hurts, but just share a little bit,' If everybody just shared a little bit, man, what an impact that would have on the world.

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[81] Apparently, the depressing images of starving children that have been historically associated with child sponsorship are not only being phased out at a broad level, but they are also phased out over the "life" of a sponsorship. Irving explained how there is a "message track" in which the amount of positive images are increased over time as the sponsorship 'progresses'; "they [the positive images] grow as they [the sponsors] grow with their child."

Focusing on the role of sponsors within promotional material does not necessarily make this material positive and upbeat. As will be discussed in the next chapter, there is still a great deal of suffering (re)presented in sponsorship advertising. This does not mean that sponsorship programs and their staff are callous or unconcerned regarding the portrayal of Southern children. What it does indicate, however, is that staff feel largely powerless to "change the conversation" as one participant repeatedly phrased it. Pascal expressed this feeling a number of times and always came back to the argument that he was compelled to use this imagery because it was effective in recruiting sponsors.[82] He said,

> The whole flies-in-the-eyes-and-swollen-bellies type thing. …From a fundraising perspective, I would say if the general public has such a problem with those advertisements, they should stop responding to them. …If I could come up with something different that did not exploit that child, I would, and I am trying. And what kills me is we can go out with a positive message – and I have in acquisition and direct mail, I have on a number of occasions cause I am committed to testing, where we will tell the story of a community that faced x number of challenges, and because of Canadians, this community has completely changed. …Hey, why do not you join a winner? No, [they] do not want to hear it, and it drives me bonkers.

In the face of the perceived need to acquire and retain sponsors, to increase revenues, almost no type of messaging is off-limits because it is not the content that is important to organizations, it is the "appropriate response" (in Paul's words). In other words, only one type of promotional material is deemed "effective" and therefore useful – the kind that brings in donations. This viewpoint may be reproduced within NGOs that offer sponsorship but the impetus for this perspective cannot be confined to them. Instead, it is linked to a broader imagining of how global poverty and inequality is manifested and what can and should be done about it. Rather than looking for explanation

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[82] It was not clear whether this compulsion was felt as a personal aspect of his work in marketing or as a general necessity for his organization to grow and be competitive. It was likely related to both these issues.

and resolution solely within the organizational contexts of sponsorship programs, then, it is necessary to examine how the problem of (under)development is constructed, how Northern subjects respond to this construction, and how ethical action is situated within this response.

Chapter Four: Consuming the Child Imaginary

This chapter presents an analysis of the promotional material of sponsorship programs. The focus of the analysis is not on the accuracy of sponsorship advertising or the effects of stereotyping. Instead, the central argument revolves around the role that the (black) child plays in these ads in relation to how (potential) sponsors see themselves. While this argument can be read independently, it is primarily intended to serve as a link between Chapters Three and Five. Once again, we turn to the *Chicago Tribune* to start us off.

Sally Struthers is famous. Even in Canada, where her role as Gloria on the 1970s American sitcom *All in the Family* may be less well-known, she is still widely recognized as the celebrity face of child sponsorship. First appearing in American Christian Children's Fund (CCF) advertisements in 1976, she is often credited with revolutionizing the promotion of sponsorship. According to the *Chicago Tribune* Special Report on child sponsorship, internal CCF studies have shown her to be "responsible for attracting more than 90 percent of its new sponsors" largely due to her ability to connect with women, who are considered to drive the sponsorship decision (Zielinski and Jackson, 1998: 2-7). Struthers is not the only celebrity to be involved in marketing sponsorship; others such as Alex Trebek and Jan Arden are seen regularly on televised ads for Plan Canada and World Vision Canada respectively. However, Struthers "is the undisputed queen of the genre, and her two-decade career as a spokeswoman mirrors the evolution of a fundraising strategy that markets altruism and guilt with the slickness of ad campaigns for car shampoo or exercise videos" (Zielinski and Jackson: 2-7).

Sponsorship advertisements have not always been universally associated with images of suffering children. Many early ads simply contained pictures of children to be sponsored or pleas from celebrities. After Struthers' introduction to the scene, though, the melodrama of sponsorship appeals increased exponentially. Whether related to the news fervour around the Ethiopian famine or the decrease in cable broadcasting rates, "hard sell" televised commercials became popular in the 1980s and became associated with Struthers' image almost as much as those of malnourished children. In one of her now iconic ads, she appears in front of a television showing images of children in horrible conditions. She is holding a remote and addresses the camera, saying "at times I have wanted to turn it off too." She goes on to declare that, through sponsorship, "I promise you can make these haunting pictures go away" (Zielinski and Jackson, 1998: 2-7). So it was that the style of appeal unofficially known as the "flies-in-the-eyes-and-bloated-bellies" came to prominence.[83] While the prevalence of this representational form has declined in popularity over the years, often to be replaced by a more positive but still problematic idea of hope, it is still easy to find examples of it today. Apparently, the "effectiveness" of this type of advertising is not in dispute, only its appropriateness and truthfulness. The *Tribune* report relies on a California State University professor to explain this point with an oft-used though under-studied idea: "'you loosen wallets with guilt'" (Zielinski and Jackson, 1998: 2-7).

Apart from highlighting the emotion-laden and guilt-inducing character of Struthers' work for CCF, the *Tribune* report does not dedicate much space to discussing the content of sponsorship promotional material. In the only article devoted exclusively to the subject,

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[83] This term has largely been replaced with other, more general terms, such as "the pornography of poverty" (Plewes and Stewart, 2007).

the reporters detail the cost of Struthers' participation, which is deemed to be high despite her technically working for free,[84] and the self-serving motivations behind other celebrity involvement with child sponsorship (Zielinski and Jackson, 1998: 2-7). Apart from these critiques, the article uses examples of Struthers' appeals, first for CCF and later for Save the Children US, to address some of the issues brought up in other parts of the report. These issues include the expense of sponsorship advertising, especially the television spots; the exploitative or undignified nature of how Southern peoples are portrayed; the use of images of children who are not receiving, and will never receive, any benefits from the sponsorship program; and the inaccuracy of representations of the lives of sponsored children and the benefits of sponsorship for these children.

According to *Tribune* staff reporters Zielinski and Jackson (1998), "though disease and deprivation are realities in developing nations, child sponsorship commercials are frequently laced with wildly inflated claims about conditions facing children in these countries" (2-7). They also note that "[o]ften, the wrenching images of starving children… are plucked from file footage taken years earlier" (2-7). The use of such extreme or borrowed imagery in sponsorship promotional material is deemed justifiable by many organizations, some of which have even acknowledged "that many of the children in ads do not directly benefit from their programs" (2-7). These organizations argue that the advertising content is "representative" of (some) situations in the global South even though it may not reflect the specific situation of one's sponsored child; moreover, they commonly perceive it as "a means to a worthy end". Expanding on this point (and reinforcing those brought up in the last chapter), "SCF's marketing director

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[84] According to the *Tribune*, there were excessive costs associated with the insurance, with the fees of the public relations firm that represented Struthers, and with the first-class airfare required for her and some of her retinue (Zielinski and Jackson, 1998: 2-7).

Brian Anderson said he had no qualms about showing dead children – even youngsters who may never have been sponsored by his group – if it proved effective in raising funds. 'The public really decides what will be run and what won't be run through their response to the advertisements,' Anderson explained" (2-7).

The *Tribune's* depiction of the problems of sponsorship advertising, and the seemingly sluggish or intractable responses of sponsorship programs, once again emphasizes organizational misconduct by placing issues of accuracy, transparency, and discretion at the centre of the discussion. Similar to other problems with child sponsorship, the *Tribune* critique suggests that the difficulties surrounding sponsorship advertising can be ameliorated through a concerted effort on the part of sponsorship programs to improve their methods and their ethics. Within this discussion, there is little concern with the processes that make these appeals so successful although perhaps it is more accurate to say that what concern there is regarding the effectiveness of sponsorship advertising is too easily laid at the feet of several assumptions regarding the immediate emotional reactions of donors, such as the influence of compassion or guilt. Beyond a cursory explanation of stereotyping poor Southerners as passive and helpless, there is equally little discussion of why these portrayals of needy children might be problematic. While not to be dismissed, there is a need to move beyond the well-documented but time-worn criticisms brought up in the *Tribune* report. These criticisms leave us with no means of understanding the problems that are still present after the apparent transition to a more nuanced and more positive messaging strategy within much recent sponsorship promotional material. More importantly, they tell us little about the role of broader discursive forces in the representation of child sponsorship to donors. To this end, the

analysis presented in this chapter will attempt to address the question: What is the

relationship between the discourse of development and the mediated interactions between

sponsorship programs and sponsors?

Of all the aspects of child sponsorship, it is the area of advertising and its imagery

that has received the most critical attention from journalists and academics. Although not

all of this attention deals directly with sponsorship advertising, there is substantial

literature on the representation of people who are different from the audience (people

who are 'Other'), especially poor non-white people in the global South (for example, see

Bula, 2002; Doty 1996; Dyer, 1993; Fabian, 1990; Giaccardi, 1995; Hackett, 1992; Hall,

1981, 1992, 1997; hooks, 1992; JanMohammed, 1985; Jefferess, 2002a; Lutz and Collins,

1993; McHoul, 1991; Moeller, 1997; Nederveen Pieterse, 1992; Plewes and Stuart, 2007;

Sontag, 2003; Wright, 2004). This literature covers an enormous variety of issues, and

offers some valuable insights into representational practices and their influence on

identity formation. Consequently, the present chapter will draw on some of this literature

to help present an analysis of sponsorship promotional material with the aim of providing

a critical reflection that sidelines the supposed insensitivity or dishonesty of sponsorship

programs. Instead of an emphasis on (in)appropriateness or (in)accuracy, this chapter will

provide a critique of sponsorship promotional material that not only describes some of

the discursive features of this material but also sheds light on how the practice of child

sponsorship is ethically positioned in the contemporary world.

In order to facilitate this analysis, this chapter draws on a sample of sponsorship

promotional material.[85] This sample represents items used both to recruit and retain child

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[85] The term "promotional material" is often used instead of, or interchangeably with, "advertising". Both
terms are meant to convey the entirety of the mass-mediated content that is witnessed by or sent to the

sponsors and includes televised ads, magazine inserts, brochures, newsletters, direct mail

appeals, web pages and sample sponsor updates. This sample was selected purposively[86]

and contains items from the following organizations: World Vision Canada (ten items),

Plan Canada (five items), Christian Children's Fund of Canada (four items), Compassion

Canada (four items), Food for the Hungry Canada (three items), and Canadian Feed the

Children (three items).

It should be noted that this sample is not used in an attempt to summarize the

entirety of sponsorship advertising across all organizations. There are many different

kinds of sponsorship promotion, and no one organization is exactly like another (although

there are many similarities). Neither is this sample used to present an argument regarding

the imagined effects of this advertising and its imagery on the minds of Canadians. While

some general inferences can be made about the implications of sponsorship on Canadian

worldview, it is problematic to assume any specific influence of individual sponsorship

advertisements. After all, unless the viewer of an ad is asked directly, it is impossible to

adequately describe what any individual advertisement means to a viewer, or what the

effect of this meaning on the viewer will be (Hall 1981; 1997). The discussion presented

in this chapter does not, consequently, follow traditional lines of content analysis, in

which images and text from advertisements are commonly broken down into their

constituent semiotic elements or assessed for their latent meanings. This means that even

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(potential) sponsor/donor. This includes not only what are traditionally seen as ads, such as direct mail
appeals, brochures, or TV commercials, but also the letters, reports, and reminders sent to current sponsors.
While a little more awkward, the former term is useful in that it appears to encompass some elements that
the latter term neglects. In particular, it is easier to explain all communication to sponsors as a form of
promotional material in that, even though they are not traditionally seen as advertising, the letters,
brochures, reports, etc. still serve the purpose of promoting the program to the sponsor so that they continue
their sponsorship.
[86] See Methodology section in the Introduction for more information about this sample and the rationale
behind its selection. See Appendix A for a list of items in this sample.

though advertising is the focus of this chapter, the purpose is not to present and analyze specific ads, and the fact that individual ads and their associated images are not reproduced in this chapter is intentional. This decision is based on a desire to highlight the discursive *contexts* involved in interpreting sponsorship promotional material in general rather than examine the *effects* of any particular advertisement.

Typical ads and typical critiques

A World Vision Canada televised advertisement for child sponsorship provides a good starting place for the present analysis. This one-hour infomercial, entitled *Africa's Children*, opens with a title sequence comprising a series of images. We first see a woman walking on a dirt road with what looks like a load of firewood on her head. This context-setting image, which shouts "Africa" as loud as the drum-laden background music, is accompanied by a few seemingly random flashes of people working with their hands before leading into a sequence of shots focussing on the sad faces of black children. These moving portraits – the last of which features a young girl at the door of her daub-and-wattle hut overlaid with the title of the "episode" – are followed by no less than nine separate shots of white, World Vision spokespersons in the process of comforting children, lifting babies, talking with local health care professionals, or simply posing with some now-smiling African youngsters. After this brief introduction, which seems to last forever but takes no more than a minute, Susan Hay greets us directly with these words, "Hi everybody, I am Susan Hay in Southern Africa, and I came here with World Vision. I wanted to find out how the children here lived, and I wanted to find out how I could help. I can tell you… it has been a life-changing experience for me." Later in

the same program, after Susan has taken us "into the life" of Rosalia, a five-year-old girl

whose family is suffering from drought-related[87] hunger, she informs us that

> what we can do to help is open up our eyes and our hearts as wide as we can
> and just sponsor a child. A dollar a day… and you can send them to school;
> health care is there; you put food in their tummy, and they have clean water,
> and you know, just a dollar a day can go a very, very long way here. I have
> seen it for myself. We just need you to sponsor, and maybe you do not think
> you can make a difference – you cannot change the world – but if we all get
> together, one person can make a difference in the lives of little ones like this.

This World Vision "infomercial" continues with three additional heart-wrenching

narratives of African misery interspersed with four vignettes featuring Canadian sponsors

and the apparent impact they have made on the lives of their sponsored children (as well

as the considerable effect it has had on their own lives). Reports by celebrity

spokespersons and appeals to sponsor a child are spliced in between these segments. The

entire program ends with another few words by Susan, who is sitting beside a young girl

she has just met that day. Susan talks about the "special connection" she has formed with

this eight-year-old, and how she now wants to sponsor her. After we witness the

presumably joyous reaction of the girl being told this on film (through the help of a

translator), Susan closes with the following words:

> So, go to your phone now and do something extra-special for yourself. And
> for just a few pennies a day, you are giving these kids hope for the future,
> sending them to school, better health care, just… being a better person, and
> we all need that in our lives. So, thank you so much for watching us; this has
> been an amazing experience, and we are going to say a big goodbye from
> Africa. Ciao, say Ciao [to the girl]. Thank you for watching.

This infomercial is typical of those produced by World Vision and very similar to

those of Plan Canada, the only other Canadian sponsorship program to use long-format

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[87] This is the interpretation provided in the ad itself. It would be off topic to provide alternate explanations
for the portrayed family's lack of food. Instead, please see Amartya Sen (1981) for arguments about the
relationship between drought and deprivation.

commercials on television. Despite its undeniable allure, many problematic elements of this ad stand out, and some of these definitely resonate with the criticisms brought up in the *Tribune* report. During the course of the ad, for example, we are introduced to four children who are (apparently) in desperate need of sponsorship. The stories that we are told about these children are indeed heart-wrenching in their desperation, filled with descriptions of illness, hunger, and neglect. Major segments of these stories seem very reminiscent of the "flies-in-the-eyes" style of appeal, where we are confronted with a very harsh depiction of need and a grim prognosis if this need is not addressed. Other parts, however, focus on the purported benefits of sponsorship and the joy that these benefits will supposedly bring. There are almost as many images of smiling children and vibrant communities as there are images of despair. This reflects a significant change in recent years across most sponsorship programs in which there is a much greater emphasis on messages of hope in sponsorship promotional material. These positive messages, however, are tied almost exclusively to the intervention of sponsors and not the actions of Southerners. The children and families in this ad, and many others like it, are still portrayed superficially both as helpless objects of unfortunate circumstance and as passive recipients of Northern generosity. No more complexity than these simple tropes is offered (or, it seems, required). So, despite the increasing prevalence of "positive" messages in sponsorship promotional material, the issue of stereotypically negative representations of Southern peoples and places in such advertising is still a pressing concern.

This problem of negative stereotypes is a common theme in the literature on representations of other races and places (for example, see CCIC, 2004; Crewe and

Fernando, 2006; Hall, 1997; Hoijer, 2004; Oliver, 2006; Rothmeyer, 2011; VSO, 2001).

In particular, the need to simply avoid the use of stereotypical images and stories, as if

this were a relatively straightforward decision, figures prominently in both lay

commentaries and academic critiques. For example, the Canadian Council for

International Cooperation (CCIC) published a report from a 2004 workshop for

fundraisers regarding "images of Africa". This workshop dealt with how to put CCIC's

Code of Ethics around "respectful communications to the public" into practice (5). The

Code stipulates that member organizations should avoid "messages which generalise and

mask the diversity of situations; messages which fuel prejudice; messages which foster a

sense of Northern superiority; messages which show people as hopeless objects for our

pity, rather than as equal partners in action and development" (5). Arguably, all of these

elements were contravened by the infomercial under discussion despite World Vision

Canada being a participant at this workshop. The key word here is "arguably". While it

seems obvious that these points from the CCIC Code should be avoided, it is not obvious

what exactly qualifies as one of these points. The story of Rosalia definitely dwells on the

misery of poverty and links the foremost possibility of hope to Northern support.

However, does it actually foster a sense of Northern superiority or fuel prejudice? How

could this determination be made?

While some examples of stereotypes are readily apparent, many are not so clear cut.

The heart of the problem is that stereotypes are an intrinsic part of cultural and cognitive

processes and, to some degree, are unavoidable. According to Brubaker, Loveman, and

Stamatov (2004), for example, much recent work on stereotyping indicates that they

> are no longer defined in terms of cognitive deficiencies – in terms of false or
> exaggerated or unwarranted belief – but more neutrally as cognitive structures

that contain knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about social groups. Nor are stereotypes seen as the distinctive and pathological propensity of particular kinds of personalities... but rather as rooted in normal and ubiquitous cognitive processes (38-39).

Furthermore, while stereotypes can undeniably be harmful, knowing the direct and long-term effects of stereotypical representations is difficult if not impossible. As Crewe and Fernando (2006) point out, stereotypes do not simply act externally on individuals with directly foreseeable results; instead, they are complexly modified and integrated into people's identities and their perceptions of the world. Consequently, stereotypes can apply in some cases, but are more often simply "cultural reference points that act as a backdrop for people to pass around, dispute, modify and even abandon as cultural identities change" (43).

Stuart Hall (1981; 1997) makes some similar points. He notes that we should not assume any particular understandings or effects of apparently stereotypical representations. After all, assumptions about the interpretation and subsequent effect of stereotypical portrayals of 'Others' can go both ways, leaving the way open to claim, for example, that particular representations are not racist despite having no empirical research on the issue (Hall, 1981). Hall encourages us to recognize that stereotypes can only make sense via reference to already established discourses. In this way, stereotypes can best be seen as part of the construction of symbolic boundaries that help structure desire and regulate collectivities. Consequently, rather than see stereotypes as the chief instrument of racism, it is more useful to see underlying processes of racialization as the mechanism that facilitates the production, legitimization, and interpretation of stereotypes.

We will come back to this the problem of stereotypical representations and their long-term consequences on Southerners later in the chapter, but there are also some more immediate concerns with the World Vision infomercial and other ads. For one thing, there is no way of knowing if these particular children are actually "available" for sponsorship (it is not likely they are). While these images are not obviously borrowed from some general pool of past footage (as might have been the case in previous years), there is still no connection between the children whose representations are used to sell the idea of sponsorship in this ad and their actual sponsorship. Knowing how sponsorship generally functions overseas, a pertinent question in this case might be why these particular children are not already receiving services from the sponsorship program's local partners. Since it is rarely, if ever, the case nowadays that a sponsored child is actually excluded from the local work of the NGO funded by a Canadian sponsorship program (whether or not they are awaiting sponsorship), where is it that these "real" children are actually located within the mechanics of sponsorship-funded development work? How can these children technically (not to mention ethically) be left without access to services when the organization is supposedly working in their midst? This begs another rather straightforward but difficult question: what is the compensation for their presence on camera? Can they be left to starve even as the production crew that is filming them eats through an obviously substantial budget (one that could "sponsor" these children many times over)? If not (and hopefully not), then how accurate can the stories presented actually be?

The issue of accuracy, of course, is a common point of contention regarding sponsorship advertising, and it was raised repeatedly in the *Tribune* report. This issue

entails two distinct albeit related questions: 1) to what extent are the stories of specific children in this ad, or others like it, "true" stories, and 2) to what extent are the presented stories representative of both the general conditions in the global South and the development interventions funded through sponsorship. The first question is important because one cannot, after all, be accused of misrepresenting sponsored children if the representations presented are "true", even if they are not representative of conditions in the global South. However, even if one could determine the legitimacy of the stories presented in the advertisement's vignettes, which is nigh impossible given the information involved, there would be little benefit. If the story of Rosalia, for example, were found to be completely fabricated, what would be the consequence of this deception, and what would be gained by its alteration? Plan USA has admitted to using generic photos coupled with made-up names and stories of children's lives that are "composites drawn 'from the histories of many children'" (Dorning, 1998: 2-13). This was not seen as scandalous and did not result in retraction of the ad because, said the Plan USA marketing director, "'the reading public does understand what the real message is'" (2-13). Even if it were a scandal that could not be brushed off with arguments about the need to raise money in the cheapest way possible (and producing "representative" stories is definitely cheaper and probably more effective than using "real" ones), then the fabricated story could just be replaced with a "true" story – inasmuch as any packaged story can be true. But what would be gained? Would the content and style of the ad be significantly different? Probably not. After all, telling any story, fact or fiction, is necessarily telling part of a story, telling one interpretation of events.

