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Communication for poverty alleviation:
How aid and development agencies in New Zealand view the relationships between
communication and development

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ABSTRACT

A highly debated topic of the last few decades has centred on the idea of communication as a means for poverty reduction. With two-thirds of the world's population living in poverty, there is a dire need to understand why global poverty and inequality continue to increase, and what role communication can, and is playing in the fight against poverty. This study therefore seeks to understand how three aid and development agencies in New Zealand, New Zealand Aid (NZ Aid), Oxfam New Zealand (NZ), and Christian World Service (CWS), construct poverty in the context of international development. Additionally it seeks to establish how these three organisations view relationships between communication and poverty. Eleven semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key informants were conducted, transcribed, and analysed in order to extract information surrounding the issues of poverty and international development. From this analysis, it is evident that these three organisations recognise official and unofficial definitions of poverty. It is also apparent that these definitions of poverty affect the ways in which these organisations view the causes of poverty, as well as their outlook on international development. Furthermore, three topics emerged when examining relationships between communication and poverty: communication with local people and local organisations, communication about local people and local organisations, and dealing with communication issues through accountability, transparency, and legitimacy. Implications on communication and development theory as well as theory on the discursive constructions of poverty are addressed. Finally, this study addresses practical implications for aid and development agency practice, and offers recommendations for further study in the area development communication.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The development agenda has faced constant scrutiny for its limitations and failings in attempting to improve the lives of two-thirds of the world's population. The amount of aid money invested in Third World development in the last 20 years has proven to be incongruent with the results observed from development projects (Malavisi, 2001). Though statistically poverty has decreased, in the last 30 years, the number of people starving to death in Africa has doubled, and 30,000 people die daily due to poverty-related causes (Oxfam NZ, www.oxfam.org.nz/MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY/index.htm). According to Edwards (2001), "Over 100 countries are worse off now than they were 15 years ago, international inequality is at an all-time high, and ethnic conflict is proving to be much more than a nasty accident" (p. 22).

A largely debated topic of the last few decades has centred on the idea of communication as a means for Third World development. Broadly defined, development communication refers to "a process of strategic intervention toward social change initiated by institutions and communities" (Wilkins & Mody, 2001, p. 385). McNamara (2003) argues that development and poverty reduction are "complex processes of economic, social, political, and institutional change through which more people gain greater access to their desired ends" (p. 78). Communication as a means for poverty alleviation is complex in nature and is derived from a historical, contemporary, and globalised context (Escobar, 1995; Stevenson, 1988; Mohammadi, 1997; Mowlana, 1996). Poverty itself holds multiple definitions. The concept of poverty is defined by some people as a lack of essential items needed for proper living. According to the Copenhagen Declaration, poverty is "a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information" (McHugh, 2007). The role of communication in poverty reduction is a long-lived debate, and according to Stevenson (2003), the core question in the field of development communication is whether communication acts as a stimulus, a product of, or if it is even relevant to development (p. 6).

The paradigm that dominated development thinking until the 1980s focused primarily on the economic implications of development, viewing social change as an outcome of economic growth. It was thought by many scholars that by accelerating the process of development through communication and mass media, within 10 to 20 years, Third World countries could have the future of their choice, capitalist or socialist, industrial or agrarian, democratic or totalitarian (Rogers, 1976; Schramm, 1964). This economic approach continues to this day to dominate the development agenda, largely due to the fact that economists and multilateral aid and development giants like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) remain the official policy guides on international development and poverty reduction.

In 2002, the United Nations, in collaboration with economist Jeffrey Sachs, established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are eight goals that all 191 UN member states unanimously agreed to by signing the United Nations Millennium Declaration (Sachs, 2005, p. 25). For the first time, nations around the world declared in writing that drastic measures must be taken in order to end global poverty and inequality.

The MDGs therefore strive to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

(United Nations Department of Public Information, 2008)

Though the MDGs are of relevance and importance to Third World development, they have quickly lost momentum due to the lack of sufficient focus and objective specificity. With more people living in poverty now than ever before, infrastructure and the basics of life, which the MDGs do focus on, are the priority. However, the lack of emphasis on communication as a central means for achieving the MDGs could be, and probably is, resulting in the failure to successfully reach these goals.

Since development draws on history, culture, economics, sociology, and politics, communication is essential in breaking down cultural barriers that often hinder the development process. Though communication is a central aspect of Third World development and poverty alleviation, it is continually overlooked. New ideas that followed the dominant paradigm of development, which emphasised economic growth first followed by social change, viewed development communication as a total process in which communication is not the universal cause of change, but is also not irrelevant to it (Rogers, 1976; Stevenson, 1988). Moreover, these new ideas emphasised the importance of the social and cultural aspects of development. According to Schramm (1964), social change is the most difficult and important part of development. Rogers (1976) states that development is a purposeful change toward the kind of social and economic system a country chooses.

It is important to look at the social and cultural aspects of development because individuals are ultimately the ones who must change in order for economic growth to occur. Furthermore, cultural values and traditions “are the organisational principles of communication that determine the range of possibilities in which economic, political, and technological development might evolve” (Mowlana, 1996, p. 97). This quote suggests that economic, political, and technological development is the product of social change. Therefore, in order for economic growth to increase, the culture and social fabric of a nation must first be understood.

The framework of development is essentially a post-World War II phenomenon in which individuals and groups within the field of development derived, and continue to derive, their motivation from an ideological and spiritual commitment to social reform and change (Tandon, 2000). Between the 1970s and 1990s, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) gained a high degree of visibility in almost every country in the world, and their roles and contributions began to be noticed. Furthermore, in the past few decades, the impact and role of NGOs has increased significantly. With over 40,000 internationally operating NGOs, organisational communication scholars have increasingly directed their attention to non-profit organisations and NGOs as a fertile ground for communication research (Ossewaarde, Nijhof, & Heyse, 2008).

The need to investigate NGO and non-profit organisational practice in the international development industry is apparent for a number of reasons. Because non-profits and NGOs fall between control of the government and market forces, they allow alternative voices to mainstream issues and have been credited with encouraging political engagement (Frumkin, 2002). However, with an increasing number of non-profits and NGOs reliant on government funds in order to implement overseas development projects and support humanitarian efforts, particularly in New Zealand, similar approaches for addressing global poverty have been noted. According to Lehman (2007) and Bach and Stark (2004), even though the NGO and non-profit sector has become increasingly professionalized, NGOs and non-profits alike all tell a similar story. Also, the number of people affected by poverty and poverty related causes has drastically increased even though NGO and non-profit sector presence is more prominent in the Third World than ever before. This raises the question as to whether NGOs and non-profits are in fact doing enough to address global poverty and inequality.

With empirical research in the communication studies field only beginning to investigate the organisational practice and operational problems of non-profits and NGOs (see Ganesh, 2003; Lewis, Hamel & Richardson, 2001), this study seeks to enhance existing communication studies theory by examining the organisational characteristics and communication strategies of NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS. More specifically, this study seeks to determine how these three organisations communicate and view issues surrounding poverty and international development.

Because poverty is a complex, multidimensional issue that holds several definitions, the way in which aid and development agencies define and report on the issue shapes the ways in which they communicate poverty and international development to the public, as well as how they view the causes of poverty. Therefore, this study asks: *How do aid and development agencies in New Zealand construct poverty in the context of international development?*

In addition to understanding how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS construct poverty, it is also important to determine what role communication plays in poverty reduction. Since aid and development agencies are often the initiators of international development and poverty improvement schemes, this study also seeks to understand: *How do aid and development agencies in New Zealand view the relationships between communication and poverty?*

Non-profits and NGOs that focus on international development and poverty improvement initiatives are an important part of the organised world around us, and with poverty and global inequality at an all time high, it is essential to investigate the organisational practice and communication approaches of these organisations. The subsequent chapters of this thesis will address the answers to my two research questions noted above.

In chapter two, I examine four academic perspectives on the relationships between communication, poverty, and development. The first perspective looks at how information can be used as a way of reducing poverty. The second perspective shows how communication has allowed for globalisation to occur, and how globalisation has ultimately created global economic inequality. The third perspective focuses on the idea that when people are poor, they do not have access to global communication outlets. Lastly, the fourth perspective investigates the notion of poverty being a socially and discursively constructed concept.

In chapter three, I first address my personal position in regards to this research. I then outline my research methods and the methodological implications of this investigation. I discuss the reasoning behind my method of qualitative, semi-structured interviewing, and identify how I contacted key informants. Finally, I talk about how my two research questions evolved throughout the research process.

The primary objective of chapter four is to answer my first research question of how aid and development agencies in New Zealand construct poverty in the context of international development. In the first section of this chapter I provide an overview and history of the three aid and development agencies on which this study focuses. I then examine the official and unofficial definitions of poverty that these three organisations recognise, and look at how these definitions shape the ways in which they view the causes of poverty. Lastly, I identify how these three organisations view international development, and how their views are influenced by their constructions of poverty.

The fifth chapter seeks to answer my second research question of how aid and development agencies in New Zealand view the relationships between communication and poverty. This chapter looks at how the three organisations communicate with local individuals and local organisations, how they communicate poverty and international development to the New Zealand public, and how they deal with communicative issues via accountability, transparency, and legitimacy.

This chapter also uncovers the language and communication barriers that arise when working cross-culturally, and how the New Zealand media's disinterest in global poverty has created difficulties for these organisations when attempting to communicate messages through the media.

Finally, in chapter six, I provide a summary of results for my two research questions. I then discuss the implications of this study's results on development communication theory and aid and development agency practice.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

It is essential to begin thinking about why it is important to look at how aid and development agencies in New Zealand understand and act on poverty elsewhere. For starters, poverty is a complex, multidimensional issue that has several definitions. The way in which academia, economists, and aid and development agencies define and report on the issue shapes the ways in which poverty is communicated to the public, and how they themselves act upon poverty. Secondly, because aid and development agencies are at the forefront of international development and poverty improvement initiatives, the way in which they view the relationships between communication and poverty are important in determining what role communication plays in poverty alleviation. More specifically, because New Zealand views itself, and is considered to be, a “Western” nation, the way in which New Zealand aid and development agencies look at, and act on poverty is crucial in understanding the discourse of poverty and international development, and how it is viewed by the West.

The primary objectives of this chapter are to provide an overview of the different perspectives of Third World poverty and communication, to compare and contrast four academic points-of-view, and to generate thought on the importance of cultural understanding and traditional communication techniques; two areas that are to this day overlooked. In order to begin answering the research questions identified above, we first need to look at how these four perspectives impact the ways in which poverty is defined and reported. The four perspectives are as follows:

- Information transmission
- Communication imperialism
- Communication exclusion
- Discursive constructions

In this chapter, I make explicit reference to these four perspectives. Each perspective can be seen as having its own view of how communication affects poverty; however, these four points-of-view are intertwined revealing how complex this issue is. Furthermore, these perspectives will allow me to explain the discourse of development and how it has changed overtime. This is significant because the shift in the development discourse can be seen as a reason why aid and development agencies construct, view, and report on poverty and international development in the way in which they do. Lastly, this chapter highlights the advantages and disadvantages of each perspective and concludes with a summary of how these four academic perspectives view communication as a means for poverty reduction.

Information transmission

The first perspective I would like to discuss is that of how poverty can be alleviated with the correct information transmission. This section discusses the initial strategies (also referred to as the dominant paradigm) that were used until the 1980s in order to increase economic and social development in the Third World. I explore how this perspective constructs the assumption that the poor have the ability to solve the communication problem that exists in the Third World, with only minor assistance from Western nations. The dominant paradigm that ruled academic definitions and discussions until the 1980s, concentrated on economic growth firstly, while social change was seen as a way to achieve that growth. Scholarship on development communication in the 1960s and 1970s viewed information transmission as a centralised top-down approach in which information and innovations begin with an elite number of individuals and are eventually adopted by an entire community (Schramm, 1964; Rogers, 1976).

According to this perspective, a centralised top-down approach requires individuals to make a commitment in altering long-lived social norms, and governments are required to take development and information transmission seriously by providing media outlets like radio and newspapers to those who are most isolated (Schramm, 1964, p. 121). Later, it was noted by many scholars that neither a top-down or bottom-up approach was most effective, but rather a cooperative of both theories (Rogers, 1976; Stevenson, 1988; Stevenson, 1994; Schramm, 1964). Contested by Rogers (1976):

Development is a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment (p. 133).