Even more than the first question, the second question gets to the heart of the problem of accuracy in sponsorship promotional material. This problem is not as much related to the complete misrepresentation of the organization's work or the people with whom it works, which is probably very rare, as it is to the representativeness of what is portrayed in sponsorship ads. If the tragic story of Rosalia is not common within the program areas funded by World Vision even if it is "true", or if the successes of sponsorship depicted in the commercial are not usual, then the organization is still vulnerable to critiques of inaccuracy and misrepresentation. The testing of representativeness in advertising seems like a straightforward issue – go overseas and examine some project sites as did the *Tribune* staff. There are some conceptual pitfalls, however, that make the determination of accuracy difficult. For one, how many children's lives or how many project sites have to reflect the advertised stories before they are deemed representative? Even if an organization could show that a simple majority of cases are similar to those advertised (which they probably cannot), they would still have to deal with almost half of their donors sponsoring children whose conditions are not reflected in the ads. Two, how does one even go about comparing hunger in one place with illness in another or, for that matter, vaccination with microcredit? Even though it is often regarded as central to the problems of sponsorship promotion and even though it cannot be completely dismissed, the question of accuracy begins a cycle of critique that is complicated by theoretical and practical difficulties and, in the end, has little possibility for any real change within the advertising practices of sponsorship programs. Even after well-publicized critiques like those in the *Tribune*, we

are largely left with similar ads that have slightly more smiles, somewhat fewer flies, and much more carefully-scripted appeals.[88]

"…little more than props"

Clearly, problems of stereotypical and inaccurate representations of Southerners within this World Vision ad, and others like it, should not be dismissed. However, it is equally clear that such conventional critiques have neither resulted in substantial change in advertising practices, nor have they adequately dealt with some of the thorny epistemological difficulties in such representations. Consequently, let us turn to a slightly different avenue of critique, one that will hopefully provide an alternate basis for the critical evaluation of sponsorship promotional material. This line of thought is actually introduced in the *Tribune* report but is not flushed out. While the *Tribune* is generally quite uniform in its discussion of the problems of sponsorship, a single statement hints at something deeper than the incorrect or inappropriate representations of people from the global South. In a different article from the one discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Dellios (1998) comments that "the children whose somber faces grace those appeals amount to little more than props in a massive industry that privately rationalizes the myth of sponsorship as a necessary, if well-intentioned, fiction" (2-8). Unfortunately, there is little explanation of this statement in the article; it seems to simply be one more shot at the organizations that use children's faces to support what is seen as a bloated and ineffective infrastructure. What is too quickly glossed over here, though, are the seeds of

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[88] After the *Tribune* report was released, an American partnership of voluntary organizations, Interaction, released a new member code of conduct that included a section regarding child sponsorship (and sponsorship advertising practices). While there is often more positive imagery and more care with wording, the degree to which the current marketing of child sponsorship is significantly different from the past is debatable.

a broader critique of the mechanisms that attract donors to child sponsorship and their relationship to an overarching discourse of development that structures the field of thought and action in this area.

An understanding of sponsored children as props on an elaborately-constructed stage rather than as fully participating actors in the process of sponsorship is a powerful metaphor to help explain not only some of the success of sponsorship as a fundraising tool but also some of the problematic nature of its use. While somewhat simplistic, this metaphor does an excellent job of highlighting the generic quality of the representations featured in sponsorship promotional material – the way in which the children are relatively interchangeable set pieces in a narrative that is as much, if not more, about the experiences of the sponsors than about the lives of the children. Numerous instances in the infomercial *Africa's Children* highlight this point. Not only is the story of Rosalia's hunger, explained simply as an issue of drought, identical to those in a hundred other appeals, but what help is apparently offered (via the sponsors' charity) is so general that it is both indispensable and indisputable: "you can send them to school; health care is there; you put food in their tummy, and they have clean water." This generic story of hunger and response, though, is quickly subsumed by another story, that of the "life-changing experience" offered to sponsors. After each vignette emphasizing the need, we are introduced to staff and sponsors who describe how wonderful it feels "to make a difference in the lives of little ones like this". What could be a better experience, after all, than doing "something extra-special for yourself", than accomplishing so much good for "just a few pennies a day"? Few other experiences offer the opportunity to become a better person with so little effort. As Maren (1997) writes in his critique of Save the

Children US: "the sponsor is seduced by the possibility of getting something valuable on the cheap. What sponsors are really buying is, as stated in Save's brochures, a sense of well-being and 'deep satisfaction'" (140).

So, despite being a universal ingredient of sponsorship advertising, children do not seem to be the principal subject of these ads. Their sad (or smiling) faces may fill them up to overflowing, but they are not the protagonists. They play a principal role in a story other than that of their own need – a narrative centred on the personal development of the sponsor through the experience of sponsorship. Echoing the financial mechanics of sponsorship, wherein the sponsor and organization in the North have a well-defined relationship facilitated by a child that is only an (imagined) object of benevolence, sponsorship promotional material positions the sponsor within a tale of their own (ethical) transformation surrounded by the cast of characters that make this story possible. As props, then, representations of sponsored children simply supply a context in which the story of the sponsor and his or her experience can be made both comprehensible and compelling.

The key here is that this context is not a unique product related to the narrative of sponsorship. Rather, its significance comes from historical relationships and cultural conventions that imbue the practice of sponsorship with particular meanings. By far, the most important relationships that inform the reading of sponsorship advertisements are those related to the history of racialized divisions of the colonial era. The "civilizing" mission of colonial interventions provides a powerful but uncomfortable backdrop to present understandings of sponsorship. That said, this very history, which plays a significant role in making sponsorship intelligible, is not one most sponsorship programs

or sponsors want to be associated with. A far more comfortable context for the rationalization of sponsorship is provided by another category of difference between sponsor and child – that of age.

This understanding of sponsorship promotion as largely focused on the sponsor rather than the child is not novel (for example, see Jefferess, 2002a; Maren 1997; Plewes and Stuart, 2007), but it is still important to flush out and illustrate this argument, which will take up some of the remaining content of this chapter. There is another element related to this theme, however, that has not received much attention within the critical literature on child sponsorship or on international development and its representations. Because representations of sponsored children are largely generic, it is not the actual child itself but the concept of the child generally – of the period called childhood and of normal child development – that is pivotal in the story of sponsorship. Despite long-standing studies such as Aries' (1962) *Centuries of Childhood* that highlight the socially constructed nature of childhood, the discursive location of the child in modern liberal societies has become so naturalized that it is commonly taken for granted. However, it is the particular construction of appropriate child development and its contexts that, to a large degree, shapes both sponsorship programs' production of their ads and donors' responses to these ads. It is only because of the discursive space children occupy in many Northern societies that their representations can be used to tell (or sell) the story of sponsorship in the way it is often told (sold).

This relationship between sponsorship and the idea of the child is more than simply an understanding that "children sell", as a senior manager at a sponsorship program worded it. The themes of child development, international development, and the

personal (ethical) development of the sponsor articulate with each other within the promotional material of sponsorship programs such that it is the liberal understanding of the child that facilitates the ethical transformation of the sponsor. In other words, (sponsored) children are props in a story of the sponsorship experience not because their representations are devoid of specific meaning (if they are deemed to be inaccurate for example) but because their representations convey a very particular set of general meanings to Northerners. This set of assumptions, which includes such elements as the (economic and political) innocence of childhood, allows for the easy integration of the stories of sponsored children into the stories of sponsors. Through this lens, we can understand sponsorship not so much as the commodification of children – as might be assumed from an initial critical appraisal of sponsorship advertising – but as another aspect of the link between consumption, identity, and ethics in modern liberal societies. While the following chapter takes up this argument regarding the relationship between the sponsorship experience and the personal development of the sponsor, the remainder of this chapter will discuss the role of children (and the concept of the child) in sponsorship promotional material *as it relates* to the aforementioned focus on sponsors and their transformation.

Generic representations for formulaic advertising

The promotional material of child sponsorship programs is formulaic; in fact, its formula is one of its most distinguishing features. After watching or reading a number of ads, it becomes difficult to tell the various agencies and appeals apart. The same components and the same themes seem to blend into each other, creating a pallid wash of

children's faces, earnest spokespersons, and repetitive thank yous. These advertisements

often contain one or more of the following main elements: representations of the need for

the sponsors' charity (i.e. displays of poverty or other difficulties among communities

and children in the South); the benefits that sponsors can expect to receive be they

emotional, informational, or otherwise; a description of what the sponsors' donations will

supposedly provide to a child and/or community; and expressions of gratitude for the

sponsors' (future) support. A single short commercial by Christian Children's Fund of

Canada illustrates each of these main elements. The text of the commercial, read by a

slow and sonorous male voice, is as follows:

> Innocent children of war, famine, and disease. Will you help them? For only
> $33 a month, you can sponsor one of these little ones, saving him or her from
> malnutrition and death. Call the number on the screen right now to sponsor a
> child in desperate need through Christian Children's Fund of Canada. By
> providing food, medicine, and a chance to go to school for one child, you will
> help that child's family and community. [At this point, the accompanying
> images switch from a slideshow of black and white pictures of sad "black"
> children to a coloured video of a "white" sponsor family sitting around a table
> looking at some papers.] Within 10 days of your call, you will receive a photo
> and a story of a child in need and information on how to become a sponsor.
> Call now and sponsor by pre-authorised check or credit card and receive your
> choice of a free gift - our way of saying thank you. The children of war,
> famine, and disease are depending on you. Please call now.

There are many aspects of this ad that touch on points relevant to this chapter,

including a basic concern with stereotyping the South as conflict and disease-ridden. The

most salient point related to the formula of sponsorship promotion, however, is the

exceedingly general level of information that is conveyed about both the children in need

of help (not to mention their families and their communities) and the role of sponsors'

contributions in providing that aid. As with many sponsorship ads, there is no

information about the children whose images are used in the ad, nor is there any kind of

information regarding what is actually happening on the ground with donated money.

While this level of generality is likely used in order to encompass the wide variety of work done overseas or to account for the variability in the audience, the lack of any specific information leaves many such ads without any significant context except that provided by the accompanying images and stories of children and their sponsors. In most cases, these images and stories are, by necessity or expediency, as generic as the components of the ads.

Take, for example, a brochure produced by Canadian Feed the Children. This document entitled *Childhood: The Chance of a Lifetime* includes five pictures with a total of nine (black) children. None of these children are named nor are we told where they come from or the circumstances that make them require sponsorship. Instead, the words "supported", "protected", "respected", and "nourished" are inscribed on each picture. While the use of such words may distinguish this brochure from others, the images certainly do not. The same brochure could easily have been made using the images of other children. After all, the text within the brochure could apply to almost any situation: "Every child has potential. But poverty can stop it dead, keeping children from wellness, strength and success. With careful attention to everyday needs, Canadian Feed the Children helps remove the barriers imposed by poverty, so a child has the chance of a full, healthy life."

This same level of generality is present in many other types of sponsorship promotional material. In a sample letter to be sent to a Compassion sponsor about their newly sponsored child, there is a short section introducing Edilson Borda from Bolivia. While the inclusion of a name and location is encouraging (and expected) in this kind of document, the background provided is sparse on details:

Edilson makes his home with his father and his mother. Running errands is his household duty. His father is sometimes employed and his mother is sometimes employed. There are 3 children in the family. Playing with cars is Edilson's favourite activity. In primary school his performance is average and he regularly attends church activities. Your love and support help Edilson to receive the assistance he needs to develop his potential.

This is the kind of information that could be (and probably was) produced through a fill-in-the-blank style of storytelling that is not only written by a remote and removed individual but is also applicable to a host of other children and their families. The same is true of a sample Food for the Hungry Canada letter, describing an upcoming celebration in the sponsored child's community:

Very soon, Rhea's community will be having a celebration for just one reason – Rhea, and all the children in her community. Just take a peek at what an exciting time it will be: It is a wonderful celebration, where sponsored children and their families gather – with unsponsored children, too – and we celebrate the value of children and their families. Games, food, fellowship, and fun. You should see it! ...Many children in Rhea's community do not know their actual birthday, but we do not want to leave them out of the celebration! I believe that every child should be celebrated. …Your donation offsets the cost of the party and helps meet additional needs in the community. Your gift will provide practical things that your child and the unsponsored children need to stay healthy, keep learning and grow strong.

This generic solicitation letter is surely sent to all Food for the Hungry sponsors irrespective of the situation in their sponsored child's community. While this is understandable from an administrative point of view, it does not change the fact that such letters tell recipients next to nothing about who or what is actually involved in sponsorship.

The generic nature of the representations of children in sponsorship advertising may go unnoticed, however, because of the extremely personal way in which promotional images are captured and arranged. As viewers, we usually see the children (whether smiling or not) in the most vulnerable of circumstances; we are privy to a distressingly

private look at their bodies – most often singled out from all but their base material

contexts. In the sample of promotional material, there are no less than 20 images of

children that have altered or deleted backgrounds in order to bring them into greater focus

(literally and figuratively). This does not include the dozens of images of children

photographed or videotaped on their own, more often than not staring directly at the

camera/audience. Despite the powerful illusion of intimacy and connection, we rarely

know more about their lives than their crushing poverty. When we are introduced to

them, it is in a way that tells us everything and nothing – everything about their apparent

needs and nothing about the specifics of their history, their community, or their lives.

Even children such as Rosalia from the extended vignettes in *Africa's Children* could be

replaced at any moment by another (or, at least, a black Other) because what seems to be

important for selling child sponsorship is not who the child is but what he or she

represents for the audience. It is this imminent exchangeability of the children in almost

all promotional material – and in the practice of sponsorship itself where one sponsored

child can be easily substituted for another from one day to the next without interruption

in donations or services – that confirms their generic status.

As noted, the generic representations of children involved in sponsorship serve an

important administrative function; they allow sponsorship programs to create

promotional materials that are seemingly applicable to most situations in the global South

where the organizations, or their partners, work. This facilitates the sponsorship of

thousands of different children without having to explain the specific situation for each

child. Arguably, this practice of providing only the most superficial information is

defensible because it saves money for the more important work being done on the ground

and because it is commonly perceived that sponsorship audiences get turned off by too much information. It is possible, however, that this practice works precisely because no specific information is present.

What is important about the generic nature of children in sponsorship advertising is not necessarily the lack of specific information; rather, it is the way this lack of specific information requires (allows) sponsors to generate interpretations using the cultural repertoires that are available. If there is little context from which to understand the representations of poor, black children, it is left to the sponsor to fill in the blanks as it were. In order for sponsorship to be successful, this process must both universalize and essentialize the relationships between individuals in the North and the South. While being paradoxically personal and superficial, the generic child image highlights an important similarity between sponsors and sponsored children and, simultaneously, an almost insurmountable difference of material (and perhaps cultural) circumstances. It must combine these elements in order to build a perceived connection between child and sponsor while maintaining the essential disparity that sees one in need of help and the other able to provide that assistance. The similarity that fosters the perceived connection between sponsor and child, however, does not seem to relate to ideas of a common humanity, which would seemingly engender an obligation to right injustice or to charitably assist fellow humans in distress. Rather, it seems to come, at least in part, from the Northern viewer's (supposedly universal) understanding of the child and his or her appropriate roles and responsibilities in life. In this way, the difficulties and remedies of Southern poverty are made both personal and intelligible through ready-made assumptions about relationships between children and the individuals and institutions that

surround them It is the assumed universality of what children mean, then, that allows sponsors to identify, not necessarily with the child itself, but with the practice of sponsorship. After all, feeding, educating, and maintaining the health of children is deemed a natural responsibility of the liberal family and state. In this way, the connection between sponsor and child seems to be maintained more through a universalized category of difference (that of age) than a common bond of humanity.

For the present purposes, age is taken to be the most salient category of difference in sponsorship. As noted above, however, age is by no means the only category of difference that plays a role in the connection between sponsor and child. Apart from the obvious category of wealth or class, the perceived category of race (or perhaps ethnicity) directly informs the sponsorship experience. Just as it would be short-sighted to ignore the connections between (past and present) relations of imperialism and those of international development, it would be foolish to ignore the influence of representational practices of racialized groups on child sponsorship promotional material. While it is true that children occupy a particular place in the imagination of many Northerners, the same can equally be said of Southern 'Others'. After all, racialized groups in the South have overwhelmingly been associated with cultural, moral, and economic "backwardness", consigning them to a history of "necessary" interventions (Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 1999). In fact, it is likely the intersection of age and race within child sponsorship that allows for the almost effortless categorization of sponsored children as being in need of developmental aid (and of sponsors being able to provide it).[89]

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[89] See Chapter Two for arguments to this effect.

From the social construction of "black" children to the ethical constitution of "white" sponsors

It is no longer terribly controversial to assert that the concept of the child, and the special period called childhood, are social constructions. There is substantial scholarly recognition, at least within sociology, of the significant cultural and temporal variations in what it means to be a child (Aries, 1962). This does not negate the biological and psychological maturation of the human body and mind, but it does illustrate the highly variable way that this period maturation is understood and delineated. As Bell (1993) notes, a "sociology of childhood has long propounded the argument that childhood is not a natural category but one constructed via social ideas and institutions that create boundaries irreducible to physical or maturational difference" (391). This understanding of the child as a constructed category is not always widely shared outside academia, however. For example, Jefferess (2002b) discusses the idea of the child in relation to the universal child rights discourse. He writes that "despite the assumed universality, ahistoricality and naturalness of "childhood," the "child" is an ambiguous and paradoxical concept, whose status as not (yet) adult is much more complex and fraught than child rights discourse suggests" (Jefferess, 2002b: 76).

The disparities that stand out in the representations of Southern children do not just distinguish the viewer from the viewed. Instead, they divide (potential) sponsors and (sponsored) children into essentialized categories laden with cultural connotations. That which defines the child provides the context for the definition of the viewer. Just as sponsors are the "surrogate" parents to these suffering children, they are also the wealth to their poverty and the charity to their need. More controversially, they are also the

white to their black and the saviour to their salvation. By inhabiting these well-worn binaries, images of children in sponsorship ads and the people who view them are brought together – as much as they are separated – via their differences. More than any inaccurate depictions of chronic helplessness or hopelessness, the recurrent use of essentialized categories is what makes these sponsorship ads problematic and "Orientalist".

One of Edward Said's great contributions was his emphasis on the role of essentialist representations in practices of power. In *Orientalism*, Said (1979) examines representations of 'the Orient' within Western, particularly British and French, culture and politics. Although most of the book is spent uncovering the thinly-veiled chauvinism within Western literature that, for Said, forms the basis of these representations, he also wants to demonstrate how the "network of interests" that are always present in discussions about the Orient work to constrain every instance of "writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient" (3). Through illustrating this link between representations of the Orient and the political, economic, and military history of interaction with the Orient, Said sets out to explain how "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (3). Consequently, beyond the academic discipline of Orientalism and beyond a particular "style of thought" that falsely distinguishes between the two monolithic categories of Orient and Occident, Said understands Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (2, 3). Said points out, however, that there is no such thing as a "real or true Orient", and although his political standpoint

remains one of humanistic tolerance for diversity, he is primarily critiquing a way of seeing the world through reductive binaries (322).

As with "Orientalist" literature, sponsorship ads are commonly constructed around similarly reductive binaries. Within these ads, sponsored children become synonymous with Southern poverty; each of their images comes to represent – at a panoptical glance – the entire story of the South and its relationship to the North. Each child is, therefore, the embodiment of the development narrative of progress. Thus, while occupying the role of an imaginary yet threatened child(hood) to the Northern sponsor, these representations also take up the burden of distilling all economic relations between North and South to those of Northern generosity in response to Southern privation.

The universalized and essentialized representations of sponsored children seem to provide a certain level of continuity through change, a stable element amidst an overwhelming sea of global forces and sad faces. These representations, then, serve as a useful foil for the (re)production of the sponsor's identity. The idea that the Other is a definitive component in the construction of the Self – or in other words, that locating difference is a crucial aspect of positioning oneself – is a long standing notion in psychology and sociology (Cooley 1998; Lacan, 2006[1977]; Levinas, 1969). This concept has also been taken up by several postcolonial scholars in order to understand the consequences of colonialism on both the colonized and the colonizers (for example, see Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1979). In fact, one of the central contributions of postcolonial scholars has been the foregrounding of the role of representation within issues of identity and power. This in-depth treatment of representation not only highlights the way Others are constructed in the North but also the way this construction shapes how Northerners

see themselves. Callari (2004), for example, notes that "one of the key contributions of postcolonial thought has been the registering of *the other* as a moment of theoretical definition *of* the West" (113, emphasis in original).

This same process can be seen to occur in microcosm via the representations of children in sponsorship promotional material. The images of the sponsored child, and their geographical and economic context, appear to serve as the Other against which the (potential) sponsor can locate him or herself in the discourses that surround the practice of sponsorship. Even though the children themselves can be shuffled in and out of programs and advertisements, their meaning for the sponsor does not need to change. In fact, it is because of what such a racialized child means to them, given the common absence of much significant personal information, that sponsors are able not only to understand the ethical imperative to help but also to position themselves in the role of generous donor. Just as the representations of children are (re)produced for the process of sponsorship fundraising, so too are sponsors (re)constructed through the same process (or, more accurately, through the processes of reading and viewing sponsorship-related material). To facilitate the necessary uniformity of this (re)construction, one in which diverse sponsors can be equivalently transformed into better – more ethical – people, it is essential that sponsored children are able to fill the appropriate role as innocent and grateful objects of charity.