Furthermore, this perspective views social change as the most difficult and important part of development, and states that when social change is effected, development at all levels can be successful (Schramm, 1964; Rogers, 1976; Stevenson, 1988; Stevenson, 1994; Yunus, 2003; Green, 2006; Servaes, 2008).

Schramm (1964) states that if poverty is equivalent to underdevelopment, then in order for poverty to be alleviated, less developed countries must experience a social transformation to achieve economic development. According to the information transmission perspective, in order for information to filter into a community, social relationships as well as group relationships must change, and people have to want and understand the benefits of change before change can occur. This perspective further argues that it is ultimately individuals who must change, and because individuals live, work, and play in groups, it is difficult for an individual to turn against strong group norms (Schramm, 1964).

Scholarly research from this information transmission perspective also notes that very little change occurs when individuals are not given the opportunity to discuss new ideas in groups, but when given the opportunity to discuss a proposed idea with a group, the idea is often tried (Schramm, 1964).

Rogers (1976) argues that new ideas are more often learned from peers than through mass media. According to Schramm (1964), “Participation in decision making is therefore a powerful device to speed and smooth social change where group norms are involved, and when social change is accepted within a community, information is more readily available and effective” (p. 119).

As noted from this perspective, the mass media’s role in socially developing a people can also be of great assistance, yet it cannot be the primary force for change. Skuse & Cousins (2007) observe that as agents of social change, the mass media often form judgements about the nature and culture of individuals living in poverty, which can affect the way in which change is introduced. Green (2006) explains that “Just as notions of the deserving poor and the culture of poverty seem natural to apply at the level of individuals within wealthy societies, so the same moral judgements are implicitly made when advocating mass social transformation or cultural change as precursors to ‘development’” (p. 1112).

In order to lessen some of the social and cultural misunderstandings that occur when implementing any sort of development project, Schramm (1964) believes that mass media should focus on providing authentic and relevant information pertaining to local communities, and local communities should be the primary force behind their own development. Yunus (2007) notes that when mass media initiatives are presented as a means of poverty reduction, they should be authentic in nature and act in the best interest of the area in which they are assisting. Therefore, this perspective further argues that no media can take the place of the community decision-making group, but they can assist in feeding the discussion by broadcasting initial talk for a rural radio forum for example.

Above I have discussed how the information transmission perspective holds that mass media can be an effective agent for information transmission and poverty reduction once social change and social development have occurred. Furthermore, this perspective observes that the decision-makers of a community ultimately hold the key to change, and with the majority of rural communities being subsistence farmers, agriculture is often where social change initially begins (Rogers, 1976). Hudnut (2008) contests that many community decision-makers are older males who have relied on traditional forms of survival and communication all their lives, and therefore, economic and social development can arguably be seen as beginning with agriculture.

Development begins with agriculture

Until the 1980s, the implementation of technological ideas, predominately beginning with agriculture, was seen as a way to close the communication gap and modernise the Third World. Rogers' research on the diffusion of innovations found new ideas and practices to be a crucial component in the process of modernisation. His idea of the 'two-step flow' was by first introducing new ideas and practices to the opinion leaders of a community, the effects of change might be more rapid and permanent. Goldthorpe (1996) states "An innovation is an idea perceived as new by the potential user, and diffusions as the process through which a new idea spreads from a source, its original invention by a creative individual, to its adoption by users" (p. 201).

Rogers (1976) notes that for many years agencies thought that providing intensive assistance to a select number of innovative, wealthy, educated and information-seeking farmers would eventually reach other farmers through diffusion. However, as this perspective argues, diffusion processes are imperfect equalisers because they arrive in rural communities one by one and take time to circulate (Rogers, 1976). According to Roling, Ascroft & Chege, "While some members of the system are still adopting an earlier innovation, other individuals are already reaping benefits from those more recently introduced" (Rogers, 1976, p. 69).

Roling, Ascroft and Chege further argue that even if it only takes ten years for a new cash crop to circulate, those who planned earlier in the process receive an additional income over the years, which put them ahead of others and therefore often make it impossible for later adopters to catch up; and therefore, an unequal distribution of resources is the main reason why diffusion is an imperfect equaliser (Rogers, 1976). Moreover, this information transmission perspective contests that while an elite number of individuals benefit from innovation diffusion, the majority of rural communities are left worse off than before. For example, new farming techniques could cause famine, and in a village where starvation is a poor crop away, the risk does not outweigh the reward. However, as Stevenson (1988) mentions, change is difficult. He argues that the social development of a people involves more than the approval of the community decision-making group, but rather also relies on the political and economic constraints of a nation-state. With that said, it can be argued that social change must occur at the local and political level for development to be successful (Schramm, 1964; Stevenson, 1988; Servaes, 2008; Vieira, 2008); hence, education plays a key role in development.

Education and development

Education can be seen as the gatekeeper to development in that it is one of the most valuable resources for boosting the economic and social fabric of rural communities. However, as this subsection reveals, there are cultural differences in what counts as education. Like the diffusion of innovations, education in developing nations poses great difficulty. This subsection will look at how the information transmission perspective views the role of education in Third World development, and how it contests that education is still only an option for a select few. It will also mention the media's role in education.

To begin, Schramm (1964) states “Public education is both a leading channel of information to the people and a chief supporter of the mass media” (p. 110). He further acknowledges that schools build literacy and “instil the kinds of interests and needs that require mass media” (p. 110). The media’s role in affecting literacy, according to the information transmission perspective, is limited because in most developing countries the media tend to reside in cities, which is why literacy is likely to drop off at the edge of Third World cities. Therefore, the media’s role in affecting education in rural communities is greatly limited.

This perspective also views the lack of infrastructure and physical geography of some developing countries as a reason why literacy is poor, arguing that even when a family makes the commitment to educate their children, children are often forced to postpone their studies due to hard times and famine. Goldthorpe (1996) notes that most families can only afford to educate one child, and therefore girls are left illiterate and uneducated more often than boys.

The information transmission perspective also observes that the mass media can speed up education, but only when social change and development has already occurred. It further notes that even though mass media does not affect many rural communities, those communities still practice modern forms of communication, and communication and the transmission of information do not always have to refer to information technology. Goldthorpe (1996) contests that face-to-face and interpersonal communication is also important for information transmission.

Poor media circulation

Mass media in the Third World is at a disadvantage to that of the West. Schramm (1964) acknowledges that the West initiates the flow of information and obtains large sums of money for information production and distribution. Money for mass media in the Third World is hard to come by and is therefore the reason why poor media circulation exists.

Furthermore, this perspective views lack of funding as the primary reason why rural villages remain isolated. According to Schramm (1964) and Smith (2008), such isolation is the reason why many rural villagers know little beyond their villages, little of science, little of modern agriculture, little of their country's efforts for economic development, and little of the responsibilities of nationhood. Moreover, many developing countries have no more than one or two persons in a single village who are literate, and in 97 percent of all countries in Africa and 70 percent of all countries in Asia, less than half of the people are literate (Schramm, 1964, p. 109).

Language, argued by Stevenson (1994), is another reason for poor circulation of mass media. In many countries there is more than one official language. In India for example, Schramm (1964) notes that 72 different languages are spoken by at least 100,000 people. Such diversity makes it difficult for national radio and newspaper services to translate each language at the state or district level.

Communication as a means for development

The power of mass media in leading development programmes, concluded from the dominant paradigm, was mainly assumed rather than proven. Researchers gradually realised the role of mass communication in facilitating development was indirect and only contributory (Rogers, 1976). New ideas that followed the dominant paradigm of the 1960s and 1970s, viewed development communication as a total process in which communication is not the universal cause of change, but it is also not irrelevant to it (Stevenson, 1988). Some of Rogers' research has indicated that interpersonal communication channels are predominantly the way in which innovations are diffused. Furthermore, Servaes (2007) argues that new ideas are more often learned from peers and government development workers than the media. According to Rogers (1976), "Communication is a complementary factor to modernisation and development. . . it can have little effect unless structural changes come first to initiate the development process" (p. 137).

Scholarly research from this information transmission perspective has keyed in on the success of the Grameen Bank, and how communication can effectively assist in the social and economic development of a country. The Grameen Bank is a development project that gives small business loans to local women in Bangladesh. The project has benefited from the positive effects of mass media by working closely with Responsibility for Ending Starvation Using Legislation (RESULTS), and has received global recognition for its micro-credit movement (Yunus, 2003). The idea of self-development, which has been successfully utilised by the Grameen Bank, allows rural villages and urban neighbourhoods alike to take responsibility for deciding exactly what type of development is most needed (Hope, 2004). According to Rogers (1976), self-development gives people the opportunity to plan their own development goals while also obtaining the governmental and nongovernmental resources necessary for achievement.

Servaes (2008) states that mass communication play important roles in the success of self-development. Rogers (1976) and Yunus (2003) argue that when self-development is present, the media's role is to provide technical information about development, problems and possibilities, and to circulate information about self-development success within local groups so others can benefit from the success. Yunus (2003) further observes that when information is understood as a social good and a product of culture rather than a material commodity, nations can develop in their own way and at their own speed. Through self-development, the Grameen Bank has successfully spread the ideas of micro-credit and served more than two million people in over 100 countries.

This academic perspective has identified how poverty can be alleviated with the correct information transmission. In sum, scholarly research from this perspective concludes that less-developed countries have less-developed mass communication systems, and less development of the services that support the growth of communication. However, this perspective has also noted that when communication is utilised and development programmes are established, mass communication can play a powerful role in the awareness and success of Third World development projects.

Therefore, as scholarly research has shown, communication and development is thus not top-down or bottom-up but rather a cooperative of both, and individuals as well as governments must work together to increase information transmission. The next perspective I will discuss is that of how communication has allowed for globalisation, and how the effects of globalisation on the Third World have resulted in the global economic inequalities that exist today.

Communication imperialism

This perspective looks at how communication has allowed for globalisation to occur, and views globalisation as the primary force behind the rising economic inequalities that exist in the world today. This perspective differs from the last perspective on information transmission in that it examines how the West has imposed its economic and cultural ideologies on the Third World, ultimately contributing to the spread of economic globalisation and cultural imperialism.

The theories behind this perspective are organised as follows. First, I define globalisation and explain how economic globalisation relates to the economic development of Third World nations. I then talk about the implications of economic globalisation and the free flow of information followed by the effects of international communication on culture and cultural boundaries. Finally, I sum up the key arguments of this perspective.

I would like to begin by defining globalisation. Mohammadi (1997) states that globalisation is “a process which involves a compression of time and space, shrinking distances through a dramatic reduction in the time taken – either physically or representationally – to cross them, so making the world seem smaller and in a certain sense bringing human beings ‘closer’ to one another” (p. 170). Globalisation according to Baraldi (2006) “is a process creating interdependence among societies and cultures that were previously separated” (p. 54). Robertson (1992) defines globalisation as “the structure of the world as a unique set of meanings” (Baraldi, 2006, p. 54).

Giddens (1990) contests “Globalisation gives an extraordinary intensity to social relations at a world level, resulting from different types of processes and creating interdependence in the world” (Baraldi, 2006, p. 54).

Before I examine how this second perspective believes economic globalisation relates to the economic development of Third World nations, I first want to explain how this perspective views the differences between economic globalisation and economic development. Economic globalisation, according to scholarship under this communication imperialism perspective, is driven by transnationalism, capitalism, and privatisation, which are Western ideas for moving toward a more global culture where information is shared equally (Ganesh, Zoller, & Cheney, 2005). Economic development, on the other hand, is nation specific and is based on the democratic principle of nations having the ability to improve the economic, political, and social well-being of its people.

Mohammadi (1997), Stevenson (1988), and Baraldi (2006) contest that globalisation has allowed for the compression of time and space of information through the implementation of information communication technology (ICT). These scholars further note that information transmission has become more efficient, and that ICTs have infiltrated urban Third World cities, though many rural villages remain isolated and cut off from the circuits of communication. Furthermore, communication technologies are concentrated in urban Third World cities because that is where infrastructure is most stable. Rural Third World villages lack the infrastructure needed to benefit from Western economic globalisation, and therefore, the majority of the world’s population remains isolated, causing an even greater economic and communication gap (Mowlana, 1996).