In her account of the Somalia Affair, Sherene Razack (2004) provides a useful illustration of this process of meaning-making involving representations of Southern Others and the construction of ethical Northern subjects. Drawing on a different trope related to Southern countries and their people(s), she highlights the perceived chaotic

nature of the South and the effect this is seen to have on the health of Canadian soldiers. In this instance, vague representations of the South as inhospitable psychological terrain for Northern sensibilities allows the concrete racist and imperial practices of Canadian soldiers to be rationalized as "natural" reactions to difficult circumstances. In a parallel vein, fuzzy representations of vulnerable Southern children (who are directly situated within this chaotic environment) help provoke a different "natural" response among Canadians (i.e. charity). The effects on the construction of Northern identities, however, are surprisingly similar with Canadians being able to ethically position themselves as doing good despite (or perhaps because of) the lack of any specific evidence.

Conclusion: Selling the sponsorship experience

The concept of the "gaze" (Foucault, 1973), with all its associated academic commentary, provides a useful way of linking the content of sponsorship promotional material to the experience of viewing it. Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins (1992), in their book on *Reading National Geographic*, discuss pictures from the *Geographic* as intersections of gazes. This formulation also seems an apt description of many sponsorship ads. One of the most arresting qualities of the images of children used in these ads is the way they seem to stare at the viewer from inside the picture. Not only does this feature make these images particularly engrossing in a mass-mediated environment principally defined by its passive voyeurism, but it also facilitates the feeling of the (illusory) personal connection between viewer and viewed that draws attention away from the specific (spatial and historical) location of the sponsor as the viewer. Susan Sontag (2003) has written eloquently on this subject in her book,

Regarding the Pain of Others, in which she states that "no 'we' should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain" (7). With this statement, she is referring to the way images both create 'Others' who are seen but do not themselves see and place these 'Others' squarely within the consciousness of the viewer. In other words, these images generate compelling connections between individuals while simultaneously separating observers from observed. In this way, images (can) distort both personal and politico-economic relationships to suffering, making it both proximate and distant, both apparently embedded in social practices and strangely singular and fragmented. As she writes, "the imaginary proximity to the suffering inflicted on others that is granted by images suggests a link between the far-away sufferers – seen close-up on the television screen – and the privileged viewer that is simply untrue, that is yet one more mystification of our real relations of power" (102).

Images of children in sponsorship advertising are accompanied by a cast of sample sponsors and narrators or spokespersons, each with their own gaze but all subsumed under the watchful eye of the sponsor as viewer. The primacy of the (potential) sponsors' gaze should be obvious despite the power of a poor child's pleading eyes, especially if we endeavour to keep in mind the purpose behind all sponsorship advertising. Although it is often eclipsed by the nature of the content, what sponsorship advertising is selling is the sponsorship experience itself. Even though it can be said to result in the commodification of black children, it seems to deal at least as much with the commodification of experience aimed at the sponsor. Perhaps it is more accurate to say, however, that the former can never really be separated from the latter. In other words, the very ability of the sponsorship experience to be successfully sold to Northerners relies on the racialized

position of Southern children. This consumptive emphasis draws the (purportedly) ethical action of sponsorship squarely into contemporary relations of (neo)liberalized capitalism.

It may be the case that sponsorship advertising revolves around the sponsor more than the child, but this is neither an original nor a terribly profound insight. What must be considered in addition to this emphasis is how the focus on the sponsor as a sales technique interacts with the discursive context of the ads, including the practices that make up the political-economic backdrop in which they are produced. This interaction plays off of – and itself facilitates – a distinctive view of the world and the place of individuals within it. In particular, the present nature of sponsorship as a fundraising technique that highlights the personal charity of Northern donors simultaneously with the economic responsibility of Southern recipients (a hand-up not a hand-out; not giving a fish but teaching to fish) emerges out of – and coincides with – a global order that privileges above all else individual liberty and private property. Ignoring this interaction between text and context, or between meanings and practices, leads to an analysis of sponsorship advertising that disregards Foucault's insights about discourse and that neglects the relationship between the problems of so-called (under)development and the rise of globalized (neo)liberalism.

Chapter Five: "Change a life. Change your own."

This chapter looks at the way sponsors express their understanding of, and participation in, child sponsorship. Its purpose is not simply to examine how sponsors make sense of the promotional material they are exposed to in relation to their sponsorship but rather to shed light on the meaning-making processes of sponsors as they negotiate the sponsorship experience. Drawing on interviews with sponsors, this chapter presents an argument that links the objectives of international development with the goals of personal development such that sponsorship can be seen as providing an unparalleled opportunity to become a better person.

It is a powerful and seductive idea that it is possible to radically alter a child's life with very little effort. After all, believing you are able to help feed, clothe, heal, and educate a child must provide a person with a particular feeling of fulfillment. An old World Vision slogan, "Change a life. Change your own," neatly sums up this supposedly reciprocal relationship. The difficulty with this scenario, as the reporters from the *Chicago Tribune* would have it, comes when the recipient (sponsored child) does not get the help he or she was imagined to receive and the benefactor (sponsor) loses faith in the mediating organization or even in the process (of sponsorship) itself. For example, take the case of Kelley Schuster, who was looking "to take a journey of hope and restoration" after the death of her husband (Tackett and Jackson, 1998: 2-13). She approached Christian Children's Fund (CCF) "seeking a new relationship, one with a child" (2-12). According to the *Tribune*, however, problems with the projects run by CCF hindered Schuster's efforts "to forge a lasting relationship with her sponsored child" (2-13).

Apparently, these problems were a result of local mismanagement such that when Schuster tried to visit her sponsored child Anthony, not only did the local staff of CCF not even show up to talk to Schuster, but she also found out that he "had received essentially nothing from Schuster's $21-a-month sponsorship payments" (2-13).

Understandably, this situation upset Schuster, and she quickly cancelled her sponsorship and sent a letter of complaint to CCF's president. In her mind, CCF's negligence in this case ruined any possibility of her building a relationship with her sponsored child. Despite the fact that CCF was clearly at fault, "Schuster blamed herself. 'I was so gullible,' she said. 'I did not check it out. I guess I had really high hopes of getting to know this boy and developing a relationship with him'" (Tackett and Jackson, 1998: 2-13). This story seems to offer a clear example of how child sponsorship can go wrong for both the sponsored child and the sponsor. It highlights the pivotal role of the sponsorship program in validating the relationship between sponsor and child. It also somewhat obscures the fact that this social relationship is wholly predicated upon the financial relationship between the sponsorship program and the sponsored child and, more importantly, between the sponsorship program and the sponsor. Although Schuster's "heart is right", although she is "not trying to hurt anybody" and "really trying to help", and although she "even placed Anthony's photo on a table alongside pictures of her children," she could not maintain her relationship with Anthony due to the breakdown in her relationship with CCF (2-13).

The *Tribune* discusses another example of the pitfalls of sponsorship in the article "A girl's sweet gesture turns sour" (Tackett, 1998: 2-10). This story describes how 11-year-old Whitney, after watching a moving Children International (CI) advertisement,

decided to become a sponsor. She made a deal with her parents to help come up with the low-cost $12 per month fee and began sponsoring 11-year-old Angelina from the Dominican Republic. As is common practice among some sponsorship programs, Whitney was soon inundated with additional requests for donations to supply such things as holiday gifts and special medical treatments. Whitney's parents were angered by the continuous emotional appeals, which they felt manipulated their daughter and which almost doubled the amount of monthly donations. Moreover, her parents were surprised to hear that via one of these additional donations, Angelina received a towel as a birthday gift. "'If I want to send $25,' Ferguson [Whitney's mother] said, 'which buys far more there than it buys here, I want Angelina to get a personal present – a dress, new shoes, a doll, something besides a towel'" (2-10). According to the *Tribune*, then, Whitney's "charitable instincts had been encouraged by CI's descriptions of Angelina's urgent needs", but the "continuous pleas" and allocation of funds ultimately left a "bad taste" (2-10). The fact that Whitney's "sweet gesture" was soured by CI's actions is simply seen as a consequence of a well-intentioned sponsor coming into contact with a greedy, desperate, or simply inept sponsorship program.

In both these examples, the *Tribune* writes of sponsors frustrated in their desire to help a child in need. As with many of the *Tribune's* critiques, the blame is laid at the feet of the sponsorship agencies. By failing to provide the imagined benefits to sponsored children in exchange for the sponsorship fee, these organizations have breached the trust of their donors. The role of these donors needs little explanation; they are good people prompted by "charitable instincts" and are simply "trying to help". The disappointment felt by Schuster and Whitney's parents is thus envisioned as something related more to

the inappropriate actions of sponsorship programs than to the (inappropriate?) expectations of sponsors. However, it seems to be these expectations as much as the actual results of sponsoring a child that fuels the practice of sponsorship. After all, the promotional material of sponsorship programs routinely encourages sponsors to expect profound, almost miraculous changes in the life of their sponsored child. These imagined changes are not only supposed to affirm the generosity of the sponsor, but they are also, somewhat paradoxically, supposed to be financially effortless.

In some apparently unrelated articles, The *Chicago Tribune* takes up this issue of sponsorship results. The *Tribune* journalists do not attempt to completely deny that sponsorship can be helpful for some individuals. Instead, they highlight the fact that child sponsorship is only a minor player in the global development industry. According to one inside source, a professor of development and former Childreach board member, "'child sponsorship agencies are very small players even in very small countries. / It is really very arrogant to say we have had a major impact'" (Dorning, 1998b: 2-14). Despite the fact that sponsorship agencies are successful in securing millions in donations from private sources, their "contributions to the people they help are dwarfed by foreign aid and the countries' own resources" (2-14). More important than the scope of sponsorship dollars in the grand scheme of development assistance is the simple issue that, in many if not most cases, the impact of sponsorship on children and communities is unknown. In an extensive article on the legacy of sponsorship, Dorning and Goering (1998) point out that "[a]lthough all sponsorship agencies highlight individual successes, the major groups say they do not know of any available data showing how formerly sponsored children have fared" (2-10). Drawing on the stories of several former sponsored children, they conclude

that "personal initiative, the support of family, the vagaries of circumstance and the actions of local authorities have as much impact as sponsorship" (2-10).

At first blush, this lack of evaluative data on sponsorship, combined with its relatively small scale, seems as though it might hinder sponsor recruitment. After all, how is it possible to convince sponsors to donate their money to "change a life" if there is little knowledge of whether or not this actually occurs? One answer lies, of course, with the notion that sponsorship organizations simply mislead sponsors regarding the effectiveness of sponsorship. As noted above, another answer may be found in the second half of World Vision's formula, the part where the sponsor changes their own life through the generous and miraculous process of sponsorship. Arguably, this promised transformation for the sponsor forms an equal – if not greater – part of a sponsor's expectation of sponsorship. The effectiveness of sponsorship on the ground in the South, then, seems to fade slightly into the background as it is substituted by the effectiveness of sponsorship as a way for the sponsor to become a different – a better – person. This consideration of the relationship between the transformation of a child's life through sponsorship and the transformation of the sponsor's own life in the process provides an alternate explanation to the disappointment of Schuster and Whitney's parents, which may, in some way, be related to their unmet expectations of personal transformation. It also offers a fruitful entry point into the question of the role of sponsorship in sponsor's lives. Consequently, this chapter is guided by the following question: What is the relationship between the discourse of development and the way child sponsors perceive themselves and their actions in relation to sponsorship? It will further address the relationship between this transformation and the discourses of development that provide

it with context. It is these discourses, after all, that allow sponsorship organizations and sponsors to promote and understand their international development contributions in terms of personal fulfillment and growth. In other words, this chapter will look at sponsors' understanding of child sponsorship, their reception of sponsorship promotional material, and ultimately, their motivation to sponsor a child through the lens of personal development.

In order to examine these issues, this chapter draws on in-depth interviews with thirty-one people who sponsor, or have previously sponsored, children through Canadian NGOs.[90] Of these participants, the majority are women (25 out of 31), who are current sponsors (26 out of 31) of children through World Vision Canada or Plan Canada (25 out of 31). Interview with participants lasted between one and two hours and were structured around a set of open-ended questions dealing with participants' thoughts and feelings about their sponsored child, about the process of sponsorship, and about their conceptions of global poverty and international development. Pseudonyms are used to help protect the confidentiality of participants.

Meetings whose needs?

Building on the arguments from the last two chapters, which explored the international development components of child sponsorship in light of perceptions of organizational and child development respectively, this chapter looks at sponsorship as something that is more than a way to simply address the needs of Southern children. As

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[90] See Methodology section in the Introduction for more information about the recruitment of sponsor participants and the interview process. See Appendix G for a list of sponsor participants including some descriptive information. See Appendix C for a copy of the interview schedule used with sponsor participants.

with promotional material that makes use of generic understandings of Southern children to provide context to the role of the Northern sponsor, child sponsorship nowadays seems to be as much about the satisfaction of sponsors' needs as it does about providing development assistance overseas. Despite the cynical nature of this statement, it makes perfect sense in terms of an understanding of the sponsorship experience as a product that is marketed to Northerners in order to raise money "for a good cause". This cause, the "development" of poor black children, seemingly justifies almost any promotional strategy as long as it is successful at attracting sponsors. This is arguably more than a simple ends-justify-the-means scenario, however. What makes it successful in attracting Northern sponsors may, in fact, be as important as what is makes it successful in helping Southern children.

As noted in the last chapter, the understanding of sponsorship as focused more on the sponsor than the child has an ample history in the critical literature on foreign aid (for example, see Jefferess, 2002a; Maren 1997; Plewes and Stuart, 2007). However, this history almost exclusively draws on emotional concepts to describe sponsors' thoughts and actions. For example, Maren (1997) argues that when someone decides to sponsor a child, he or she is really buying "a sense of well-being and 'deep satisfaction'" (140). Summarizing several studies on the psychological implications of the marketing of overseas aid, Campbell, Carr, and MacLaughlan (2001) make a similar argument. They posit that the most common fundraising strategy "is the use of shocking pictures to arouse emotion and guilt" (426). Drawing on a study by Bozinoff and Ghingold (1983), they also argue that while "high-guilt" ads can result in more guilty feelings, these kinds of appeals are also likely to result in "counter arguing", rationalizations for not donating

despite these feelings of guilt (426). They conclude that "guilt-arousing foreign-aid campaigns may indeed cause so much counterarguing that attitude and behavioural intention change are unlikely to occur" (426). Consequently, even if guilt is present upon the reception of sponsorship promotional material, it cannot simply be assumed to account for the decision to begin or maintain sponsorship.

While emotional factors obviously play some role in the thoughts and actions of sponsors, it is equally important to look beyond these transient states to the discursive contexts that contextualize them. These discourses – of global poverty, of charity, of personal growth – inform sponsors' understandings of what child sponsorship is and what it accomplishes; they also help determine what it means to be a good person in modern liberal societies. Through this lens, one can begin to question what it might mean to be transformed by the sponsorship experience. How exactly is a sponsor's life changed? Is it simply a feeling of lessened guilt or increased satisfaction? After all, although we may be moved to action by an emotion, we first must interpret the world in such a way to account for that feeling. In order to feel guilty at seeing the face of a starving African child, for example, one must first understand the situation both as distressing and unfair. Furthermore, such emotional states are not permanent and are likely not experienced in the same way at every future encounter. Instead, it is probable that our emotional responses shift over time or simply give way to rationalizations regarding any action taken. This does not mean that affective reactions to the imagery presented in sponsorship advertising are unimportant. These reactions, or personal interpretations of these reactions[91], definitely play a role in audience responses to such advertisements. However,

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[91] There is a substantial literature on the nature of emotion and its relationship to bodily states of arousal (for example, see Gorton, 2007; Tompkins, 1995). Part of the debate is centred on the very definition of

these reactions are obviously not the sole factor involved in decisions to sponsor a child, and non-emotional elements seem to be neglected in much of the literature discussing why sponsorship is so successful.

Understanding the decision to begin or maintain sponsorship as more than a straightforward result of an emotional response is, arguably, an important first step in appreciating the complex role of the sponsor. Instead of looking primarily to sponsors' desire to *feel* good about themselves, it is enlightening to look at how sponsors' *imagine* themselves as better people because of their participation in child sponsorship.[92] The process of transformation that is supposed to occur through sponsorship can then be equally conceptualized as a process of formation, one that constructs sponsors (or facilitates their self-construction) as ethical subjects in relation to Southern poverty. This (trans)formative process derives from both the messaging practices of child sponsorship programs and the (liberal) discourses of charity and responsibility that sustain them. This point may seem a little both vague or trivial; however, it not only fits within much current literature on ethics and identity formation (see for example Appiah, 2005; Cruikshank 1996 & 1999; Hattori, 2003; Hoijer, 2004; King, 2006; Somers, 1994), but it also has several significant implications.

In his book on *The Ethics of Identity*, Appiah (2005) discusses the complex relationship people have with their identity, especially when it comes to the moral value

emotion, with some scholars arguing that it should be conceived of as separate from the bodily (affective) states that are interpreted as emotions. This implies that what are called emotions are a product of personal interpretation, and therefore subject to the influence of discourse, but it also implies that there are some more basic affective states that occur prior to the level of interpretation (perhaps at the level of instinct). Whatever the case, these debates fall outside the scope of this project. However, future research into child sponsorship or related practices would do well to address the role of emotion and its relationship to the interpretation of such imagery.

[92] This focus on presentations of thought rather than emotion fits with the discursive level of analysis adopted for this project, which analyses participants' verbal responses and not other indications of emotional reaction (such as facial expression or body language).

they assign to the elements of social life. In particular, he notes how identity is both something that helps determine what people do and something that people adopt as a result of their actions. This reciprocal relationship means that identity not only plays a part in informing one's ethical decisions (as with the concept of a moral compass), but it also encompasses the way in which people perceive themselves as ethical individuals. In this manner,

> [t]here are thus various ways that identity might be a source of value, rather than being something that realizes other values. First if an identity is yours, it may determine acts of solidarity as valuable, or be an internal part of the specification of your satisfactions and enjoyments, or motivate and give meaning to acts of supererogatory kindness (25).

The subtle distinction that Appiah is making reflects the movement away from traditional conceptions of identity as relatively stable and passive to a more postmodern notion of identity as fluid and active. This perspective highlights the fact that the decision to sponsor a child should be understood as more than simply a product of an individual's generous nature (an aspect of who they are). Instead, the motivation to sponsor must in some way also be built upon the desire to take on a certain (moral) identity.

Samantha King (2003) employs a similar logic in her discussion of "new technologies of ethical citizenship" and the Race for the Cure (of breast cancer) (295). In her article "Doing Good by Running Well", she draws attention to the way contemporary capitalist society associates moral worth with "volunteerism and self-responsibility" such that taking part in a "physical activity-based fundraising event" can be seen as a significant and unproblematic reflection of one's generosity and civic participation (307). In this way, such fundraising events not only allow individuals an opportunity to "do good", but they also provide a powerful framework for understanding what it means to "be good" in contemporary society – a framework that permits and encourages "national

identification and inclusion at the same time that [it denies] the unequal material conditions and violence of everyday life under capitalism" (305). Consequently, such "thons" help re-define ethical action in contemporary society such that "publicly celebrated, personal acts of generosity mediated through – and within – consumer culture [have] attained hegemonic status" and "dissent or criticism of dominant socio-economic relations is marginalised" (312). King concludes, then, that far from simply being a way to raise money for and awareness about breast cancer, "the Race for the Cure is an ideal technology for the production of proper American citizens" (311).

King's (2003) analysis of the ethical landscape of the Race for the Cure provides a useful comparison for the case of child sponsorship. Just as "thons" occupy a discursive space that allows them to construct participants in a certain light, simultaneously as moral people and good citizens, sponsorship provides individuals with an opportunity to see themselves, and be seen by others, as generous Canadians, Americans, etc. who make a difference in the world. Once again, these perceptions are more than the product of guilty consciences or "charitable instincts", and they culminate in more than straightforward feelings of well-being or accomplishment. They are the artifact of a powerful and purposive "technology of ethical citizenship", a technology[93] that does more than raise money for poor people in the South. It is also part of the system that (re)defines what it means to be a good person in contemporary Northern society. Akin to running for the cure, child sponsorship seamlessly merges notions of societal/global development with those of self-development. Sponsorship represents a way to become a better person (as

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[93] The term technology draws on Foucault's theorizing around the concept of technologies of the self (2003[1982b]). Recall that technologies of the self are practices that "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, immortality" (146).

opposed to simply an expression of one's good nature) as much as it represents a way to help a poor child. In fact, because there is little knowledge about the actual effects of sponsorship on the child, the former component becomes all the more important – so much so that this lack of knowledge ceases to be a major issue and sponsorship becomes more about what the sponsors think of their actions than about what their donations accomplish.