With that said, Stiglitz (2003) and Mohammadi (1997) observe that the effects and consequences of globalisation are not uniformly experienced. It can be argued then that this perspective on communication imperialism views globalisation as a hindrance to the economic development of Third World nations because it not only creates greater inequality between the West and the Third World, but it also furthers the gap between urban and rural areas making it difficult for Third World nations to improve the economic, political, and social growth of its people.

Research on communication imperialism acknowledges that the right to development is an inalienable human right in which all persons have the right to participate and contribute to economic, social, political and cultural development (Mohammadi, 1997; Rogers, 1976; Stevenson, 1988; Mowlana, 1996). This research also notes that the global flow of information is concentrated in developed countries in which their governments and national business communities have the most gain, and because nations acquire independence, sovereignty, and communication infrastructure at different rates and in different contexts, communication and information are not culturally neutral (Stevenson, 1994; Stevenson, 1988).

As mentioned when examining the first academic perspective, information that is relevant in one country may not be in another. What is global is not universal, and global communication does not refer to universal communication (Mohammadi, 1997; Mowlana, 1996). “Although the distribution of information has become global, the actors controlling it are few. Thus, while information reception might be universal in nature, the capacity for distributing messages is severely limited and centralised” (Mowlana, 1996, p. 199).

According to Mohammadi (1997), “The force of globalisation shifts power away from the sovereign governments to private capital wherever it takes place” (p. 80). This perspective therefore reveals that when sovereign states have less power and do not have the means to mobilise resources, economic inequality prevails. Communicative imperialistic research further recognises the global communication inequalities that exist today are historical in that the West has long initiated the flow and movement of globalisation while developing countries have been imprisoned by it, and that overtime, access to global information has led to a communication gap between developed and under-developed countries (Mohammadi, 1997; Wilkins & Mody, 2001).

Globalisation and the free flow of information

As this communicative imperialistic perspective noted earlier, transnationalism, capitalism and privatisation are Western globalisation initiatives for moving toward a more global culture, one in which information is equally transferable. Technological developments in communication, which claim to improve quality of life, are conceived, planned, funded, organised, facilitated, operated and exported within a deregulated free market system, a system where transnational companies dominate (Mohammadi, 1997, p. 44). Globalisation via operations of transnational companies, according to Stiglitz (2003), has proven to be inappropriate to the needs of Third World countries, while transnational corporations have infiltrated developing countries causing more disparity and poverty. It has been argued by scholars of communication imperialism that transnationalism and privatisation of large companies have created jobs in countries where unemployment and poverty linger. However, Mohammadi (1997) and Baraldi (2006) argue that uncertainty continues to be a chronic condition for the developing world.

According to Stiglitz (2003), globalisation occurred because the elite wanted it to occur and therefore made it happen. The media’s role in the spread of globalisation and global communication is powerful. The media initiates public demand for goods and services, which in turn stimulates international trade.

But who actually benefits from international trade? According to Mohammadi (1997), “Transnational corporations conduct about 70 percent of international trade; international capital markets process transactions worth around \$75 billion per year” (p. 71). Western dominance of mass media and international trade has created an even larger communication gap. Noted by Christian Aid, “The United Nations estimates that unfair trade rules deny poor countries \$700 billion every year” (<http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/campaign/trade/basics#topten>). Even though world trade has increased 10 times since 1970 and more food is produced per person than ever before, the number of people going hungry in Africa has doubled (http://www.cafod.org.uk/get_involved/campaigning/vote_for_trade_justice/trade_justice_campaign).

Stiglitz (2003) contests that Western nations are to blame for the economic inequalities caused by globalisation because they continue to dominate the global economy, and for this reason, they have a moral obligation to change the way in which globalisation affects the Third World. Globalisation does not have to create negative effects for developing countries. Further observed by Stiglitz (2003), globalisation has allowed for longer life, reduced isolation in some parts of the Third World, and increased factory labour to name a few. Therefore, communicative imperialistic research shows that for globalisation to be effective globally, international trade and communication must be distributed equally, and for this to occur, the West must acknowledge the human, cultural, social, economical and political rights of developing countries.

Effects of international communication on culture and cultural boundaries

International communication has allowed individuals to more effectively communicate with one another through the use of ICTs. However, cultural boundaries are often ignored, and it is regularly assumed that under a free-market system, the finest delivery of information need not be culturally neutral. Therefore, Stevenson (1994) argues “Authentic development is possible only when Third World nations disengage from the global information system and establish their own, based on their needs, their cultural values, and their traditions, not on a pale imitation of the West” (p. 307).

Under this subsection I first explain how the communication imperialism perspective acknowledges that international communication has disrupted the cultural balances and boundaries of the world, second I show how this perspective believes that poverty is a partial product of misunderstanding, and third I discuss how this perspective argues that globalisation operates in generalities.

To begin, Mohammadi (1997) and Servaes (2007) observe that international communication affects the cultural balances and boundaries of the world. “International communication and its major players can best be described,” according to Mohammadi, “in terms of a commercial market-place driven by the belief that a free market under capitalist conditions guarantees an optimal delivery of information and culture to everyone” (1997, p. 97). However, the local cultural space of many communities throughout the world is threatened by cultural globalisation in which the West has attempted to draw all cultures into its ambit (Servaes, 2007; Mohammadi, 1997). According to Friedman, the West has attempted, and succeeded, in gaining hegemony of the infiltration of predominantly American values, products and information. He further shows how the hierarchical nature of such dominance has resulted in a widening communication and information gap as well as the cultural misrepresentations of the Third World.

Moreover, Green (2006) and Mohammadi (1997) recognise that poverty has deep roots in culture and is a partial product of cultural misunderstanding. Escobar (1995) argues that cultural globalisation and imperialism have depicted particular stereotypes of Third World conditions through Western media, and that violence, hardship, starvation and disease in Third World countries has become a component of the cultural environment in which people live and children are born. Therefore, under this perspective, Mato (2004) contests that Western media have ultimately desensitised and dehumanised the ‘have nots’, and in doing so, Western depictions of Third World conditions continue to dominate the mass media, while the people of the Third World continue to be seen as inferior to modern ideas.