Perhaps the most important implication of the way the practice of sponsorship constructs (or facilitates the self-construction of) sponsors as ethical individuals is the fact that this aligns it with, and not against, the processes that structure the modern world in all its violence and inequality. In other words, far from being a definitive solution to the problems of world poverty, sponsorship is yet another way that contemporary relations of power are expressed. These are the same relations that organize the relative locations of sponsors and sponsored children, informing their economic and geo-political separation. Sponsors understand, and are constantly reminded, that their comparatively minor donations have miraculous consequences in the lives of Others. Precisely because sponsored children occupy the place they do in the world, sponsorship not only plays such a prominent role in the ethical identity of the sponsor but also serves as a mechanism that helps (re)produce the categories (such as race, nation, gender, class) that structure our lives. Contrary to many other practices that connect self-improvement with charitable action, sponsorship offers "average" people the chance to do something (be someone) extraordinary for minimal effort. Relying on (neo)liberal discourses of charity and responsibility as much as those of development, this opportunity makes it possible to

fulfill personal goals of morality at the same time as meeting collective expectations for engaged citizenship.

Perceptions of child sponsorship

The remainder of the chapter will expand on and clarify these arguments regarding the ethical character of child sponsorship, with the principal objective of exploring how sponsors articulate their understanding of sponsorship. Rather than focus on sponsors either as benevolent individuals duped by desperate sponsorship programs or as self-serving donors looking to ease their guilt, the analysis that follows tries to shed light on some of the discursive connections between the practice of sponsorship and the perception of doing "good" in the world. Within this context, themes such as poverty, charity, religion, and race are touched on in order to help explain these connections. Prior to discussing these themes in depth, however, it is useful to consider what the participants talked about in relation to their sponsorships. Not only will this provide a glimpse into how sponsorship is seen to work from a sponsor's perspective, but it will also underscore the surprising complexity of the participants' responses.

An important point to bear in mind is the varied and often contradictory way sponsors explain sponsorship and their thoughts and actions in relation to it. In many cases, participant responses were unexpectedly insightful in their evaluation of the practice of sponsorship and their participation in it. Some sponsors mentioned that sponsorship was largely an emotional ploy aimed at getting their money, but that it worked on them. Sometimes, this insightfulness took the form of frank admissions of ignorance. Several sponsors noted, for example, that they really did not know much about

their sponsored child, where they lived, or how they benefited from sponsorship. These responses were mixed in with a wide array of comments ranging from first-hand knowledge of what sponsorship agencies do abroad to exhortations against helping Muslim children. Despite this diversity of sponsor observations and perceptions, or perhaps because of it, it is possible to pull out some enlightening points of similarity.[94]

The sponsors discussed the nature of child sponsorship in a variety of ways. Most often, however, they mentioned that it was a way to help someone out, a way to do something concrete for a child and his or her family or community. This could be accomplished, moreover, with minimal effort on the part of the sponsor, so it was presented as somewhat of an obvious choice. For example, Abby explained that "basically we give World Vision 35 dollars a month and they move her [their sponsored child's] family into a community where they teach them to be self-sufficient and provide them with ways of getting education and help them to learn." Despite not necessarily portraying what actually happens as a result of sponsorship, Abby described what she imagines the results to be as both tangible and direct. Consequently, she went on to say that "I always thought it was a really great idea. I mean why not help somebody out for, you know, when you can put that little amount in, and it seems to make so much of a

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[94] Some of the diversity in the participant understandings of sponsorship may be due to the fact that a seemingly disproportionate number of participants had extensive knowledge of sponsorship programs and / or issues of international development. At least two participants had worked for child sponsorship programs, sometimes in overseas offices. At least three participants (not necessarily the same ones) had studied international development issues at the graduate level. At least four sponsors had visited their sponsored children.

Because of this diversity, as well as the scope of the study, it is not really possible to represent all participants' voices equally well. Consequently, the following account of sponsorship should not be taken as representative of the entire breadth of participant responses, just as it may not be representative of all sponsors' experiences or opinions. The goal, however, is not really to generalize to all child sponsors although many of the points are probably reflective of a majority sponsors. Instead, the objective is to explore the ways this subset of sponsors understands what they are doing in order to shed light on the social and psychological processes involved in decision to begin or maintain sponsorship. These understandings can then be analyzed to highlight the way sponsors (re)produce various discourses related to sponsorship.

large difference in somebody's life, why not?" This connection between the ease of sponsorship and the potentially extraordinary benefits is a theme that will be returned to in a moment. First, it should be noted that many sponsors also described sponsorship as a way to help that was relatively minor, but it was something they could manage. For instance, Jolene mentioned that sponsorship is "just helping to make someone's life better. If you look at what Oprah has done in Africa with the kids who came from poverty. All that other stuff aside with what is going on with that now. To me, this is just a small way to do the same thing. It is being able to take someone who had no hope of a future and give them that hope of a future."

The perception of valuable and straightforward benefits to the child and their family existed even though many sponsors were not exactly sure what happened with their sponsorship fees. Lana explained that

> The [sponsored] child is not an orphan, but his village is very poor. His family is very poor, and I feel that World Vision not only helps my sponsored child with clothing, school supplies, school fees if there are any, but also it sounds like what he gets filters down into his family. Plus, they are always asking me for extra money now. Whether it goes to his village or elsewhere, I am not sure.

Making the same point more frankly, Leah said that

> my donation goes toward helping the child and his immediate community – to improve life for that community and for the child. That is what I believe is supposed to happen and according to the commercials or the TV broadcasts, it is the whole child. It is education, it is medicine, it is food, it is water. That is what they say. Now, whether it is the truth, I have not taken the time to truly investigate it.

This lack of specific knowledge about what happens on the ground, coupled with a perception of direct benefits, is likely a factor in the way the sponsors sometimes linked sponsorship with adoption (unintentionally in some cases). Donald, for example, made the remark that "it is the same with the kid you know for adoption. Oh, I keep saying

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adoption, I mean sponsorship." On the other hand, Pamela directly compared the two by

describing sponsorship in the following way:

> When a child is in need in another country, and somehow, through some
> connection, somebody meets that child and decides that this child's
> progress in life [would be improved] if they had a sponsor, like the way you
> would adopt a child, but since you cannot adopt, you would take on that
> child for life and… be the donor to them, so they can carry on in life and
> have money… usually until they are able to take care of themselves.

Understanding sponsorship as a way of solving the specific problems of poverty for

Southern children was a recurring topic among sponsors' description of sponsorship.

Commonly perceived deficits including food, health care, and most prominently

education were seen to be the reason behind the need for child sponsorship, which was

thus seen to be a solution. For example, Robert described sponsorship as "supporting a

kid who if you do not sponsor it [sic] may well not get education or may not get some

food to live on. Secondly it shows to the child and his family that there are people out

there who are concerned about them." Harriet reiterated the importance of solving the

problem of education, saying that "it is really all about going to school… I link up there

because I am a teacher and these children would be at home working, whatever that is.

Subsistence farming is usually what the families are about. They have got a couple, goats

couple chickens, maybe a tiny plot of land." Discussing what he perceived to be the

reason why sponsorship is a useful tool to address poverty, Trevor stated that "it is a way

of seeing what your money does as opposed to something like United Way or so on

where there is a huge pot of money that you throw yours in with, and you have no

feedback. I think that the feedback is very gratifying." In his mind, the perceived concrete

relationship between sponsor and child separates it from other forms of charity because

of its individualized character. "It is not just giving charity," he says, "but it is giving it in

a way that allows them [sponsored child and his or her family] to leverage it themselves

and do something with it [his donation]." At the same time, Trevor admits that "it is hard

to find common ground" and, therefore, does not write to his sponsored child.

Trevor was not alone in finding it difficult to discover "common ground" with his

sponsored child. Harriet also noted that

> there is a great distance between us and these children… So you want to
> look for connections, but let us face it there really are not very many
> connections except on the human level. And so they do not speak English,
> and you cannot really talk about your life, so it is not like having a pen pal
> like some people might think… I am not looking for that though.

This "distance" did not stop many sponsors from discussing sponsorship in terms of the

connection between sponsor and child, however. From her perspective, Alexis thought

sponsorship "seemed to be a fairly trouble-free way of making a connection with a child

and improving her life." Other sponsors mirrored this view, such as Gail who said, "I

think it is the personal connection. It is receiving these little pieces of paper that gives me

a sense that this person is benefiting from what I am doing." Donald, a man in his forties,

stated that "it is very important [that] I feel like a have a connection with the child. My

little guy is 17 now." The connection with his "little guy" did not seem quite as strong

later on, though, when he said, "I approach it [sponsorship] in a very loose way… so I

will just write a check and send it off. I probably should look at it more carefully and say

what does sponsorship mean, but to me, it is just like helping this kid in this village."

Despite understanding that sponsorship is a "construct" to raise money, Tom expressed

the desire for connection in a very similar manner, saying that "there is the hope that

there will be at least some kind of relationship developing between the two [sponsor and

child]". However, when discussing his own relationship to his sponsored child, he noted

that "it is pretty limited… because of the age differential between the child and myself

and a huge cultural gap as well; so there is less of a relationship." Patty commented on her connection to her sponsored child in what could be considered a more emotional, if still possibly one-sided, way. Describing her state of mind when she learned that her sponsored child was being changed after years of sponsorship, she said, "Oh wait a minute, she has been part of my life for seven years. I do not want to just lose this friend, this person." It became easier, she admitted, even though "it was hard at the beginning to lose kids and have them replaced with new ones… It is kind of sad, but that is the nature of the program."

Whether the sponsors described sponsorship as a way to connect with a child or simply a way to do their part in improving a child's life, they unanimously agreed that sponsorship was easily something they could do. In fact, this sentiment was so common that it was not surprising to hear Patty's initial response to the question of why she sponsors a child: "a dollar a day is nothing". She went on to say,

> at one point, I was so strapped for cash, and I thought, 'how am I going to keep a roof over my head? How am I going to eat?' And so I was looking at the budget, and I thought maybe I am going to have to cut the kids… but then I just thought 'no' that [44 dollars] will buy me a few more groceries, but it gets so much more for them. And so it just that bit of money for them just means so much more [sic], so I just kept doing it.

Donald echoed Patty's statements, saying that "It is not a huge amount of money. I mean my finances are always stretched… but I look around where I live, and I am so god-damn lucky of course I can afford that." Perhaps Harriet summed it up best when she observed that sponsorship "does not cost very much… Practically anyone in North America can do this kind of support. It is very cheap, and they do not even want you to give a lot of money, and it is very easy to do… so it was something that we could do and feel like we were making a difference." The combination of financial and logistical ease with the

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feeling of "making a difference" was something many sponsors alluded to again and

again. For example, Gail asserted that sponsorship

> is not a hardship financially. I kind of look at it like direct giving at that
> point in time, similar to the panhandler in the street.. I kind of like [it]
> because there is a sense of making a difference… What I am doing really
> takes zero effort on my part, you know. It is so minimal as to be ridiculous,
> but for whatever reason, I think it is making a big difference in her life.

While Phyllis agreed that "it is a small amount of money…to help a child and their

family improve their life to have an opportunity for education, to improve their health, to

improve their community," Alexis described a different aspect of how easy sponsorship

is. She admitted that "they make it fairly painless, and it comes right off my VISA card.

So I even get Air Miles [laughs], and the price has not gone up in two years."

Sponsorship was considered so affordable and effortless, in fact, Leah even confided that

"in some ways I see it as a cop out because it is so easy just to give 33 bucks a month or

whatever to support this child… it is easier than me actually going over and getting my

hands dirty and trying to make a difference… it is just an easy way to help without

getting too involved".

As noted above, the ease of sponsorship for the sponsor was often juxtaposed with

the perceived benefits to the sponsored child, their family, and their community. When

asked to describe what their money was used for, however, a sizable majority of the

participants had an extremely difficult time articulating what exactly these benefits were.

Beyond mentioning some broad areas such as education, health care, and food, these

sponsors commonly – and rather calmly – admitted to not knowing where their money

went. For example, when asked this question, Tom exclaimed "oooh gosh, I am sure they

have told me. Um, from what I can remember off the top of my head, I have the

impression it is paying for at least education [and] some other necessities like food and

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clothing." Similarly, Donald responded, "I do not ask to details [and] say, 'okay I want a breakdown', but I have heard education being pointed out, help them go to school otherwise he [sic] might have to go to work." He immediately followed this statement, somewhat incongruously, with the assertion that "people have to be careful to understand what is happening with their money." Another participant offered a comment that could be a reiteration of this point or an explanation of it. She revealed that "we do not see anything really more than what just shows up in the mail… so we do not really know how the organization handles things, but there has not been anything that has left me wondering what is going on." Toby, on the other hand, put it as simply as possible. When asked what he thought his sponsorship money was used for, he replied, "I really do not know how to answer that."

Instead of specifics, then, sponsors often relied on variations of the general idea of "helping" to describe what went on in the South with their donations. Interestingly, the word "hope" also came up repeatedly in the same context. For example, Phyllis noted that as a sponsor you have to "hope that you have given some improvement in their [the sponsored child's] life. You have not answered all their questions. You have not taken care of everything, but you have kind of helped them get up a notch." Using similar language, Leah said "I am believing it [her donations] goes to the child and the community is what I hope because that is what the commercials lead us to believe… I am hoping that a portion goes directly to the child for education, health, etc… [but] I just honestly do not know how effective it is [the use of money for sponsored children]." Alexis also made the same point: "well, I am hoping it is used for things like digging wells and providing sanitation and healthy cooking stoves because that is another

problem in the developing world… I really do not know; I have not investigated. I write

the check [and] look at the stuff peripherally." Valerie added

> I think just the knowledge that somewhere, you may never meet them, that hopefully you helped to make a difference. I do not know whether that is educationally. I am hoping it is, you know. They told me it is true. Apparently, his father works to support the family, but they are very, very poor. I do not know what work is in that area, probably what his dad's doing, farming, but it would be nice to think he had have more education perhaps than his parents, but I do not know what education. They do not tell me that.

From these statements, it may seem as though these sponsors were not terribly curious

about, or engaged with, their sponsorship. Given the rest of their responses, however, this

did not appear to the case. Rather, the hope of doing something good, something they

understood to be of help to poor Southern children, was enough of an incentive to

overlook (or disregard) the unknown. Alexis expressed both this desire and uncertainty

with the following rhetorical question and answer: "Where do you begin? I do not have a

clue where to begin. Well, in my own little way, I do not know where to begin, but at

least I can write a check and a letter or two." Coming from a slightly different angle,

Leah seemed to see the purpose as overshadowing the details. "I see them [children] as

innocent," she said, "I see them as born into a world, into circumstances that were not

very kind to them." Therefore, I help "because I am in a position to… I definitely

recognize how fortunate I am not to be in those other circumstances, [and] being part of

the solution even in such a small way is definitely a motivator."

Wanting to "make a difference"

This language about "helping", "making a difference", or "being part of the

solution" also came up repeatedly when participants discussed why they chose to begin

and maintain their sponsorships. In addition, many sponsors noted that the personalized aspect of sponsorship was a major draw as well as the desire to follow through on a commitment they had made. Some sponsors, although fewer than one might expect, also talked about the emotional draw of sponsorship. Leah, for example, frequently mentioned guilt throughout her interview although she expressly noted that sponsoring a child was the result of a "combination" of guilt and compassion. Campbell spelled it out clearly when he said, "I feel almost guilty living in the lap of luxury in this beautiful part of the world that it eases my conscience somewhat that I am contributing even though it is in a minute way to a child of the Third World." Like Leah, Campbell's guilt seems to stem from a perception of how fortunate he is to have what he has (or perhaps, to live where he does). Guilt or compassion were not the only emotions mentioned, however. In reference to why she began sponsoring a child, Gail spoke about the "admiration" she felt for someone she knew who sponsored a number of children. Talking more generally about the emotional aspect of sponsorship, a former sponsor admitted that she was "sucked into the whole gambit." Margery, who has since become quite critical of the idea of sponsorship, had decided to sponsor a child with two friends after seeing a promotional concert held by a sponsorship program. She remembered "the whole emotional side of it after the concert saying, well you know, this is a way we can get involved and help these kids." She also drew attention to how the emotional aspect of deciding to sponsor a child blended into her feelings around the connection to the child. She said, "I was totally sucked into that whole thing where you are writing a person so you do have that person's face and that connection… So I felt like, yes, stopping the financial support would be a bit of a betrayal to that somewhat relationship we had."

Once again, the idea of the connection – of the "somewhat relationship" to a sponsored child – played a motivating role for many sponsors. Harriet laid it out succinctly, saying "I think that there is a great appeal to having this kind of aid personalized that really speaks to people that do this." Despite speaking of "the complications and the expense of the individual name [the fact that sponsorship involves the idea of giving to an individual]", Alexis, who is relatively new to sponsorship, acknowledged "that the individual name is a real draw for people who want that sort of emotional connection." It was not clear if she included herself in this category of people or not. Instead, she stated that "what drew me to Parents Plan because I would have a foster grandchild somewhere [sic]." Alexis was not the only sponsor to personalize their sponsored child(ren) with reference to their own family. Valerie made the revealing comment that she sponsored a child

> because I have a daughter in England, and through marriage breakdown, I have no contact with my grandchildren any more. So I thought I was very sad, and I do not have control, and I am hoping one day it will happen again, but that is okay. It [sponsorship] was a way for me to channel my desire to help. The little boy [sponsored child] is the same age as my grandson, and I could not have contact with him, but I could have with someone else. That was probably what the catalyst was.

This (psychological?) substitution of an actual or desired child with a sponsored child is a point that will be brought up again later. For now, it is enough to recognize that the sponsors were often drawn to the idea of either developing a relationship with a child or simply being able to "see" their money at work in an apparently direct manner. Patty included both these elements, saying "at the beginning it was because I thought I can help one kid break out of that cycle of poverty by helping them to stay in school and not have to quit and help out at home or go out and work or whatever. I can help at least one child, and if I could put a face to that child and get some letters from that child, so much the

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better." Focusing on the latter aspect, Jenny said of sponsorship that "there is no doubt where the money is going where it is supposed to go and the children are advancing and learning and happy. If you send a big amount of money to the Red Cross or some other big organization… somebody could be lining their pockets with that money." Alternatively, Vanessa and Tom mentioned the former element. Vanessa said, "I always had that [sponsorship] in the back of my mind. I like volunteer stuff, and making a contribution back, so on and so forth… Then of course the letters and the photos were something that inspired me, and I liked the personal connection." Tom began with a similar sentiment, saying "I guess I see the key difference between child sponsorship and giving money to some other organization is that relationship with the child." He ended, however, by noting that "I do not think that I have had that particularly deep or meaningful relationship with this child." In spite of the disappointment this apparently caused him, Tom did not stop sponsoring the child. Rather, he noted said, "I felt like I made a commitment, and I wanted to honour that."

Tom was not the only sponsor to discuss their continuation of sponsorship in terms of personal commitment. Margery, Tom's partner and a former sponsor, also commented that "I had made that commitment, and I was not going to drop it." Recall that she considered it somewhat of a "betrayal" to stop her sponsorship. Interestingly, she said this despite first-hand knowledge that her sponsored child would not really lose any benefits if she stopped. This contradiction points to an interpretation that her commitment somehow combines thoughts of the child and desire to be a particular kind of person. A comment Valerie made supports this interpretation. She said that maintaining her sponsorship "was a commitment I made to myself." Adrienne, another former sponsor,

also discussed commitment in a way that was not directly related to her perceived relationship to the sponsored child; she discussed her decision to sponsor as associated with the stability it provided in her own life at the time. She said, "That was a way I could do it [give money to charity] monthly, and there was a commitment involved. So instead of just saying, 'oh, I will give money without a commitment,' it is just easier to have it [like that]. That way it's organized."

While the sponsors routinely talked about things like connection and commitment as to why they sponsor, the most common response to this question by far was that they wanted to "make a difference" in the world. Valerie drew on this language, saying "we were not rich at all by North American standards, but I felt we could make a difference." Phyllis made a similar comment that highlights the personal desire to do some good that is associated with this general idea. She declared, "I think it is really important that we are playing this kind of part sponsoring something that can help someone move on in their life. It is really dear to my heart, and I think it is very strong in me, and that is why I wanted to do it." On the other hand, a comment Tom made emphasizes the extremely general – or perhaps vague is a better term – character of "making a difference". He said, "I just had a sense of wanting to do something to help out, something in a developing context, you know, overseas kind of idea, and thought that this was one way to do that."

Imagining sponsorship as a practical (and often sufficient) way to help was not only a common theme in participants' decisions to sponsor, but it was also one that was frequently linked to a sort of pessimism about the state of the world. Donald, for example, assumed that "you cannot change the world. You can only do little things to try and make it work. You do what you can do." Sponsorship was seen as particularly valuable way to

do something, then, because other efforts to help did not seem as useful – at least for Donald who was heavily engaged in the anti-war movement. "That is exactly why I am supporting a kid," he noted. "it is exactly why I want to be do one thing [sic] at least that I know is having an effect because the other things you do, sometimes it does not make any difference." Martha echoed and expanded on this sentiment, saying

> I think sometimes we get overwhelmed like when they say there is a million children starving in Africa and that [you] cannot do anything. But if you take one person with one child, you can do something, and so if ten people do ten children you can do something. So to me, that was an important thing that you can do something instead of being overwhelmed by everything that is going on in the world.

Donald and Martha's comments not only highlight the noteworthy overlap between the ambiguity of the perceived benefits of sponsorship and the vague explanations of their motivation to begin sponsoring, but they also juxtapose the imagined hopelessness of global poverty with the hope of sponsorship. This union of hopelessness and hope does not seem entirely coincidental. Recall the World Vision advertisement where Susan Hay pleads, "We just need you to sponsor, and maybe you do not think you can make a difference – you cannot change the world – but if we all get together, one person can make a difference in the lives of little ones like this." Toby's perception of the situation encapsulates these views about "making a difference" when he said, "I am pretty well-off, but there is a lot of the world [that] is not, and there is nothing that is ever going to be done. So I like knowing that, OK, now there is a village that has a well, and they will do okay after all. I like that."