Since the West controls the flow of information, and stereotypical perceptions of the Third World do exist, the transmission of relevant information to developing countries is limited. Much of the news that is relevant in the West does not pertain to everyday life in the Third World (Stevenson, 1988; Mohammadi, 1997; Rogers, 1976).

The world today, observed Stiglitz (2003), is uneven and unequal and shows no signs of balance in the near future. Growing gaps between the 'haves' and 'have nots' have jeopardised peace and tranquillity and caused more tension and violence. According to Huntington, new strategies of modernisation need to be adopted to reduce the gaps and provide bridges of trade, cooperation, dialogue and understanding (Mohammadi, 1997, p. 155). Furthermore, Mohammadi (1997) argues that civilisations are knowledge systems, and when two civilisations interact, they form a third.

Today a global civilisation is being formed alongside old regional, national and local cultures. "Dialogue is therefore the key to a successful development of a universal, human civilisation" (Mohammadi, 1997, p. 157). It is essential, according to this perspective, that the context of media messages is culturally sound. Though a global civilisation is evolving, traditional cultures still exist and always will; and therefore, the question, according to this communication imperialism perspective, is how can traditional cultures as well as the evolving global culture coexist without jeopardising the tranquillity of future generations. For starters, scholarly research under this perspective states that the West must change the way in which it views Third World issues by developing new strategies for closing the gap between 'haves' and 'have nots' (Mohammadi, 1997; Rogers, 1976; Green, 2006; Baraldi, 2006).

Though it is apparent the world is becoming more global, the benefits currently and will continue to only effect an elite number of individuals while the majority of the world's population remains the same, poor, exploited and uniformed. By creating a more global environment, Thompson (2004) argues that ICTs can increase the creativity and productivity of individuals.

This communication imperialism perspective notes however that even though we are moving toward a more global flow of information, what works in one country may not always work in another. Moreover, developing countries and their governments must be committed to establishing communication techniques relevant to the needs and culture of their people before communication technology and social and economic development can successfully occur.

This academic perspective emphasises how communication enables the existence of globalisation and how globalisation has become the main cause of global economic inequality. I have shown how this perspective differs from the first perspective in that the first perspective draws on mass media (radio and print in particular) as a facilitator of social change; whereas, this perspective emphasises Western domination through the imposition of economic globalisation initiatives and cultural imperialistic ideologies. This perspective has looked at the cultural effects of international communication, and how poverty has become a partial product of misunderstanding. The third perspective will reiterate the importance of cultural understanding and education and will further the argument by examining how poverty and globalisation have affected women in particular. The third perspective will also look at how communities organise and define themselves overtime and the role media plays in the making of community.

Communication exclusion

This academic perspective argues that poverty is a result of the lack of access to the circuits of global communication. In a sense, this perspective is opposite of the last perspective on communication imperialism in that this perspective argues the problem is that there is a *lack of communication*. Furthermore, this point-of-view assists in understanding gender issues as a fundamental aspect of poverty. Finally, this perspective explains the importance of community organisation in the Third World and how the media can play a powerful role in the making of community.

It is important to understand how communication and information can assist as well as hinder developing countries. As the last perspective noted, globalisation has allowed for information to be more transferable to areas in which it was not previously possible. However, it has also been noted in the last two perspectives that even though today we live in a more globalised and sophisticated world, the majority of the world's population remain cut off from the circuits of global communication. Some countries are worse off today than they were two decades ago. Therefore, this perspective on communication exclusion argues that without the ability to utilise the circuits of global communication, those who live in poverty remain impoverished with little means of improving their situation.

Mowlana (1996) contests that impoverished communities do not have access to global information, and therefore, people are poor because they do not have access to global information. According to scholastic research on communication exclusion, despite advancements in science and technology as well as growth in communication and information hardware and software, the vast majority of the world's population live in undignified conditions of illiteracy, hunger, disease, unemployment and malnutrition and still lack the basic tools of modern communication and information (Carney, 1999; Edwards, 2000; Parker, Kirkpatrick, & Figueira-Theodorakopoulou, 2008). Therefore, this perspective contests that global information tends to undermine Third World cultures by attempting to generalise for one global culture.

This communication exclusion perspective further observes that traditional cultures continue to exist and therefore misunderstandings continue to occur. Moreover, cultural misunderstanding and lack of education are major contributors to Third World poverty. "Without increased cultural understanding accompanying increased education, intercultural exposure may worsen rather than improve international relations between and among nations" (Mowlana, 1996, p. 22). Resolution of the cultural misunderstandings that have contributed to poverty and isolation, according to this perspective, require moral changes in media transmission and development strategies from the Western world.

Women and poverty

Poverty and globalisation have adversely affected women, and women are continually ignored and unseen as an asset to the global economic system. Many scholars have noted that women experience development differently to that of men, and therefore hold valuable insights on poverty reduction. In this subsection, I discuss how women and girls have been affected by globalisation and development initiatives, as well as look at how rigid social and economic structures often make living and working conditions difficult for women.

For decades the role of women in the alleviation of poverty has been undermined (Rodriguez, 2001). Mowlana (1996), Rogers (1976), and Escobar (1995) note that women are consistently absent in development communication as well as agricultural programmes and are often termed “mood engineers” rather than decision makers because of their cooperative, consensus-oriented communication style in resolving disputes. Most development programmes for women lie within health, family planning, nutrition, childcare and home economics. According to Escobar (1995), “Women have been the invisible farmers. Women’s visibility has been organised by techniques that consider only their role as reproducers” (p. 172).

Afshar (2000), Steeves (2001), and Rodriguez (2001) argue that women and girls are intentionally and unintentionally oppressed in developing countries, and that long-lived cultural traditions and religion continue to limit women’s role in society. Moreover, this communication exclusion perspective states that female children have less opportunity than male children, particularly in education. Education can assist in speeding up the development process, according to Mowlana (1996), but when female children are not educated, they remain illiterate and cut off from the circuits of global communication. As was discussed in the first perspective, families can often only afford to educate one child, and therefore girls are left uneducated and illiterate while their male counterparts attend school.