The rewards of sponsorship

The satisfaction that Toby expressed about "making a difference" was commonly mentioned not only as an incentive to begin sponsoring a child but also as one of the most gratifying elements of sponsorship. When asked what the most rewarding aspects of sponsorship are, most of the sponsors talked about the good feelings associated with helping others, particularly others who are as destitute (or exotic) as the sponsors imagined their children to be. Like a number of sponsors, Tom used the word satisfaction to refer to the rewards of sponsorship. Tom said, "The initial motivation for doing it was to help, right, and so I am not really looking for a reward out of it. I guess one could say that the satisfaction of having done something [though]." Other sponsors , such as Vanessa and Pamela, simply described the good feeling they got from what they were doing. Sponsorship provided "that warm fuzzy feeling that I was doing something", commented Vanessa. "Because you came along this child's life is forever changed… and that is a really good feeling," stated Pamela.

Again, the manner in which these feelings are expressed is not coincidental. Organizations such as Christian Children's Fund, Harriet explained, do "a great job of making you feel like you are making a difference." No matter the precise impact one is making, sponsorship programs (justifiably?) ensure sponsors feel like their donations are significant. In yet another instance of combining general notions of help and hope, Harriet described this quality of child sponsorship:

> I crossed my fingers and prayed that at least somebody was getting
> something positive out of it. Maybe it was our family; maybe it was
> somebody else… You do not learn much about the country, but you learn a
> little about your child. And what you learn is that you are making a
> difference, and that is why you are doing it… It is nice to feel you are doing
> something whatever that is.

In recounting this experience, Harriet not only highlights the role of the organization in facilitating these feelings of satisfaction, but she also calls attention to two important themes regarding the rewards of sponsorship. The first relates to the not-unfamiliar notion that the good feelings associated with charity are valuable in and of themselves and, therefore, remove some of the selflessness from apparently altruistic acts. The second deals with the idea that sponsorship is a learning experience for sponsors. A comment by Abby epitomizes the first point. "It is almost just like we are helping these people and we do not know them that well, we are just kind of giving them a hand," she said. "I like it, well, helping people is not entirely unselfish, you know, you get a good feeling. Well, I do anyways. I get a good feeling when I do it, and I am proud of myself, you know. I mean that is why I do it." In a very telling turn of phrase, Abby went on to express what might be considered the limits of this egocentric facet of sponsorship. Discussing the selection of her sponsored child, she commented on the peculiarity of the experience, saying "you almost feel like you are, I do not know, like you are a god deciding that, oh, this is the one that is going to all of the sudden have this better shot at life." Although not quite as extreme, Beatrice made a similar point when she admitted that

> it certainly makes me feel good to know that a child is being educated, fed, supported. For me, that is the best thing that I am still able to be part of – I do not know, humanity I suppose, I do not know what word to use – that I have still got a certain amount of usefulness… I have to have that need of being wanted also by a child. It is a 2-way street.

Harriet, Abby, Beatrice, and many other sponsors acknowledged this not "entirely unselfish" element to their sponsorship. Perhaps the most significant – and most unusual – example came from a woman named Jenny, who sponsors 18 children from World Vision.

An elderly lady, widowed and retired, Jenny had recently moved from Toronto where she had sponsored 14 children and where, she said, there were "too many immigrants." Although not necessary from an organizational standpoint, she stopped her sponsorships before moving, and began again when she arrived in Victoria. "Now I have 18 children whose pictures are on my wall," she read from a statement that she had pre-written for the research interview. "This makes me very happy," she went on, "I know I am changing their lives forever. Almost all of the children are from Africa because Africa, Africa children [sic] are the most in need." She repeated both these points several times throughout her statement and the conversation that followed. "It made me so happy to think I was helping kids. It gives a lot of pleasure to help people" she said. "They thank me very much for my letters and say, 'God bless you for helping me', and the parents say the same thing. I do not know what else you could do to make you feel better than to sponsor a World Vision child." Happiness was not the only emotion she referred to when discussing her extraordinary engagement with sponsorship. She declared, "I am awfully proud of what I am doing," and she mentioned that her two grown sons were also "proud of me because of it." Jenny seamlessly blended (conflated?) the benefits of sponsorship for the children with her self-perception. For example, she recounted the following story: "one little girl would have died if I had not have been her sponsor. She lived in Malan, Mawali, [Interviewer: 'Malawi'] Malawi. She was seven or eight, and she took pneumonia, and because I was her sponsor, they managed to get her to a hospital to save her life. So that was a good day *for me* (emphasis added)." She concluded the interview with the revealing remark – which will be considered in more detail later on – that while

she would like her efforts to inspire other people, she would "not want them to be jealous of [her]."

Although few sponsors were as forthright about the personal rewards of sponsorship as Jenny was, her responses could be said to reflect the ideal-typical sponsorship experience. The notion that Jenny's comments are ideal-typical is important both in locating her case within the participant responses overall and in highlighting what could colloquially be seen as the exception that proves the rule. The analytical value of Jenny's comments lie not in their representativeness – because they are so obviously not representative of all sponsors – but in their overt reflection of the often subtle subjective processes that are at play within the sponsorship experience.

Feelings of satisfaction, happiness, or pride were not the only elements mentioned by sponsors that speak to the personal rewards of sponsorship. Several sponsors also simply talked about it as an "experience", as something that is "fun" to do or something that fills a space in one's life. "I always thought it was just fun and interesting," Jaime said. Upon hearing about the unplanned changing of her sponsored child, Vanessa noted that it took "some of the fun out of it for me." In her response to the question about the rewards of sponsorship, Alexis mentioned the fun of it along with many of the issues discussed above. She said,

> I do not know that there are a whole lot of rewards. It makes me feel that I am doing my a little bit. It is also nice when you get telephone solicitation to say, 'Thank you. I am already involved' and not be telling a lie. It is not a whole lot of money. It is 33 dollars. That is not even a coffee a day these days. Its supportable; it is doable; it is one little thing… making a difference even to one little person's life is a nice thing to do and definitely [the] connection because I volunteer and travel… I thought it would be kind of fun to have another reason for going [to the country where her sponsored child lives]… I think it will be fun to see where she lives.

Alexis was not the only sponsor to talk about visiting her sponsored child as a gratifying part of the experience. Trevor "strongly recommend anybody who is doing this to visit their sponsored child. I think that is an incredible part of the experience." Alexis was also not the only sponsor to mention the fact that her sponsorship allows her to hear about poverty in the world and feel like she is already doing her part. Erica, a former sponsor, noted that "when I would see the commercials come on TV, I would feel a little like I do that." She continued to comment on her former sponsorship, talking about the experience she got out of it and what happened when she was done. She said that she did not feel guilty about stopping because, "I do not know, been there, done that, and that was cool, and that was it."

In addition to talking about the personal rewards of sponsorship, Erica also touched on an issue that seems to be a frequently cited (but largely unknown) aspect of sponsorship. This is the idea that sponsoring a child is a good way to learn about other places and the problems of development that plague them. In this regard, however, Erica and many other sponsors found sponsorship to fall short. "I was expecting more," she said, "I do not know what more I was expecting… more information… like what was happening in their community. It was kind of like, 'Thanks for your money; here is a picture of the kid.'" Harriet spelled it out more directly, observing that "you get very little information honestly… I do not think it really does work to teach you much." Gail – a 'white', middle-aged, middle-class, immigrant Canadian with two grown children like Harriet – just said, "Do I learn a lot from it? Not necessarily." A response from Tom provides a possible explanation for this lack of educational benefit. He conceded that "the level of correspondence is very rudimentary." Adrienne explained that "there are just

check marks [on the yearly updates]. There is really not much written out [about the child], so I think it [the reason for sponsorship] was my telling myself that I was giving something back. I was doing part of my tithe and being connected."

Despite the general lack of confidence in the educational ability of sponsorship regarding the sponsored child, their country, and their circumstances, more than a third of all participants thought that sponsoring a child was a great way to teach their (grand)children about the value of charity. Even though Harriet did not believe that sponsorship worked "to teach you much," she was quite adamant that her children benefited from the experience. She said,

> I know that I thought at the time that this would be something that a) was nice to help others and [b)] I thought it would be something my children would be able to relate to. And so that is part of the, maybe, Christian teaching, and that is part the teacher thing, understanding that personalizing things for children makes it much more real, much more of an experience they can relate to.

Again like Harriet, Gail described sponsorship as "an example of walking the talk, right? So, this is something we do as a family, and that just helps solidify part of who we are as a family and demonstrating our value… I think if we do not have these sort of demonstrations of doing that then it becomes something like it is not real, it is not part of who you are." This statement may be a simple recognition of the desire to put one's values into practice as a lesson for one's children. However, it also appears to represent a fascinating insight into the way ethical identity is constructed, especially in consideration of Gail's mistaken use of the term "value" in the singular rather than the plural. For example, it demonstrates the predominantly social, as opposed to psychological, character of ethical identity construction, highlighting the connection between moral self-

perception and participation in particular social practices (as opposed to simply espousing

certain opinions).

From these responses, it seems as though the educational experience of sponsorship

is more about showing one's (grand)children how to be a good person in contemporary

times than about actually learning something concerning the roots of global poverty or

the lives of sponsored children. Donald, for example, expressed this outlook, saying "I

wanted to go see him [the sponsored child] actually, but then I have got mixed feelings

about that too. I think, God, maybe I should just give the money to the community, but I

would love my son to see it, to go there with me, just so that he could continue on

thinking about these kids… and then he will have a conscience as he grows up." While

Harriet's, Gail's, and Donald's remarks are similar to those of other sponsors, Beatrice

provided some comments that seem to epitomize this notion of the desired moral

educational of child sponsorship. Not only did she mention that sponsoring a child is "a

great way of teaching my grandchildren that we are not the only people in the universe"

and that through this process "they benefit [her grandchildren], we benefit and the kids

overseas benefit", but she also described the situation in more depth, explaining that

> my husband and I will give X amount of dollars to the children to give to
> [the sponsorship program], and in return what I am trying to get [the
> program] to follow through is to acknowledge to our grandchildren what
> kind of difference it is made… because this is the only way we can teach
> North American children 'look what you have done'… And the only way, I
> think, for North American children to pick up on that, is to read it, to have
> their name on it.

Questioning sponsorship organizations

Before moving on to discuss some of the critical themes present in sponsor

responses, there is one more pertinent topic that participants brought up. Within the

interview, sponsors were given an opportunity to communicate their own critical comments with regard to sponsorship or to the specific organization involved. Apart from concerns such as too many extra requests for donations, too much money being spent on fundraising or administration, lack of follow-up information on sponsored children, and age-inappropriate presents or cards being sent to children, one thing stood out in particular. This was the fact that, in most cases, sponsors were not terribly invested in the organization itself. Instead, it was child sponsorship that was important and not trust in the organization to do good work, which seems somewhat contrary to popular notions of charitable giving where trust in the organization is seen to be critical. As Toby noted, he chose World Vision simply because "that is just the one who came walking up the road." Consequently, he did not feel like he could elaborate on the organization, saying "I feel like if I knew the organization better I could pick them apart." Adrienne came right out and said that she "just was not loyal to the organization." The most telling illustration of this point, however, is the fact that so many sponsors had trouble remembering what organization they sponsored with. Jenny mentioned that, at one point, she "accidentally" sponsored with the "wrong" agency (apparently because she forgot which one it was). While talking about how he had gone out of his way to call some organizations to find out about sponsorship, Donald remarked, "which one am I with again? I always forget. It is terrible."

Despite this somewhat surprising lack of interest in the specific agencies, participants were not shy about questioning some of the practices involved even though this rarely resulted in them discontinuing sponsorship. Perhaps because of this, many critical comments by sponsors were not targeted at the particular organization. Tom and

Vanessa, for example, merely wondered why the letters from their sponsored children seemed inconsistent (as if written by or about different children). Related to another issue, Vanessa and Harriet were "skeptical" about the situation with their sponsored child for similar reasons. Vanessa did not understand why "here we are in Zimbabwe and everybody is always well, and everybody is always healthy… I know there is a lot more going on there." Harriet, on the other hand, noticed that over "the last couple of years, the pictures looked the same, and so you did not see any developmental kind of stuff [which you would expect]." While many sponsors would likely not put it quite so negatively, Pamela summed up these concerns about the legitimacy of child sponsorship as a practice (rather than as an organizational failing), saying "something about it began to seem fake and contrived."

Themes: Poverty in the global South

The participants' responses are filled with many fascinating and relevant reflections on their experiences with child sponsorship. Among these, however, their articulation of ideas around themes such as poverty, development, race, and religion are particularly enlightening with respect to the relationship between how they imagine the Others they are "helping", how they conceptualize that help, and how they see themselves in relation to it. The general patterns in participant comments considered above lays the groundwork for an argument about sponsorship that focuses more on the construction of ethical identities than the solving of problems of poverty. The following discussion of themes, on the other hand, draws on the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two in order to provide the analytical connections that make this argument justifiable.

Sponsors characterized the conditions of their sponsored children, along with their communities and countries, in a variety of ways. Although a surprising number of participants were well acquainted with complex explanations of global poverty as well as the potential problems of stereotyping Others[95], the majority of sponsors still drew on mainstream assumptions regarding the global South. These assumptions, a staple element of the discourse of development[96], commonly take the form of monolithically envisioning the global South (and particularly the continent of Africa) as a place teeming with hungry, sick, and conflict-ridden people(s), who are the product of barren environments and bad choices. For example, Lana described where her sponsored child is from, saying

> they do not have very many resources. I am not sure about the government; they have had dictators who have absconded with what funds were available. The climate can be harsh… I think economically is what their problem is. They do not have a very large economic base to their country. There is not a lot of jobs that pay well. There is not enough community for young people to get to university, so they might not in many cases have any chance to get an education at all.

Introducing another common stereotype, Penelope explained what she saw to be the root problem of development in the South, saying "we cannot make any progress as long as people keep producing 10 or 12 children… It is an endless thing in Africa. You feed one generation, and unless we send out birth control, they have babies, 400 hundred babies in the next few years and everyone is starving." Jolene not only provided a very similar picture to Lana and Penelope, but she also included a comparison of Canada and the global South. She said,

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[95] Although some sponsors were well acquainted with the development industry as noted above, a handful of sponsors who did not study or work in development drew on what could be considered non-mainstream explanations for global poverty and inequality. For example, Martha explained that "it is got a lot to do with politics and economics. We have the power… I think we have mistreated a lot of people." Speaking about global poverty in a similar manner, Vanessa said, "I think our whole society, our whole global economy is very racist… I think it is a white man's world."

[96] See Chapter One for a thorough explanation of this concept.

we can grow everything we need, but I think in many countries they cannot. And I think in a lot of countries, they are small countries with lots of people. We are just so blessed we have room, we have crops, we have everything we need and a lot of countries do not. They do not have the room, they do not have the climate, whatever. [Dictators are] prevalent in a lot of countries, that they have corrupt governments, and those in power are living high off the hog, and everybody else is living in poverty.

These somewhat stereotypical accounts of what life is like in the global South do not, of course, spring from the ether. They are propagated through a variety of (mass) media, including sponsorship promotional material. This complex relationship between stereotypes of the South and sponsorship is readily apparent in the invalidated expectations of sponsors. Several sponsors were surprised by their sponsorship experience because the conventional representations that convinced them to sponsor were subsequently discredited through the very experience of sponsorship. For example, Harriet noted that "we were quite surprised our first child was in Haiti, and I was not kind of expecting that. I was expecting Africa or something like that." A more detailed version of this issue was recounted by Adrienne, who visited her sponsored child in Brazil. She said, "we go into the house [of her sponsored child] and they have this brand new stereo system and a brand new fridge and a brand new stove." She explained that the child "happened to be in an urban area, and World Vision showed mainly Africa. And so this was Latin America. It was very different than what was on television, and so we always picture this African child with flies on their face. And I knew it was not that, but I guess I expected a higher level of poverty." The expectations of sponsors do not simply highlight the stereotypes that circulate regarding conditions in the global South, they also reveal what sponsors expect from sponsorship. In this regard, it is once again revealing to introduce Jenny's rather candid viewpoint.

While her sincerity is undeniable, Jenny's discussion of Africa was replete with what, from most social scientific perspectives, would be deemed overly-generalized or racist comments. She explained that "African children are in the need the most. Many of their parents have died. Many still live in mud huts. Many have very little to eat, and many have health problems." Jenny went on to link these stereotypical portrayals to the practice and experience of sponsorship. She said,

> the first picture is one of a sad, often frail, child. One who needs help each year. You receive a new picture, and what a difference. You hardly recognize the child; she looks so happy. The child is always smiling. Her face is bright and interested. She even looks healthy, and you will know you are giving for this fortunate child a new life, for a chance for education and happiness. It will make you happy too. You will feel as if you have done something special. This is the most rewarding action you can do… you know you are helping a child live a good life, you're saving it. Those little girls have an awful time over there. They end up as sex slaves lots of them. Nothing else they can do, and if they avoid that, they still have a terribly hard life, have about fifteen children, many die of AIDS. They just have a dreadful life, so why would not I want to help them?

Jenny's description of the problems confronting children in Africa, and the help that sponsorship provides, may seem a little too simplistic to be representative of many sponsors. However, there were several other participants who echoed her assessment in similar, if not identical, ways. Abby admitted that she is "kind of ignorant about what their life is like," saying "do they live in a hut?… Niger, I do not know anything about Niger really. Where is that in relation to some of these horrible things that you hear about happening over there, and is somebody going to come in and wipe out this village that World Vision has worked so hard to set up?" Based on what "you hear about things and read about them," she explained that "it is not lush and green and that sort of thing. There are challenges to even getting yourself started with something, and… there is not – I guess probably not really – a public education per se." Because of these kinds of

perceptions, Abby could then locate the "proper" solutions that she imagined sponsorship to provide. She said,

> I like that they teach them to be self-sufficient. It is not like you are just throwing money at a problem, and they are not solving it. They are working towards getting them up and moving on their own, and then they can move on and help somebody else because I think that is really important. You know, you cannot just hand people cash, here you go, and let them sort it out for themselves because a lot of times, I do not know why, but they just never seem to get themselves up out of anything.

For the purposes of the present project, these comments, and many others like them, are interesting not necessarily because they provide evidence of the use of stereotyping and the presence of paternalistic ideals in relation to the global South. Although these comments may support such an interpretation, they also reveal the relationship between the way sponsors imagine Others and the way they see themselves. Significantly, this relationship relies on the liberal values that are thought to counter discriminatory patterns. In particular, the overwhelming emphasis on education (on both the personal and communal levels), and the ideas of individual responsibility and prosperity that are linked to it, as a solution to the problems of "underdevelopment" serves not only to reinforce the separation of Southern poverty from Northern wealth but also to legitimize the practice of "individual" child sponsorship. Because of the interventions that sponsoring a child is seen to provide (education being the chief among them), sponsorship is able to play a special role in facilitating this relationship between the way Others are imagined and the way sponsors see themselves. The importance of this connection among stereotyping, liberal values, and sponsorship lies in the fact that no amount of cultural sensitivity – and no amount of "public education" or "awareness-raising" about the global South – will be

able to simply eradicate the use of stereotypes without some consideration of how they are enmeshed with identity processes in North.[97]

The focus on education and its central role in sponsorship was repeatedly apparent in sponsors' responses. Like many sponsors, Valerie cited the main benefit of sponsorship as "more education." Regarding her sponsored child, Martha stated, "I want her to be educated… It is one of the main reasons we sponsored so that a girl could get educated, a Muslim girl." Jenny, straightforward as ever, said that "I insist on them going to school. I remember last year some child could not continue on with their schooling for some reason, and they wrote to me asking me if I would pay anything. I said 'no, there is no future for the child if she cannot go to school.' I cannot pay for her." Similar to Jenny, Lana drew the connection between the personal "effort" of sponsorship and the value of education, commenting that "the most rewarding part [of sponsorship] is just to see he is gradually getting an education… and especially he will be literate and has had the opportunity. It is something that we are developing a literate, educated little guy."

Once again, it is not necessarily the thematic considerations that are most important here. The focus on education merely serves to illustrate the processes involved in the way Northern identities are related to perceptions of poverty in the South. In particular, these processes seem to hinge upon the characteristic relationships that individuals and collectivities (whether one's own or those of Others) are seen to have within modern liberal thought. These relationships – such as those that specify parental, governmental, or developmental responsibilities – help define the roles (including their limitations) that Northerners are expected to assume in light of Southern poverty. In this way, we can

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[97] This point is in line with theorizing about identity and its relationship to the process of Othering. See Chapter Four for details.

make sense of Martha's statement (quoted earlier) as an expression of how child

sponsorship helps Northerners fulfill these roles:

> I think sometimes we get overwhelmed like when they say there is a
> million children starving in Africa and that. But I cannot do anything, but if
> you take one person with one child you can do something, and so if 10
> people do 10 children you can do something. So, to me, that was an
> important thing that you can do something instead of being overwhelmed
> by everything that is going on in the world.

In order to understand this comment as both rational and reasonable, it is necessary

to already have a set of pre-conceived ideas about the (in)abilities and responsibilities of

individuals. For example, the fact that such things as starvation in Africa are seen to be

separated from the personal lives of Northerners, except in terms of their emotional

impact, means that the issue can be understood in terms of choice (rather than, say,

obligation). This reliance on sponsor choice, and particularly the choice to sponsor, then

becomes associated with a particular understanding of child sponsorship as a solution to

the problems of Southern poverty because, among other things, it is the choice that is

apparently available to them. Consequently, we end up with sponsors like Leah, who

admitted that "I know what I am doing is better than nothing, but I know there is got to be

something that is even more effective, more better," before she made the following

revealing (and confounding) statement: "I am just hoping that there is enough

sponsorship out there that one day we do not have to have hurting children."