Furthermore, women often live in difficult social and economic conditions, and the poor economic condition of women is a direct benefit to the global economy (<http://globalpolicy.org>). Not only have women's living conditions worsened, but their workload has also increased as a result of development programmes. The inequality of women in the market has benefited the capitalist system. The Global Policy Forum states that, "Women not only represent a cheap labour force, but they also contribute to the survival of the economic system" (<http://globalpolicy.org>). Unpaid and low-paid labour wages for women has provided a basis for modernisation (Escobar, 1995).

It can be argued from this perspective that the world in which men dominate is propped up and kept alive through women's labour. Women are predominately those who work in factories run by large transnational corporations, which exist due to globalisation and capitalism. Education, healthcare and employment, the very things that can increase women's status, are being destroyed while Third World governments continue to struggle with foreign debt obligations (<http://globalpolicy.org>).

Moreover, Shaeffer (2003) argues that in times of famine and drought when families are forced to cut back, men cut back less and women more because in patriarchal families, men command a greater proportion of the household income and resources than women (p. 111). Women also tend to work longer hours than men and contribute a greater portion of the earnings to the household. Economists have found, according to Shaeffer (2003), that "Women in Mexico contributed 100 percent of their earnings to the family budget, but men contributed only 75 percent of theirs" (p. 111). A World Bank report stated, "It is not uncommon for children's nutrition to deteriorate while wrist watches, radios and bicycles are acquired by the adult male household members" (Shaeffer, 2003, p. 111).

Furthermore, Roberts (2008) and Afshar (2000) contest that gender inequalities are produced by diverse patriarchies, and the oppression of Third World women ultimately hinders men as well. Underfed mothers conceive babies, male and female, who are born deprived and stay deprived. Shaeffer (2003) observes that “What begins as a neglect of the interests of women ends up causing adversities in the health and survival of all, even at an advanced age” (p. 183).

Women have felt the hardships of poverty and the debt crisis more than men, and for this reason, Lee (2007) argues that they hold a valuable perspective of not only resolving the situation but also participating in the process of resolution. Sustainable development for the future requires the assistance of women. Sustainability requires women to have a stronger political voice and a say in the economic and social development of the Third World (Shaeffer, 2003; Ross-Sheriff, 2007; Dinerman, 2003; Stubbs, 2000). By allowing women to effect change, this perspective on communication exclusion contests that history no longer has to repeat itself.

Community organisation

Understanding how societies organise and define themselves overtime is important to development because the organisation and behaviour of communities ultimately affects the culture of that community. Moreover, the culture of a community influences the daily activities and decisions made by the community and its opinion leaders. According to Mowlana (1996), “Community can be defined as a network of information flow or communication grids that can exist within and outside national boundaries.

A community must be based on values or a belief system of a much higher level, and therefore it can transcend national boundaries” (p. 90). The opinion leaders of a community often dictate what forms of communication will be recognised by the community and what will not. Furthermore, some communities choose to remain cut off from the circuits of global communication, and if those who choose isolation are community opinion leaders, then the decision affects the entire community.

According to this perspective on communication exclusion, the media can play a crucial role in the making of community, though community must come first. The media will never have the ability to create a community. Mowlana (1996) states that communities are created when people interact with each other and communicate when together. Baraldi (2006), White (2004), and Mowlana (1996) contest that the media act as organisers, mobilisers and legitimisers as well as perform as an educator, acting as sources of information, an advocate for policy and ideology and a forum in which to transmit culture. Such initiative “is not community building but rather helping the community come to some action, providing integration and identity, or transmitting values and facilitating communication among members” (Mowland, 1996, p. 93). Furthermore, the media are meant to represent community interests, not remain neutral to them.

The media are important facilitators and movers of information; however, strong community values and relationships can hinder the flow of information transmission. Schramm (1964) and Mowlana (1996) note that individuals will often go to great lengths to preserve their good name within a community, which is a primary reason why change is difficult in rural villages, and for this reason, remote communities remain largely uninfluenced by mass media.

This academic perspective has examined women’s roles in development and how women have been affected by globalisation initiatives. This perspective has pointed out that when women are oppressed and not made part of the development process, the results in turn affect men, which ultimately affects the entire community. In order to achieve sustainability for the future, this perspective on communication exclusion states that women must be made active partners in development.

I have also discussed the importance of community organisation, and have shown how some traditional communities have chosen to remain isolated and cut off from the circuits of global communication. Therefore, communication in rural villages is still primarily oral, face-to-face communication. The media's role in the making of community is one of organising, mobilising, legitimising, educating, and advocating.

This perspective has ultimately reiterated the importance of understanding the culture of traditional peoples. Though this perspective holds several similarities to the last two, it differs in that it focuses more on the grassroots issues of development and signifies the need for women to become more involved in development at the social and political level. The final perspective I will discuss in this chapter is the discursive constructions of poverty. This perspective is much different from the other three in that it focuses on Western perceptions of what poverty and development entail. Moreover, it specifically makes reference to the misrepresentations brought about by the media, aid and development agencies, and academia to describe the people and 'condition' of the Third World, and is also likely to view the notion of the 'Third World' as a discursive construction that keeps peoples, societies, and civilisations 'in their place'.

Discursive constructions

According to this point of view, the concept of poverty is discursively and socially constructed. In this context, poverty as a discursively constructed concept refers to the lengthy and often irrelevant nature of statistical figures that are grouped together to indicate the scale of deprivation that exists in developing countries. Poverty as a socially constructed concept is defined in terms of income and material goods in which culture and tradition remain unseen (Escobar, 1995). Furthermore, this perspective on discursive constructions acknowledges that poverty is seen as being defined by the major players of the development industry (World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)) and the media as a way of classifying the Third World and its 'condition'.

This final perspective focuses on four main areas. First, I will further explain what is meant by poverty and development being discursively and socially constructed. Second, I talk about the discourses of hunger and the power of symbolism. Third, I show how the hegemonic nature of the World Bank continues to reinforce global inequality. Finally, I look at how sustainable development has been seen as a solution for the future, and how this academic perspective views sustainable development as a mere redistribution of entities that have ultimately led to the vast economic inequality.