Themes: Race and Nation

The way sponsors described the conditions of the South and their role in improving

them through sponsorship was not only indicative of particular understandings of choice

and responsibility, but it was also animated by particular national and racial themes. It

should be noted, however, that these themes are present in extremely subtle forms. Despite the concept's enormous socio-cultural significance, direct references to race by sponsors were few and far between. As has been recognized by many recent academic perspectives on race (for example, see Giroux, 1994; White, 2002; Wren, 2001), this is understandable given the way that cultural and political references have taken over much of the language of race (albeit with very similar consequences). On the other hand, the concept of the nation (including perceptions of the nation-state system and Canada's role in it) came up frequently in sponsor responses, but this concept is so naturalized in the understanding of human relations that it is difficult to separate out from other themes such as poverty, religion, and childhood.

One topic that provides a useful inroad into the themes of race and nation is the sponsors' comparison of Canadian conditions with those overseas. These responses were mentioned in the context of discussing why sponsors help children in the South rather than Canadian children. The most common answer to this question is that, as Donald noted, "there is no comparison" to the levels of need. Leah put it more precisely, saying "I am under the impression that internationally the children are worse off than Canadian children." The notion that children overseas will be more grateful for this help was often added to this (reasonable) idea that the need is greater in the South than in Canada. For example, Shelley said, "it is really hard to know how to help the kids here… Southern "kids are happy… smiling, playing with their sticks and stuff, not saying, 'I want. I want.'" Adrienne simply stated that "kids down there have a lot more appreciation for things than kids up here." Perspectives such as these are critical to the success of sponsorship because they help assign relative value to the objects of charity and because

they link these values to the identities and desires of the sponsors. Such perspectives on relating to Canada and the world, allow sponsors to still see themselves as good Canadians even though – or perhaps because – they are not necessarily helping Canadian children. Valerie draws the connection between the perceived difficulties of life in the South and her awareness of herself as a North American. She said,

> I do not know the true extent of it [poverty in the South]. I suppose it is because you see these children and there is poverty and [then] there is [real] poverty, which must be horrible for the child to have to deal with it. And you do see these things about little black babies who've lost their mom and dad. And I do not know if it is true. Are these lies that people tell you about these children?... I am a resident of the world, you know what I am saying, so I have no problem doing something like this. I think it starts there. It is not like I just see myself as this North American and whatever, but I like having that experience of connecting with somebody somewhere else.

The desire to experience connection "with somebody somewhere else" and even the desire to be more than "just" a North American is likely linked to the desire for the Other that bell hooks (1992) talks about as an aspect of the commodification of race and ethnicity. This relationship between sponsorship and the desire for difference is evident in Jaime's description of her motivation to sponsor. She confessed, "I have not been able to travel anywhere, so I guess I have – for lack of a better word – a fascination with other places outside of North America even though I have not been able to go anywhere. And so, I kind of like knowing somebody who has a different society than me, and so I like the connection that it is." Erica, however, tried to explain the association in more depth, saying

> there definitely is an element of – I do not know what it is – exotic-liking or something. Ya, there is something going on like that that just makes people feel good to help out, makes you feel like life is so much harder for other people [in other countries], and it makes people feel better to help out little coloured babies than kids in their own neighborhood.

As hooks discusses, this desire is not simply an interest in something that is unusual or foreign, it is part of a practice of power that reinforces one's own position over Others. This practice is not only associated with the legacy of colonial thought but also with the concept of race pleasure (Farley, 1997). "Race is the preeminent pleasure of our time," writes Farley. "Whiteness is not a color; it is a way of feeling pleasure in and about one's body. The black body is needed to fulfill this desire for race-pleasure" (458). In this light, the pleasure provided through the experience of child sponsorship, while it may not exactly mimic race-pleasure, can be understood in some way as related to the perceptions of wealthy (white) sponsors *because* of their relative position compared to poor (black) children.

The position of sponsors not only provides the pleasure of experience, and the relations of power that this implies, but also the presumption of knowledge. Alexis, for example, asserted that "we are so fortunate here. I can turn on the tap and be confident about the water, and two-thirds of the world cannot do that. I just think we have spread our talents around whatever they are as far as we can." While this statement seems innocuous enough, it is still laden with assumptions about where talent lies and, therefore, who knows best. Gail stated the same idea in more widespread terms, saying "we can take our technology and jump start it into those rural areas. They do not have to go through a linear process to build up to that technology." Why does Canada have this technology to offer? According to Gail, it is because Canada was "a huge barren land full of incredible wealth", and it received the necessary infrastructure "from a civilized society." From Gail's perspective, then, development "has to do with education. As societies become more educated, particularly the women, they start improving culturally;

they begin maturing." Trevor also expressed this perspective in a similar manner with his comment that "it may be popular to decry colonialism, but the British brought democracy and education to India, and I think that gave India a step up compared to a lot of the Asian countries." This presumption of expert knowledge is surely a product of the broader discourse of development – and its relationship to past and present colonialism. It is also likely reproduced in some manner through the structure of the sponsorship experience. For example, Pamela explained, "what I like about [sponsorship] is that you can choose the country, and you can choose the sex of the child that you want. So I figured a Palestinian Muslim girl was the lowest on the totem pole for getting any help, so that is why we wanted to sponsor a little girl." The option(s) presented by child sponsorship, then, allowed Pamela to fulfill a very particular kind of desire. "Ever since I was eight years old," Pamela said, "I wanted to go to Africa and help the poor people. I have always really been interested in kids in Africa especially. It was my dream to go to Ethiopia, and so it was like the only thing that I [pause] that was the closest thing I could do to, think to, help anyone."

Themes: Religion

Pamela's comments touch on a final theme that is relevant to the present study, that of religion. Participants were usually asked if faith played a role in their decision to sponsor a child, and how they would feel about evangelism being part of the sponsorship organization's work abroad. Predictably, sponsor responses fairly consistently fell into two camps, those for whom faith was a major factor and those who were indifferent or wary of its role in sponsorship. For many sponsors, faith was described as something that

played a significant role in their motivation to sponsor . Leah speaks for this group well, saying "being a Christian is a motivator as well. Believing that God has blessed me and wants that I should give in return." Talking about her decision to sponsor, Adrienne noted, "for me, it was my kind of following in my father's tithing, giving back." Martha echoed this point, tying together the notions of Christian responsibility with those of identity: "most definitely because part of my Christianity is serving others because you do some service work. That is part of what being a Christian is." Christianity is not the only faith that might be relevant here, although it was the predominant one among the participants in this study. Gail may have been taking this into account when she said that "generally people that are more spiritual are more likely to look around them and see the need and think of ways to provide that help."

This emphasis on faith as a motivator is not terribly surprising and neither is the discomfort many sponsors expressed toward the idea of evangelism being part of sponsorship. Toby conveyed his concerns with the comment that "sometimes I worry about if they are converting to Christianity. I do not really have anything wrong with Christians or anything, but I do not know how comfortable I feel about them being there. Maybe the people in these countries are a little more susceptible or vulnerable." Toby's partner Jaime was uncomfortable with the "Christian aspect" as well but thought that World Vision as a Christian organization may be more "fiscally responsible" because of their religious nature. Patty simply said that evangelism "would not sit well with me." Interestingly, these sponsors still decided to support World Vision, a choice which could be explained in part by the way the Canadian organization seems to present a relatively moderate image of itself where religion is concerned. Not all sponsors were completely

against evangelism, however. Some, like Tom, felt that it is okay as long "as it is not done in an insensitive way". As Martha explained, "I do not mind them doing it, but I really hope they respect the people they are teaching. Like going to a Muslim and saying you are not going to heaven unless you make Jesus your personal saviour....I would not want them doing that."

Leaving aside the issue of what is an acceptable level of proselytizing (not to mention the moral connotations implied by the word "teaching"), not all discussion of religion revolved around the sponsorship organization. The (perceived) faith of the sponsored child was also mentioned by a few sponsors as something that was relevant to their decision to sponsor. Alexis noted that she made the decision to go with Plan precisely because they are not faith-based. However, she felt that religion was still a factor because her sponsored child's family is devoutly Christian. "I find this kind of difficult actually," Alexis said, "because I am always getting these letters 'heaping God's blessing upon you' and 'the family loves and prays to God almighty they can meet you'… I am afraid she is got in the grip of one of those holy roller churches." A similar sentiment, albeit with a different result, can be found in something Penelope mentioned. She said she would not sponsor a child from the Philippines because "the trouble with sponsoring in the Philippines is they are all Catholic… and I feel the Catholic Church is not doing what they should in the world, and I feel kind of strongly about it." Alexis' and Penelope's comments represent a small minority of participant responses that demonstrated concern with what is seen as too much religiosity in the global South (at least in contrast with a North that is seen to be more discreetly religious if not wholly secular).

Rather than representing too much faith, it also seemed possible for sponsored children to represent the "wrong" faith in the eyes of sponsors. Once again, Jenny provided a rather blunt statement that is noteworthy despite, or perhaps because of, its unconventional nature. Jenny began by saying that "I would not turn away a child [even if they are not Christian]. I think they have better values if they are raised a Christian." She followed this *relatively* reasonable statement, however, with the contradictory declaration:

> honestly, I do not want Muslim children because half the Muslims seem to want to kill us. The others do not, but you know what they are doing a lot of them, they are terrorists. I do not want my money, I have not got that much money to spend to educate a Muslim child… I do not want them to spend all their days studying the Bible. I just want them to get good values, to have good moral values. This little girl said, "obey my father and mother and be honest in all ways." That is about all there is, is it not? Would not that be better than having a little Muslim kid with a dagger.

Jenny's statement is by no means representative of other participant responses – at least not on the surface. Her opinion is not unexpected, though, given the present level of Islamophobia in North America. Jenny's assumption that "good moral values" are inevitably associated with Christianity and that violence is synonymous with Islam could be taken as a straightforward expression of individual prejudice, but such an analysis would neglect the systemic roots of racism. Rather, we should see Jenny's comments as an expression of commonly-circulating perceptions that normally take on a less straightforward (and less sensational) form. What is remarkable about these comments, then, is the way they clearly highlight a common discursive process involving racist statements. Jenny is able to maintain a positive self-image ("I would not turn away a child") despite the obvious discriminatory content of her response ("I have not got that much money to spend to educate a Muslim child") through reference to some indistinct

moral objective ("I just want them to get good values"). Through this process, the internal contradictions between positive ethical identity and overtly discriminatory opinions are overcome such that, as long as individuals are well-intentioned, racism can be sanitized.

While all the above comments regarding the role of faith and evangelism in child sponsorship may not be terribly surprising, they do help demonstrate the perceived divisions of the world and their effect on sponsorship. As discussed in Chapter Two, there is a commonly understood categorization of the world into Christian and non-Christian areas (or perhaps more accurately Protestant and non-Protestant areas) that overlaps with the categories of "developed" and "undeveloped" (see Bornstein, 2002). This division further cements the status of Southern people(s) as Others and facilitates their simultaneous subjection to developmental and evangelical interventions. Moreover, it also facilitates the link between the imagined justification for developmental / evangelical interventions (the simultaneous economic and moral poverty of the South) and the motivation to provide these interventions (the economic and moral superiority of the North). The key point here seems to be that the perception of the South as economically "backward" often overlaps with the perception of Southerners as morally "backward" (be it non-religious, too religious, or "wrongly" religious). Consequently, even those sponsors who were skeptical of the role of evangelism in child sponsorship could place explanations of poverty, in part, at the feet of religion (morality). In this way, the very real connections between the economic prosperity of the North and the poverty of the South are once again elided, and Northerners are able to position themselves as good people not only by virtue of being economically "developed" but also by being either good Christians or, for that matter, good atheists.

Conclusion: The satisfaction of sponsor needs

Most of this chapter has been spent reviewing some general and thematic patterns in the way sponsors talk about their sponsorships. The descriptions and explanations provided by sponsors highlight the startlingly varied and complex nature of representation and rationalization that accompanies child sponsorship. They also highlight the field of power and knowledge (or, more accurately, power-knowledge) upon which the practice of sponsorship is located. While the many responses discussed above may seem either too disparate or too ambiguous to draw conclusions about the social and psychological processes that animate sponsorship, one thing seems to stand out above all others: the fact that the importance of sponsorship for the contemporary world is as much about what the sponsor thinks and feels (and acts) about sponsorship as it is about what actually happens to the money they donate. This focus on the sponsor is evident in sponsorship promotional material and is justified through the money it produces each year. This focus is also evident in the way sponsors referred to the feel-good experience of sponsorship.

In many instances, the pleasures of the sponsorship experience are not only taken for granted but taken as due. Describing why she sponsored a child and then why she stopped, Adrienne said, "I guess it was knowing that I was doing something to help. Maybe I stopped [because] I found other more rewarding things or ways that I felt more rewarded." Other former sponsors made similar comments. Erica mentioned that she "was expecting it [sponsoring a child] to be more fulfilling and it just was not… I was hoping to feel a connection with the kid, and I did not really. It was very strange and

unfulfilling." Likewise, Pamela said, "I did not withdraw because I think that people should not sponsor children. I just withdrew because it was not meaning anything for me." Phyllis, on the other hand, helped explain the connection between sponsorship promotional material and the (unrealized?) expectations of sponsors. "I really like when I see Plan occasionally [on TV]," she shared, "I really like the way… Plan will visit different children. Then they sometimes will make a tape of the child, and then they take it to the foster, the sponsor, and I think that is really nice… to see the close connection, and to see the tears of the sponsors when they see this child smiling at them and speaking their gratitude." These comments highlight the quest for personal meaning or fulfillment that is so often part of the motivation to sponsor a child. They also do a good job of illustrating the position of the sponsored child in these situations, a position that is largely apparent through its relative absence.

The focus on the sponsor within child sponsorship has a counterpart in the commodification – or more broadly the objectification – of Southern children. This objectification was a regular feature of participant responses. Perhaps the most telling example of the objectification of the sponsored child is the synecdoche associated with an off-hand comment made by Harriet. She said, "then they just sent us the other day our new boy, and so I have not even gotten him out of his little envelope." The vocal (and arguably semantic) replacement of a whole, living child with that child's picture is indicative of the largely unidirectional character of the sponsorship experience. This replacement is often compounded by a language of possession (not to mention differentiation), as in when Harriet referred to "my Ghana girl."[98] Harriet was not the

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[98] In this context, Harriet also explained that Christian Children's Fund had begun placing a fingerprint of the child on their annual progress report. This "understandable" phenomenon that ensures sponsors know

only sponsor to speak in these terms. Phyllis recounted her thoughts when she was forced to change her sponsored child, saying "oh well, I will get another little girl, see if I can have another little girl from Malawi." This emphasis on selection, and the gendered emphasis involved in this selection, came up again when she said, "well I just thought I would like a little girl" in response to the question of why she specified a child from 4-8 years of age when signing up for sponsorship. Vanessa also made a similar decision, commenting that "they all look like boys; I wanted a real little girl." The fact that several sponsors expressed a desire for a girl as their sponsored child could be a product of their own gender (most participants were women) or a product of the present emphasis on the "girl child" in development discourse (for example, Plan's "Because I am a Girl" campaign). Arguably, however, this preference could equally be related to the oppressed position of femininity, which has a long history of being more readily possessed and bartered than masculine forms.[99] Describing her experience with signing up for sponsorship, Abby commented on the bizarre nature of selecting a child (whether girl or boy) as if he or she were a commodity. "He [the organization representative who came to her house] gave me a few different kids to choose from," she recounted, "which is [a] very strange thing to have to do." The very strangeness of this experience, however, is often lost in its banality, as is evidenced by Jenny's shockingly casual remark: "the best way to pay for these children is by using your VISA card."

Through these participant responses, it is possible to see how sponsorship transforms Southern children into objects for Northern consumption. This process may be

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that there is a real child involved, seems no more or less than a form of quality assurance for the goods one purchases.
[99] The gendered character of participant responses raises several questions that could be fruitfully addressed in future research.

unavoidable in order to raise funds, but it places an uncomfortable emphasis on meeting the needs of the sponsor in order to secure these funds. This may seem like a suitable trade off to sponsorship agencies, who often judge themselves according to their revenue stream[100], but there is more at stake than simply trying to raise the maximum amount of money for development assistance. The practice of sponsorship draws on and feeds into a discourse of international development that has become increasingly associated with the personal development of the private donors who help support it. What this means, then, is that sponsorship constructs (forms) sponsors in such a way that they are transformed into seemingly more ethical people. Their ethical nature is thus not a simple quality of their personality but is confirmed through what is envisioned as ongoing action on their part (even better than a single donation, which cannot be thought about or talked about in the same way). This is significant (problematic?) because the action they are taking by sponsoring a child is, in reality, quite divorced from the underlying problems of poverty in the world. Instead, sponsorship represents a kind of feedback loop that is able to sustain its ethical integrity (and those of its sponsors) without the need for convincing evidence that it is ameliorating poverty. In other words, the choice involved in the simple act of sponsorship itself is able to be ethically substituted for the desired results of sponsorship, i.e. the so-called development of the child and community.

This connection between international development, sponsorship, and (ethical) identity is readily apparent in many of the participant responses noted above. The links between the way sponsors talk about the benefits of sponsorship in relation to the perceived problems of Southern poverty and the way they refer to the rewards of sponsorship, such as the feeling of "making a difference", is highly indicative of an

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[100] See Chapter Three for arguments.

imagined (or merely desired) world where their apparently discrete and concrete choices have a significant positive effect. This is important not because it is untrue (their choices do have significant effects) but because these choices are not the only ones, or even the central ones, that matter. It is the multitude of everyday, abstract choices – choices that help reproduce a particular vision of global life and its associated practices – that really define the ethics of individuals and that really represent the solution to global poverty. Instead, we are left with accounts of sponsorship that are littered with the readily-available language of emotional satisfaction. It is hard to believe that is all there is to it, however. For instance, Julia described sponsorship as "one of the best things I have ever done in my life… I get so much pleasure out of feeling I can make a difference." Similarly, Pamela said, "knowing that you have a child overseas almost it makes the world kind of a smaller place, that you do not just have your own family, but you are also at the same time looking out for someone else you could not adopt."[101] Comments like these hint at deeper processes than simply good feelings. Gail offered an anecdote that hints at one such deeper process. She said,

> I was traveling to another part of the country on business and was meeting a particular lady and went into her office, and there she had her child with World Vision right? So, it kind of gives something to talk about as well… it was really an affirmation of what I was doing because this is a person I otherwise respect, right, and it is like "oh, you have got one too" [laughs].

The fact that Gail's positive perception of herself in this circumstance was linked to the social approval of the person she met is not groundbreaking, but the way sponsorship facilitates such encounters between individuals in the North does hint at something

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[101] The reference to adoption as a cognate for sponsorship, just like the use of the term foster parent, reveals an aspect of sponsorship that not only defines the sponsorship child as a metaphorical orphan but that also defines the sponsor as the metaphorical parent. This "obvious" association is significant not only because it speaks to the paternalism of the sponsorship relationship but also because it simultaneously highlights the conventional and the imaginative elements of sponsorship.

important. It indicates how processes of ethical identity formation are *socially* grounded in the circulation of certain ideas about what makes a person good and in the practices that are seen to convey these perceptions.

A similar story can be read into another participant's response related to the fact that Tom could not "remember what it was that triggered" his desire to sponsor. His partner Margery, however, was able to supply the answer: "Tom's just a really generous person." In a similar vein, Erica noted that "people were impressed when they found out that I was sponsoring a kid when they saw the picture on the fridge." A former sponsor who started sponsoring on her own when she was 15, Erica went on to say, "I was really invested in my own niceness… It was part of my do-gooder thing to sponsor a child… I just wanted to do good things." As with many accounts of sponsorship, Erica's comments highlight the way that sponsors are commonly positioned, or position themselves, as good people by virtue of their sponsorship. Erica's unusually perceptive statements illustrate how child sponsorship operates as a mechanism of identity formation that allows sponsors to understand their desire to help a poor child in terms of their quest for personal growth and moral development.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

"The hard sell of little faces." This compelling title introduces the second part of the *Chicago Tribune*'s 1998 exposé on child sponsorship. The paper goes on to declare that "child sponsorship organizations are often better at promising miracles than delivering them. Potential sponsors may find it irresistible to change a child's life with a few dollars a week. However, reality is not that simple and help is not that cheap" (1-1). Despite some of the limitations of the *Tribune* critique that have served to introduce the arguments presented throughout this project, this phrase – especially the final line – does an excellent job of summarizing the central challenges to child sponsorship. The problems with global poverty and inequality, and with the solutions that sponsorship is supposed to provide, can be neither easily articulated nor easily addressed. They are systemic problems. Consequently, the difficulties with sponsorship stem from more than bad organizational practices (although these do occur) or misplaced standpoints on development issues (although these occur as well). At its heart, child sponsorship represents a problem of perspective – the discourses surrounding sponsorship help produce subjects that are inclined to understand and explain their role in "making a difference" in a very particular manner. As could be expected, these understandings and explanations draw on many mainstream (liberal) conceptions of the problems of poverty (or development) as well as the nature of ethical action. As a philanthropic practice, child sponsorship encourages a vision of the world that is paradoxically disconnected and egoistic.

From this perspective, the success of child sponsorship is not related as much to the way it focuses on the needs of poor children as it is to the way it constructs a vision of ethical action in the work of international development that coincides with the personal development of Northern sponsors, the "natural" bio-psychological development of Southern children, and the organizational development of sponsorship programs. In other words, the desires to become better people(s), secure appropriate childhoods, and raise lots of money end up taking priority over the goal of living together well on a global scale. Drawing on an analysis of promotional material and interviews with staff and sponsors, the preceding chapters have detailed this argument, starting from a consideration of the mainstream critiques of sponsorship as largely fictional due to fraudulent or negligent organizational practices. This project took inspiration from the concept of developmentality to highlight the way sponsorship programs in Canada perceive their work, the way the experience of sponsorship is packaged for consumption by (potential) donors, and the way (former) sponsors rationalize their participation in the practice of sponsorship.

As noted in a previous chapter, the complexity of individuals' understandings of child sponsorship should not be easily dismissed. Whether a person works in a sponsorship program or sponsors a child, it is not an easy task to predict how that individual will interpret the sponsorship experience. This complexity definitely extends to the production and reception of sponsorship promotional material, which implies that we must take analyses of such material that neglect these areas with a grain of salt. Despite this complexity, it is relatively safe to say that most people seem to believe that sponsoring a child is a good thing to do, or at the very least, they hope it is (and this hope

often sustains sponsorship). Given the breadth and character of the research conducted for this project, however, it is difficult to make any conclusive claims in this direction. While almost 50 individuals were interviewed for this study, there was no effort to select these participants randomly or with an eye to how representative they were to the entire population of child sponsors (such information about this population is not readily available in any case). This means that it is not really possible to make assumptions regarding the breakdown of participant characteristics; for example, what it means that 80 percent of the interviewed sponsors were female. In any case, the objective was not to be able to generalize to the entire population of sponsors – or sponsorship staff members for that matter. Rather, the goal was to provide a rich analysis of the meaning-making processes – especially those related to the various discourses of development – behind the production of sponsorship promotional material and the experience of sponsorship.

The problem of child sponsorship revisited

If we remember how sponsorship programs are organized internationally (into fundraising offices and project offices) and nationally (as marketing powerhouses), we can situate the problematization of global poverty within its current (neo)liberal frame of reference. This frame of reference positions the dilemma of international development as requiring solutions that provide the correct blend of social and economic interventions in the South facilitated by funding from the North. This is a discourse about development that not only ignores the historical and contemporary relations of power between North and South but that even goes so far as to make unspeakable or unthinkable alternate understandings of human behaviour and the nature of progress. It is this discourse that

enables sponsorship organization staff to justify the disadvantages of child sponsorship and its promotional appeals (such as the administrative expense and the apparent exploitation of children) through the argument that the money is needed for a good cause (the ends justify the means), and it is this discourse that enables sponsors to be deemed good and generous people precisely because they are not seen to be complicit in the problem of poverty and their support is therefore not compulsory within this framework. Child sponsorship, then, becomes understood as a solution to the problem of global poverty both through its claim to being a successful fundraising strategy and through its claim to transform lives.

Recall Susan Hay's comments from the World Vision advertisement discussed in Chapter Four, where she tells us that "we cannot change the world, but if we all get together, one person can make a difference in the lives of little ones like Rosalia." This is a point brought home by such ads again and again; for so little effort on the part of sponsors, they can make a profound impact in the world and on themselves. No matter their jobs, lifestyles, or political affiliations, sponsors do not just get to feel good about themselves temporarily, but they become better people. More than anything, it is this ridiculous ease with which we are invited to throw off history and injustice and to consume our individual portion of the (neo)liberal pie that makes child sponsorship problematic. As part of a movement which sees people doing good by enjoying or improving themselves, child sponsorship and its advertizing (re)positions what it means to live ethically in a terribly unequal and unjust world. It presents us with an almost miraculous way of becoming more than we are, more than we have otherwise made ourselves.

This does not mean that child sponsorship programs set out to reform the ethical landscape nor that they are not actually doing "good" in the world (at least in the short-term). This simply means that we must see child sponsorship not only as a means to an end but also an end in itself – not only as a development fundraising technique but also as a process of subjectification set within dominant cultural, political, and socio-economic contexts. What we should remember (borrowing from Foucault here) is that sponsorship may not be bad but it is dangerous.

Through these perspectives on development and ethics, the organizations that offer sponsorship are seated squarely within the rubric of ends justifying means (although these ends are ill-defined). Perhaps this accounts somewhat for the difficulty many sponsors and staff have in articulating the reasons behind global poverty and inequality and yet the ease with which they embrace the 'obvious' good of what they are doing. Perhaps this accounts somewhat for the relative neglect of advocacy and development education on the part of sponsorship programs. Perhaps this accounts somewhat for the overwhelming lack of critical reviews of their own work with respect to anything but the bottom line. Perhaps this accounts somewhat for the fact that child sponsorship seems to be disproportionally concerned with satisfying the needs of sponsors over those of the sponsored child. After all, if sponsorship programs do good by raising money, then sponsorship of a child is automatically an ethical act since the sponsors are providing this money. This vision of child sponsorship as ethical action, however, has significant consequences: it elides the global connections between individuals and groups that form the basis of structural barriers to equality, it reproduces colonial relations of power and

knowledge, and it allows for the deterioration of conditions in the global South despite the appearance of enormous efforts in the North.

A future for child sponsorship?

The focus of this project on the ethical rather than the organizational or the "developmental" character of child sponsorship means that it is difficult to provide concrete recommendations. This was never the goal of the critique represented here, which is more about exploring the complex ethical relationships between the practice of sponsorship and the discursive contexts within which it operates. However, it is fruitful to reflect on the implications of this critique for the (future) practice of sponsorship. After all, while it may not be possible to readily turn this research into suggestions for improvement, there are a few points that could be taken into consideration with respect to child sponsorship and related practices.

First of all, it is important to recognize the distinction between short-term and long-term objectives for addressing issues of global poverty and inequality. It would be neither warranted nor beneficial to advocate that sponsorship programs immediately drop sponsorship as a fundraising technique or that sponsors immediately give up their sponsorships. It is undeniable that supporting organizations such as World Vision and Plan through child sponsorship is better than using that same money to purchase more consumer goods, for example. Arguably, it is also better than switching one's donations to a more domestic-oriented charity because, as many sponsors pointed out, there is no comparison between levels of poverty in the North and the South. In the long run, however, child sponsorship will never adequately ameliorate the problems that it

supposedly sets out to address. Moreover, the practice of sponsorship itself contributes to a pattern of thought and action regarding global poverty and inequality that is either insufficient or counterproductive. This is not necessarily, or perhaps not only, the fault of sponsorship programs as this project has pointed out repeatedly. What is problematic, then, is the continuing perception of sponsorship as an effective solution, or even a major part of the solution, to Southern poverty. Whether it takes the form of believing sponsors can really "make a difference" in the world through sponsorship or believing that people "cannot change the world but can change the life of one child", this perception ignores the fact that "reality is not that simple and help is not that cheap."

Despite not attempting to blame the organizations involved, the critique presented here is more damning in some ways because, if one accepts it, there is really no salvation for child sponsorship. There is not much these organizations can do to address the problems that plague the practice of sponsorship; these problems are part of a broader set of issues that are cultural as much as they are economic or administrative. What can be done presently is to begin a search for alternate means to acquire the private sources of revenue that sponsorship taps into. In fact, many sponsorship organizations either make use of or have tested fundraising strategies similar to sponsorship but without some of its attendant difficulties.

UNICEF's "Global Parent" or Save the Children's "Child Guardian" programs represent such initiatives. There are no individual updates provided or letter exchanges facilitated though their programs. Instead, sponsors receive information about a "representative child" so as to save on the administrative costs of individual sponsorship. These programs draw on similar discourses as sponsorship, however, and are therefore

subject to a critique similar to the one outlined here. Organizations that have tried other variations on sponsorship, such as sponsor a village or sponsor a cause (education, HIV, vaccination, etc.), have not found them to be as financially successful as child sponsorship and have therefore discontinued them.[102] Arguably, these variations are preferable to child sponsorship for similar reasons to the representative child programs. In addition, they may also be useful in removing some of the emphasis on individual ability and responsibility that often accompanies discussions of poverty or development.

Another significant trend in this field is the proliferation of "gift catalogues" wherein you can purportedly purchase goats, school supplies, and other services or items for a community overseas. While no figures are available to compare this technique to sponsorship, these catalogues seem to be successful in securing additional donations from current sponsors (at least according to the interview participants). Once again, these types of fundraising practices appear to do nothing to change mainstream (unidirectional and disconnected) representations of the problems and solutions to global poverty. In fact, they may even do a better job of promoting individual consumption as the dominant method of (imagined) social change and of separating the fundraising appeal from the development intervention. After all, how is it that a person sitting in Canada should decide the number of goats needed relative to the amount of school supplies? The short answer is that they should not, nor could they really, since these catalogues work much the same way sponsorship does – as a fundraising tool. Logically, it does not make sense to have direct proportionality between what Canadians purchase in these catalogues and what is handed out overseas. In fact, since the Canadian organization is often separate from its international partners, with these partners commonly (and rightly) setting

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[102] Refer to Chapter Three for some quotes regarding these attempts.

development priorities, there cannot be any direct relationship between these catalogues and what happens on the ground.[103]

The fact that many interviewed sponsors did not understand this side of their donation, just as many did not understand the way their sponsorship fee was spent in the South, highlights an area of potential improvement for sponsorship organizations. While no sponsorship organization is explicitly fraudulent in their marketing about where sponsorship money goes – it is always in the fine print that this money does not go directly to the child – they are not terribly forthright about it either. After all, the present system of distributing funds overseas does not match the marketing messages of individual child sponsorship very well, and sponsorship organizations seem to be keen to maintain these messages. However, there are benefits to spreading the word more widely about how sponsorship really works, and the costs associated with doing this may not be as high as organizations imagine. Bringing the promotion of sponsorship in line with current development practice, e.g. by focusing on community-level issues rather than on individual progress, should be seen as an aspect of public education (and therefore part of the organization's mission) rather than simply a dilution of marketing power. This perspective may help (potential) sponsors to displace the emphasis on individual achievement so-often associated with liberal notions of development and to better appreciate the complexity of the issues involved. Judging from the interviews conducted for this research, sponsors who were not aware of how their donations were actually spent were generally positive about the community-level focus with some even expressing relief that their sponsored child was not being singled out for special attention.

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[103] This aspect of gift catalogues was confirmed through staff interviews just as the common belief that items were purchased directly was confirmed through sponsor interviews.

All in all, the alternatives to sponsorship are often plagued by the same general issue: they neglect the importance of advocating for systemic (attitudinal or lifestyle) change in favor of increasing donations. This makes sense of course, not only for the reasons outlined in Chapter Three, but also for the fact that most sponsorship organizations are subject to charity tax laws, which restrict what might be deemed advocacy work. Even if the organizations wanted to produce promotional or educational material that tried to get at the deeper issues involved in global inequality, it is a challenge to do this and avoid presenting a political position – not to mention avoiding donor apathy. What is to be done then? Once again, the answer lies in not seeing fundraising as the key element to combating global poverty and inequality. Rather, well-established organizations such as World Vision or Plan International need to come out of the closet (to borrow an apt phrase from the gay rights movement) and start being vocal about some of the underlying issues, such as the historical and contemporary effects of imperialism, the amounts of defense spending vs. Official Development Assistance rates, the continued presence of so-called tied aid, the illegal or simply unfair practices of Northern corporations and multilateral organizations, etc. The phrase "From charity to justice" that became the one of the slogans of the 2005 Live 8 concerts is a good example of the shift that is necessary – although the concerts themselves are simply another example of Northerners doing good by enjoying themselves. This shift may alienate some donors and threaten an organizations charitable status, but it is possible since some organizations like Oxfam manage to accomplish this (at least to some degree).

This importance for sponsorship organizations to be more outspoken brings to the fore another potential (and essential) area of improvement. Based on interviews with staff

and review of policy documents, it seems as though sponsorship organizations could really improve their work by producing, maintaining, and publicizing a consistent philosophy of development. As noted in Chapter Three, the staff of sponsorship organizations commonly expressed diverse and inconsistent perspectives on the causes of global poverty and the necessary responses. Having a consistent development philosophy and promoting that philosophy both internally and externally could go a long way toward ameliorating some of the negative side effects of sponsorship marketing.[104] While any consistent philosophy would be better than none (in that it would at least allow for a frank discussion around priorities), it almost goes without saying that, ideally, this philosophy should not blame the poor or exonerate the wealthy, should express a reliance on securing political will as much as promoting education, and should promote the necessity for change in the North as much as in the South.

A final thought on the implications of this research relates to sponsors rather than sponsorship organizations. One of the most frequent questions sponsors asked before concluding the interview was whether or not they should continue to sponsor a child, whether it was "really helping". This is not an easy question to answer, and truthfully, this research provides no clear-cut answer. In fact, it mostly generates more questions. Often, however, being able to ask the right kinds of questions is as important as knowing the correct answers (provided these answers even exist). Consequently, current or potential sponsors can approach this particular question by asking themselves some different ones. For example, what rewards do I feel I get out of sponsorship, and how is this related to my perception of myself? Why should I feel generous about helping a poor

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[104] After all, many of the staff members of these organizations are not development experts. Too often, it seems as though their good intentions, and the structural divisions that contextualize their work, take the place of a detailed understanding of global issues.

child overseas when I feel obliged to help a poor child in Canada? Knowing I can accomplish the same things on the ground without the extra administrative burden of sponsorship, do I need the feedback I get from sponsoring a child in order to continue donating in the area of "international development"? In addition to, or instead of, sponsoring a child, what can I do to effect change in here in Canada rather than focusing on what needs to be done in the South? How much does sponsoring a child really have to do with my connection to someone in another part of the world; are there different ways to fulfill this desire that are less one-sided? If I want to maintain my sponsorship, how can I influence the sponsorship organization to focus more on advocacy or public education in the North? Thinking ethically about child sponsorship does not necessarily involve stopping one's sponsorship immediately, but it should involve asking some difficult questions about what we really know about the benefits of sponsorship and what we really expect to get from it. In many ways, child sponsorship is akin to a customer care program. It is not dissimilar to the reward cards one uses to earn points in exchange for brand loyalty, where tangible but pre-selected goods or services are made available seemingly for free (the costs are incorporated into the original purchase price however) in order to make sure people continue to support the company. Perhaps the question sponsors should ask themselves, then, is "do I really need this incentive"?

A future for child sponsorship research?

There are three broad areas where future research into child sponsorship and related practices would be of particular value. The first area, and arguably most important area, is independent research into the effects of sponsorship on children, families, and

communities in the global South. This does not, however, primarily involve an evaluation of the impact of sponsorship dollars on local "development". Instead, because child sponsorship is primarily the fundraising technique that keeps donations flowing rather than a way to allocate donations,[105] the evaluative component should focus on the personal effects of participating in the production of sponsorship promotional material including annual reports and letters to sponsors. Not only might this research study the claim that sponsorship is psychologically beneficial to the children and families involved, but it might also address the community-level effects of having organization representatives solicit children for sponsorship and then collect information about these sponsored children. There are also, of course, issues to investigate regarding the creation of disparities through sponsorship as sponsored children receive letters (and sometimes extra gifts) that other children, including siblings, do not necessarily receive.

While it may be difficult to secure access to participants for this area of research, the potential to include interviews with former sponsored children and families makes this more feasible. Data for the second recommended area of future research may not be as easily attainable, however. There is very little transparency on the way sponsorship monies are distributed among partner organizations or dealt with once transferred to these organizations. Research into this area would be fruitful, such as following sponsorship dollars both to investigate claims of organizational efficiency and to study the relationship between the stated goals of an organization and its structures and practices. There is also very little research into the way organization revenues and expenditures are tracked or publicized. While organizations appear transparent by releasing their financial statements to the public and communicating their spending in easily-digested pie charts,

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[105] See Chapter Two for details.

these resources actually tell us very little about where the organization acquires funds and how it spends them. Studies that could highlight this (admittedly difficult to acquire) information would be beneficial not simply to reveal the inefficiencies and subterfuges of sponsorship organizations but also to shed light on how accepted and routine organizational practices relate to the way the problems and solutions of poverty are perceived.

A final area of potential research lies in the further exploration of the motivations and rationalizations of sponsors and sponsorship staff and how these relate to development practice. It would be valuable to explore the relationship between the motivation to sponsor a child, or to donate money in another way, and the willingness to engage in either activism or lifestyle change. A mixed-method study could highlight the demographic or ideological characteristics of sponsors in order to draw some conclusions regarding the relationship between sponsorship, worldview, and political values. Another approach to studying these issues could be a more in-depth analysis of communications between sponsors, organization staff, and sponsored children (or their representatives) in order to illustrate how aspects of personal and organizational identity are expressed and what this might mean in terms of investment in certain perspectives on development. Finally, additional studies with organization staff would be particularly helpful in examining both the "corporatization" of non-governmental organizations (especially their integration of for-profit business and marketing logic) and internal barriers to institutional change (especially the relationship between organization structure and staff roles and expectations).

A future for developmentality?

Beyond the specific topic of child sponsorship, this project addresses several key issues in global sociology and the critical literature on development. The overarching emphasis of this research – on the production of ethical subjects as a facet of the discourse of development – continues a particular trend in the critique of international development thought and practice that focuses on the subjectivities of Northerners (for example, see Goudge, 2003; Heron 2007; Smith and Yanacopulos, 2004). Rather than focus on the economic, political, or cultural difficulties that appear to impede a country's increase in GNP or a higher placement on the Human Development Index, this project draws attention to the importance of studying the way everyday practices in the North, and their attendant rationalizations, contribute to a unequal and unjust global order. Furthermore, by expanding on the postdevelopment emphasis on the importance of the meaning-making processes in international development (for example, see Rojas, 2001; Sachs, 2000), the discussion of developmentality in this project provides a specific way to look at how the discursive mechanisms of development operate to produce ethical subjects and how these mechanisms are tied to (neo)liberal modes of governance.

Developmentality was conceptualized as a tool to aid in the production of a novel critique of child sponsorship. It was never intended to develop a theoretical life of its own; it was merely used to represent a particular trend in our understanding and exercise of development, whatever its form. This objective appears to mirror Foucault's intent with governmentality, a shorthand for a complex concept that seemed to be waiting for a different expression that never materialized. The notion of governmentality has now developed a (substantial) life of its own, however, and so the question is: can (or should)

developmentality be used in a broader context to look at practices similar to child sponsorship?

It seems as though the answer to this question lies less in the value of developmentality as an explanatory tool and more in its value as a descriptive one. As a way of articulating a set of connections between representations of development and their associated practices, developmentality offers a slightly unwieldy but convenient shorthand for describing a deeply entrenched aspect of modern (neo)liberal society. This aspect, which at its core links particular ideas of progress with particular practices of individualism, is so deep-rooted it does not appear that even the contemporary backlash against neoliberalism will counter it. As with governmentality, it may have found a new expression in the era of neoliberalism, but it is an essential facet of liberalism itself. This means that the objective of using the concept of developmentality, similar to that of governmentality, lies in its ability to expose these connections in order to begin a process of "thinking otherwise". Of course, it is first important to believe it necessary to "think otherwise", and for this reason, projects like this one on child sponsorship hopefully help to foster that discussion. At the end of this project, it now becomes clear that it is not developmentality that helped formulate an analysis of child sponsorship as much as it is child sponsorship that helped illustrate the nature of developmentality.

The evidence behind this inversion can be found in the plethora of international development-related practices that are now firmly entrenched in the North. Such things as the meteoric rise in popularity of micro-credit, the "ethical" branding of goods and services, and the proliferation of so-called voluntourism activities can equally be understood through the lens of developmentality. Micro-credit, for example, has been

become so-popular that its progenitor, Muhammad Yunus, won the Nobel Peace Prize. Supposedly a way for poor people to lift themselves out of poverty, micro-credit provides small loans to encourage entrepreneurial practices to people who do not otherwise have access to capital. This practice has been called "credit-baiting", however, for the way it commonly draws people into a capitalist economic framework that simultaneously destroys many of the interpersonal connections that help sustain poor people (Spivak, 1999: 220; see also Rankin, 2001). At the same time, websites such as Kiva, which facilitates small loans (largely) between people in the South and the North, provide Northerners with yet another way to "solve" the problem of global poverty through a paradoxically disconnected and disproportionally moral gesture. While the micro-loans are surely helpful to the recipients, the practice itself – like most development funding / fundraising strategies in the North – projects a particular narrative of Southern poverty and its causes. This narrative focuses on the way individuals, organizations, or businesses can help poor people with *their* poverty, as if it were simply a personal trouble with no broader social causes or consequences. As with child sponsorship, it is this lack of holistic understandings of poverty, understandings that are facilitated by the contemporary discourse of development, that allows the practice of microcredit to appear so ethical.

Similarly, some aspects of the contemporary "ethical consumption" movement draw on an equivalent logic. While the discussion around, and demand for, fairly-traded products has heated up over the past decade so has the desire of corporate interests to cash in on a new niche market. The creation of a "transnational moral economy" around fair trade (Goodman, 2004) has not only changed consumption habits (and their

subjective effects) but also led to a situation where fair trade certification processes are increasingly subject to corporate influence (Renard, 2005; Macdonald, 2007) and where fair trade is fallaciously thought to provide a holistic solution to the problems of global poverty (Levi and Linton, 2003). Specific consumer campaigns such as Product(Red) are no different. Product(Red) is a celebrity-inspired fundraising strategy in which a wide variety of consumer products are "ethically" branded in order to raise money for the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis in Africa. It *seems* to make perfect sense. After all, Northerners want to spend money on cell phones and t-shirts, so why not raise money for "Africa" at the same time? It appears to be a win-win situation; Northerners get to feel good about themselves and Southerners get HIV/AIDS medication. However, while this strategy may be successful in selling products and therefore raising money, it not only reproduces particular (traditional) representations of Africa and its relationship to the North, but it also commodifies Southern poverty and illness (see Barnes, 2008; Hintzen, 2008; Jungar, 2008; Mugabane, 2008; Wiragu, Farley, and Jensen, 2010). This is problematic in that the simplicity of the messages conveyed through this campaign is detrimental to the broader understanding of social responsibility that is necessary to make significant changes in the world (see Young, 2006).

> Virtually every aspect of (RED)'s message is simplistic and the result of such simplicity is visible in comments about the organization. Africa, when discussed, is portrayed as a monolithic continent whose people are in peril, but whom we can save as long as we buy the right products. So lacking in centrality to (RED)'s advertising and messaging, Africa is the subject of only one half of one percent of all comments left at (RED)'s MySpace page. Only fifty-eight people mentioned the continent at all. Instead, the majority of comments were focused on the greatness of (RED), its fine products, or the general, unspecified cause. Finally, consumerism is touted as the means by which we can save Africa, without acknowledging the inherent inequalities existent in the global economy, some of which have helped to impoverish many Africans on the continent (Anderson, 2008: 47).

The simplicity of Product(Red's) message should not obscure the fact that there are complex discursive processes at work. As with the developmentality inherent in child sponsorship, Product(Red) does not operate as an ethical brand *despite* the lack of specificity about Africa and its "cause" or *despite* the focus on (Red) products. Rather, Product(Red) is successfully presented as an ethical choice *because* of the generic way that "development aid" and its recipients are presented and *because* of the conflation of personal or organization development with the purported goals of international development (e.g. "I am a better person when I buy these products because I am helping others"; "What is good for Product(Red) is good for Africa"). Van Niekerk (2008) subtly highlights this point by stating that

> (Red)'s intervention may be characterized not as upliftment, but as relief. It is relief because it provides assistance at least to some in need in Africa; it is relief because it makes Africa visible, draws attention to its poverty and its otherness; and it is relief because by representing it, it stands in the place of Africa, displacing Africa and interring its meanings, bringing its own, and the "first world's," interests – which may include (though that is perhaps to be represented in another study) the desire for relief from the guilt of subjecthood and domination, manifested here in the form of relief from the guilt of consumerism – into relief (van Niekerk, 2008: 65).

Although there are a multitude of related practices that highlight the nature of contemporary developmentality, such as the Aga Khan Foundation's "World Partnership Walk" or the proliferation of "socially responsible investing" houses such as Meritas and Ethical Funds, the last one that will be discussed here is the practice of "voluntourism". Voluntourism – volunteering for local (development) projects while travelling for pleasure (largely in the South) – once again reinforces the link between personal enrichment and the helping of others/Others. "VolunTourism is 'slow travel,'" promotes the website VolunTourism.org (2012), "The experience starts before it even begins - - with Y-O-U! "Know Thyself" is the first step in the process" (n.p.). Through what may

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be seen as quintessentially selfless tasks, such as digging latrines in Guatemala, voluntourism nevertheless reflects a view of the world in which individualism is naturalized and egotism is rationalized. According to Projects Abroad (2012), one of the largest Canadian voluntourism agencies, "By touring and volunteering simultaneously, your time and efforts will be greatly appreciated and your role will be important... Through your chosen voluntourism project, you will not only provide beneficial aid and services to your community, but you will also gain from your cross-cultural immersion" (n.p.). The fact that such practices are unashamedly marketed as beneficial to the "voluntourist" as well as the local community is no by-product of the promotional process; it is part of the overlapping discourses of personal and international development that are central to constructing voluntourists as ethical subjects. When potential voluntourists are plied with the idea that their service overseas is extraordinarily (and disproportionately) meaningful to the people they are helping, they are being drawn into a narrative that makes sense precisely because it extends traditional (colonial) understandings of the relationship between Northerners and Southerners. This process locates individual acts of voluntourism within the broader project of development. As Barbara Heron (2007) notes in her study of the "helping imperative" behind female, white, Bourgeois development workers:

> The development enterprise, seen in this light, appears to be of constitutive importance for white Northern subjects, securing for us key aspects of colonial relations accomplished for our predecessors; thus the development narrative is not only produced through imperial relations, but it necessary to their operation (150).

In this way, purportedly ethical activities such as volunteering abroad can be implicated in both historical and contemporary global relations of power. This means that voluntourists should, as Heron writes about her participants, "consider our investments in

innocence in relation to the making of our selves, or, put more bluntly, in not seeing our participation in domination" (152).

Child sponsorship, then, is definitely not alone in helping reproduce the current global (dis)order. Rather, it is simply one aspect, albeit a significant aspect, of a broader pattern that continues to separate "us" from "them" through the dissociation of "I" from "we". In the end, the practice of child sponsorship (re)produces a vision of ethics that should not be seen as truly transformative, or at least not for the children and communities involved. Rather, this vision is mundane and mainstream. It is a vision that reciprocally supports the contemporary discourse of development and that animates governmental processes. It is a vision that is rooted in the same notions of charity and responsibility that have repeatedly failed to solve the problem of deprivation and global inequality and that are intimately associated with the current era of (neo)liberal capitalism.

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Appendix A: List of sponsorship promotional material contained in sample

1. Canadian Feed The Children. No Date. *Childhood: The Chance of a Lifetime* [Brochure]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

2. Canadian Feed The Children. No Date. *Sponsoring a child what a wonderful way to help!* [Brochure]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

3. Canadian Feed The Children. No Date. *Birtukan Woldie* [Pamphlet]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

4. Canadian Food for the Hungry International. No Date. *Celebrate!* [Sample Donation Appeal]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

5. Christian Children's Fund of Canada. No Date. Untitled [YouTube Video]. URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IwQG0D6h8I Retrieved July 10, 2007.

6. Christian Children's Fund of Canada. No Date. *Easter Gift* [Sample Donation Appeal]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

7. Compassion Canada. No Date. Untitled [YouTube Video]. URL:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XF_gjd3ysbE July 12, 2007.

8. Compassion Canada. No Date. *Compassion Today* 7.2 [Magazine]. No publication information.

9. Compassion Canada. No Date. *Edilson Borda* [Sample Introductory Letter]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

10. Compassion Canada. No Date. *Question & Answer Booklet* [Pamphlet]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

11. Plan Canada. No Date. *Susan is waiting for a sponsor* [Pamphlet]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

12. Plan Canada. No date. *Destination Hope* [Televised Commercial]. CTV. Aired January 13, 2007.

13. Plan Canada. No date. *Heart of a Child* [Televised Commercial]. CTV. Aired March 30, 2007.

14. World Vision. No date. *Africa's Children* [Televised Commercial]. Global. Aired January 3, 2007.

15. World Vision. No date. *Children of Hope* [Televised Commercial]. Global. Aired January 11, 2007.

16. World Vision. No date. *Sponsor a Child, Change a Life* [Televised Commercial]. Omni. Aired January 11, 2007.

17. World Vision. No date. *You and Your Sponsored Child: Helping Build a Bridge of Hope* [Brochure]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

18. World Vision. No date. *Come Celebrate: Ntiza, Malawi* [Brochure]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

19. World Vision. No date. *Child Sponsorship Works…I've Seen it!* [Brochure]. No publication information. Available August 2007.

20. World Vision. *Child View* [Magazine]. No publication information. Summer 2006

21. World Vision. *Child View* [Magazine]. No publication information. Winter 2006/07

Appendix B: Staff Interview Schedule

1. Could you please describe what you do here at (organization name)?

2. Would you mind telling me how you came to work here?

3. How would you describe child sponsorship to someone who does not know anything about it?

4. What role does child sponsorship play in your organization's work?

5. What would you say are the main benefits of child sponsorship? (for sponsor, for sponsored child)

6. Do you think that there are any downsides to child sponsorship? (if so, what?)

7. How do you think child sponsorship compares to other methods of development fundraising?

8. What things do you think need to be taken into consideration when producing promotional material (advertisements and sponsor mail-outs) for your sponsorship program?

9. What things do you think need to be taken into consideration when allocating the funds donated by sponsors?

10. Have you ever heard anything negative about child sponsorship? What did you think of this?

11. What do you think could be done to improve child sponsorship here at (organization name) or in general?

12. What do you think the major problems facing the world are today?

13. What do you think can be done to alleviate these problems?

14. Why do you think that some countries are poorer than others?

15. Is there anything you would like to add about your work or your personal experience with child sponsorship?

Appendix C: Sponsor Interview Schedule

1. Would you mind telling me a little bit about yourself?

2. How would you describe child sponsorship to someone who does not know anything about it?

3. What made you decide to sponsor a child? (If applicable) What made you decide to stop sponsoring a child?

4. How would you describe your relationship with your sponsored child?

5. What has been the most rewarding (difficult) aspect of sponsoring a child for you?

6. Why did you choose the particular sponsorship organization that you use?
   a. How do you feel about the material (letters, reports, ads, etc) sent to you by the organization? Do you learn anything from them? Do you feel as though you want to learn more? About what? What do you think about the ads of (sponsorship organization name) or other child sponsorship agencies?

7. How do you think your money is spent overseas? What is it spent on?

8. Have you ever heard anything negative about child sponsorship or about (sponsorship organization name)? What did you think of this?

9. Do you think that there is something they could do better? (if so, what?)

10. Do you find sponsorship a difficult burden on your budget?

11. Why do you think that some countries or peoples are poorer than others?

12. What do you think Canada's role should be in helping poor people from other countries? Is Canada doing enough to help?

13. Is there anything you would like to add about your experience with child sponsorship?

Appendix D: Sample Recruitment Letter

[Organization's name and address]

Peter Ove
University of British Columbia
Department of Sociology
6303 N.W. Marine Drive
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Dear [contact name],

My name is Peter Ove, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of British Columbia. I am conducting a study on the subject of child sponsorship in Canada, and I am very interested in talking with some individuals from (organization's name here).

This study will explore how child sponsorship works as a successful fundraising technique for international development efforts. It will examine some of the social and cultural aspects of sponsoring a child. It will also examine how advertising is produced and used by child sponsorship programs. In particular, this study will look at how sponsored children are represented, and how this may influence sponsors' ideas and opinions about people in the "Third World". This research will hopefully shed light on issues of global poverty and inequality and the difficulties associated with raising money for development projects.

As part of this research exploring the socio-cultural aspects of child sponsorship, I am looking to conduct brief (one hour) individual interviews with a number of people who work for prominent child sponsorship programs in Canada. In particular, I would like to sit down with one or more individuals who deal directly with the promotional or management aspects of your child sponsorship program.

The interviews would be conducted one-on-one, and they would be very informal, taking place in a "conversation-style" and revolving around issues related to child sponsorship in general and to the participants' day-to-day work at your organization in particular. The answers provided by the participants would be used to help explore the factors that affect the running of child sponsorship programs in Canada, particularly regarding the production of promotional material. Because of the qualitative nature of the research and because of confidentiality issues, participants' names and identifying information would not be used in any publications. Similarly, [organization's name] name would not be used in direct relation to the interviews. The interviews would be conducted at a time and location of the participants' choosing.

I will call you within a week's time to follow up on this call for participants and to answer any questions you may have. In the meantime, please feel free to pass this notice on to any individuals who may be interested in participating in this study or feel free to contact me [phone and email] or my supervisor [name and contact information] for more information about this study.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter Ove
Ph.D. (Candidate)
Department of Sociology
University of British Columbia

Appendix E: List of Staff Participants

Pseudonym	Job Area
Jennifer	Marketing Management
Dorothy	Donor Relations
Paul	Senior Management
Jacqueline	Program Administration
Margaret	Program Management
Gina	Marketing and Communications Management
Petra	Donor Relations Management
Pascal	Marketing Management
Susan	Donor Relations Management
Irving	Communications Management
Brian	Senior Management
James	Senior Management
Tamara	Program Management
Beatrice	Communications Management
Margery	Program Management*
Gabrielle	Program Management*
David	Marketing Management**
Tammy	Program Management**

*Margery and Gabrielle are both former staff members of sponsorship programs. Both also worked overseas on sponsorship-funded projects.

** David and Tammy both work at Canadian development NGOs that do not currently offer child sponsorship (UNICEF and Save the Children).

Appendix F: Sample Recruitment Items

1. **Sample Newspaper and Website Advertisement Text**

   Do you sponsor a child with an organization like World Vision or Foster Parents Plan? Participate in a UBC study and talk about your sponsorship experience (1 hour interview in Victoria). Contact Peter Ove for more info at [phone] or [email].

2. **Sample Poster**

HAVE YOU EVER SPONSORED A CHILD?

❖ Do you currently sponsor a child in the "developing world" through an organization such as World Vision, Plan Canada, Christian Children's Fund, etc.?

❖ Or…have you sponsored a child in the past but currently do not?

❖ Would you be willing to talk about your experience?

I am a Ph.D. student conducting **a study** on the social and cultural aspects of **child sponsorship**, and I am looking to talk to current or past sponsors about their experiences with sponsoring a child from another country.

If you are interested in participating in this study, which would be **confidential** and involve about **one hour** of your time at a **location convenient to you (in Victoria)**, please contact Peter Ove ([phone] or [email]) for more information. Thank you.

Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]	Child Sponsorship Study Peter Ove [phone] [email]

Appendix G: List of Sponsor Participants

Pseudonym	Description
Harriet	Woman in 50s; white[106]; married; elementary school teacher; religious (United)[107]; immigrant Canadian (from USA); appeared well-off financially; two grown children; Christian Children's Fund sponsor; recruited through poster in church.
Abby	Woman in 30s; white; married; administrative assistant; not religious; non-immigrant Canadian; two young children; World Vision sponsor; recruited through poster in a post office.
Jenny	Woman in 70s or 80s; white; widowed; retired; worked for Canada Revenue Agency; religious (Presbyterian); non-immigrant Canadian; two grown children and grandchildren; World Vision sponsor (18 sponsored children); recruited through church minister.
Gail	Woman in 50s; white; married; financial manager; religious (Lutheran); white; non-immigrant Canadian (second generation Eastern European immigrant); two children; World Vision sponsor; recruited through poster in church.
Patty	Woman in 40s; white; ESL teacher; non-religious; non-immigrant Canadian; World Vision sponsor and CCF sponsor (has sponsored for 30 years); a colleague mentioned this study to her after seeing an advertisement.
Alexis	Woman in 60s; white; lives alone; journalist and communications manager; stated she was a non-believing member of a church; non-immigrant Canadian; one grown child; Plan sponsor (4 years); recruited through poster in church.

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[106] There are numerous difficulties with using the term "white" here to describe the participants, including but not limited to the question of who has the legitimacy, or even the ability, to make such a determination in the first place. That said, the fact that the vast majority of participants would be commonly thought of as white has several implications that relate to the present critique, including but not limited to illustrating the racialized nature of the relationships that characterize our world.

[107] Religiosity of the participants was determined solely on the basis of participant self-evaluation. I recognize the inadequacy of the binary use of the terms "religious" or "not religious", so please keep in mind that this and other short-hand phrases used in this table are not intended to be definitive or exclusionary.

Pseudonym	Description
Leah	Woman in 40s; Asian heritage; in a relationship but not married – lives alone; program manager; participant said she was "Spiritually Christian" but not "religious"; non-immigrant Canadian (parents immigrated); no children; World Vision sponsor (two children) and Christian Children's Fund sponsor (for more than 5 years); participant said that her sponsored children were to be taken care of in her will; a colleague mentioned this study to her after seeing an advertisement.
Beatrice	Woman in 60s; white; married; immigrant Canadian (originally from UK); religious (Presbyterian); two grown children and many grandchildren; Watoto sponsor (for three years); recruited through poster in church.
Pamela	Woman in 20s; white; in a relationship but not married; graduate student; has a Bachelor's Degree in Development Studies; has worked overseas and started a small child sponsorship program together with a friend upon return to Canada; not religious (but grew up in a very religious family); former World Vision sponsor (10 years ago, sponsored for two years); sponsored together with her then boyfriend; stopped sponsoring because it got too expensive (among other reasons); recruited through poster at university.
Robert	Man in 60s; white; lives alone; social worker; worked overseas; non-immigrant Canadian; not religious; Plan sponsor but also sponsors two girls in East Timor through a local program; specifically told Plan he did not want to receive any letters from child; recruited through advertisement in paper.
Valerie	Woman in 50s; white; married; cosmetician; immigrant Canadian; have children and grandchild in UK; lost contact with child which is one of the reasons she said she wanted to sponsor a child; religious (but does not attend church regularly); World Vision sponsor (for 3 or 4 years); recruited through advertisement in paper.
Lauren	Woman in 40s; white; married; music teacher; two children; said it was daughter's idea to sponsor a child; Plan sponsor; recruited through poster in church.
Shelly Trevor	Man and woman in 60s; white; married; both retired; both worked in IT sector; appeared well-off financially; no children "but two dogs"; started sponsoring after world tour in early 1980s; Plan sponsors (2 children); participants have previously visited three of their children; non-religious; recruited through another sponsor participant.

Pseudonym	Description
Donald	Man in 40s; white; immigrant Canadian; artist and activist; two children (one grown); worked overseas; not religious; World Vision sponsor (for about 4 years); recruited through poster at coffee shop.
Margery Tom	Man and woman in 30s; both white; both non-immigrant Canadians; he is an electrical engineer and she is a graduate student; both religious; both started sponsoring before they met, and both sponsored separately; he is a Compassion sponsor (for about 15 years); she is a former sponsor with African Children's Choir (recently stopped after almost 20 years); she worked overseas on a sponsorship-funded project, but she was so disillusioned that she did not start sponsoring a new child when her previous child grew out of the program; recruited through poster at church.
Jaime Toby	Man and woman in 30s; white; not married; he is a welder and she is an undergraduate student; she has a daughter; she is an immigrant Canadian (originally from USA); he is a non-immigrant Canadian; interview took place in a coffee shop; not-religious; he began the sponsorship; she writes letters along with him (it seems like she does it more often); World Vision sponsor (for about one year); recruited through poster at university.
Vanessa	Woman in 50s; white; married; retired; owned a marina and a charter boat rental service with husband; two grown children; atheist; non-immigrant Canadian; started sponsoring a child in lieu of Christmas gifts to family members; Plan sponsor; Plan had to change her sponsored child and she felt was upset about that; said that may stop in next few months as she is reconsidering her "charitable priorities"; recruited through advertisement in newspaper.
Martha	Woman in 60s; white; married; husband worked in the Navy; two children; non-immigrant Canadian; former World Vision sponsor (for about 7 years in the 1990s); took trip to Israel where she heard a presentation by World Vision and then started sponsorship a Palestinian child; stopped sponsoring because World Vision pulled out of the area (according to her) for political reasons; she was so disappointed with the experience that did not take a new child; recruited through another sponsor participant.
Julia	Woman in 50s; white; separated; retired; owned a landscaping design firm; non-immigrant Canadian; not religious; World Vision sponsor (for about four years); recruited through advertisement in newspaper.
Adrienne	Woman in 30s; white; graduate student; fundamental religious upbringing but had left the church and only recently returned to the United Church; non-immigrant Canadian; travelled and worked overseas; visited her sponsored child; former World Vision sponsor; stopped because wanted to focus on environmental issues; recruited through poster at church.

Pseudonym	Description
Penelope	Woman in late 60s; white; married; two grown children; retired; worked in a shoe store; non-immigrant Canadian; religious (regularly attend a United church); World Vision sponsor; participant had misread the advertisement for the study and initially thought I wanted to talk about foster children (of which they have had several), but when informed of the real purpose of the study to look at child sponsorship, she said "oh, we do that too"; currently sponsoring her second child because first one had been changed by the organization – she was a little upset because she was not really asked and just sent a new child; second child is from Latin America and not Africa, where she thinks more help is needed; recruited through poster at church.
Christy	Woman in 50s; white; married; lawyer and mediator; religious (Baptist); non-immigrant Canadian; World Vision sponsor "for many years"; has professional experience working with sponsorship programs; recruited through poster at church.
Lana	Woman in 60s; white; married; retired; two children; non-immigrant Canadian; religious (United); World Vision sponsor; recruited through poster at church.
Daisy Campbell	Man and woman in 60s; white; retired; she was a mental health worker and he was a probation officer; immigrant Canadians (originally from UK), used to be religious (Catholic) but had a change in faith about 20 years ago and are both now agnostic; Plan sponsors (for about 30 years); sponsored previously through a direct donation to an orphanage in Vietnam; never write to children and cannot recall how many they have had over the years; recruited through another sponsor participant.
Jolene	Woman in 60s; white; widowed; retired; used to be cardio technician, two grown children (one adopted); raises granddaughter; not religious; non-immigrant Canadian; World Vision sponsor (for about 20 years); never write to sponsored children; recruited through online advertisement.
Phyllis	Woman in 70s; white; retired; nurse and foster parent; immigrant Canadian (originally from UK); religious; Plan sponsor; sponsored a child for a long time before stopping for financial reasons and recently started sponsoring again after break; there is a problem with the sponsored child number so participants has not been able to write to the child yet; recruited through poster at church.
Erica	Woman in 20s; white; undergraduate student; works at youth shelter; non-immigrant Canadian; not religious; former World Vision sponsor (for six months when she was 15); stopped sponsoring for financial reasons and because she felt "unfulfilled"; recruited through poster at university.