The arguments from this perspective will assist in answering my first research question of how aid and development agencies in New Zealand construct poverty in the context of international development.

To begin, Chambers (1995) and Wenden (2008) argue that development is socially constructed, and poverty is determined largely through the application of internationally defined criteria. Green (2006) acknowledges that advancements in technology have allowed for the representation of poverty by development agencies, and have had significant consequences for the truths they reveal. “An identity of form rather than content justifies the grouping together of countries and populations that may be quite different, with different histories and different causes of poverty” (Green, 2006, p. 1112). Geertz (1984) and Appadurai (1993) observe that quantitative statistics can create an impression of the similarity of experience and of the processes that contribute to poverty in diverse settings (Green, 2006).

The North American perception of development, according to this perspective, has been measured through material goods, while values of dignity, tradition, justice and freedom are overlooked. Development was and is thus measured in dollars and cents, not in cultural values and traditions. According to Green (2006), “The social construction of poverty as the target of international development assistance means that what constitutes poverty changes depending on the perspective of those charged with its assessment” (p. 1113). Escobar (1995) observes that “The constitution of poverty as a research focus is predetermined by the current policy agendas of international development institutions and the World Bank in particular” (Green, 2006, p. 1110).

Furthermore, the discourse of development assigns individuals to certain coordinates of control (Maxwell, 1999; Dwyer, 2007). The goal is not to discipline individuals but rather transform the conditions under which they live into a productive, normalised social environment: in short, to create modernity (Escobar, 1995, p. 156).

The idea of rural development, as noted by this discursive constructions perspective, was seen as a way to bring the green revolution to small farmers. The green revolution was a worldwide transformation of agriculture between the 1940s and 1960s that led to significant increases in agricultural production (Escobar, 1995). Norman Borlaug, father of the green revolution, contests that in “provoking rapid economic and social changes . . . the green revolution was generating enthusiasm and new hope for a better life . . . displacing an attitude of despair and apathy that permeated the entire social fabric of these countries only a few years ago” (Escobar, 1995, p. 158). Green revolution literature is filled with cultural assumptions regarding science, progress and the economy. Escobar refers to this literature as the awakening in which the white fathers/saviours of the West talk to the poor children/natives of the Third World with selfless condensation (1995, p. 159).

Borlaug believed individuals must first be awakened to new possibilities; they must be taken by the hand and led into the light of economic and social development. Green (2006) observes that poverty is represented as an evolving entity that must be ‘attacked’ rather than the consequence of social relations. He further states that poverty in development writings is represented as inherently problematic for the people thus described, and the wider society which is threatened by it (p. 1112).

Discourses of hunger

The discourses of hunger are particularly interesting in that peasants are socially constructed and dehumanised by the West (Freire, 1990; Escobar, 1995). According to this scholastic perspective, the peasant’s world is organised by a set of institutional processes.

They are referred to as categories of target groups to whom items of services can be delivered (Shaffer in Escobar, 1995, p. 121). Moreover, this perspective argues that peasants, or those living in poverty, are seen purely in economic terms – they are degraded to statistical figures.

As many scholars have noted, poverty is represented as a problem that must be eliminated in order to maintain functionality rather than as the outcome of historical and social relations (Freire, 1990; Escobar, 1995; Maxwell, 1999; Hickey & Bracking, 2005; Green, 2006). Moreover, social relations contributing to poverty are seen as flawed in terms of quality – content is overlooked. According to Green (2006), social capital, where the low quality of local social relations is seen to contribute to poverty, is often analysed within development discourse instead of viewing the terms in which a community is a product of wider regional, national and international economies (p. 117). Green (2006) further contests “The constitution of the kind of poverty that development practitioners aspire to reduce is itself a product of the socio economic relations of modernity” (p. 1117). He also observes that discourses of legitimating differential treatment for communities on the basis of differences in lifestyle and livelihoods not only contribute to the negative stereotyping of minority cultural groups, but provide the rationalisation for a perception of exclusion as a problem of the excluded categories (2006). Therefore, poverty is often constructed not only as a problem of “the poor” but also their responsibility.

The symbolism of hunger has proven powerful over the years. The media portray Third World conditions via magazines, newspaper articles and most popularly through television advertisements. Freire (1990) contests that activist slogans and pictures contribute to the dehumanisation of the oppressed because such publicity materials also portray the oppressed as objects that need the help of the powerful. Clawson (2002) adds “Black images are often associated with poor people, resulting in the construction of poverty as a Black problem” (p. 353).

In reference to Western depictions of the Third World, Escobar (1995) notes that magazine covers portraying starving children in Africa and South America is “the most striking symbol of the power of the First World over the Third.” He further states that, “After all, what we are talking about when we refer to hunger or population is people, human life itself; but it all becomes, for Western science and media, helpless and formless (dark) masses, items to be counted and measured by demographers and nutritionists” (p. 103). According to Freire (1990), “Concern for humanisation leads at once to the recognition of dehumanisation, not only as an ontological possibility but as a historical reality” (p. 27). Freire further contests that violence is initiated by the Western world, who oppress, exploit and fail to recognise others as persons – not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognised (1990, p. 41).

Those who reside in the Third World, as viewed by this perspective, have been destroyed because their situation has reduced them to things, and for this reason, the dehumanisation of the oppressed is nearly impossible to reverse due to the power of media representation and globalisation. Clawson (2002) further observes that visual images are important conveyors of information. He argues that the media should pay close attention to what messages they emanate from photographs. Therefore, this discursive constructions perspective argues that it is nearly impossible to unmake the academic terms and language that has been used for so many years to refer to those who reside in developing countries because the media have ultimately stereotyped and constructed the Third World and its ‘condition’.

Hegemony of the World Bank

The World Bank is the largest international development agency and continues to be the official policy guide in the development world (Blackmon, 2008). The World Bank also regularly engages in mutual assistance agreements with the United Nations.

According to Escobar (1995):

The World Bank maintains intellectual and financial hegemony in development because it channels the largest amount of funds; it opens new regions to investment; it contributes to the spread of MNCs through contracts; it deepens dependence on international markets by insisting on production for exports; it opposes protectionist measures of local industries; and it helps maintain in power corrupt and undemocratic regimes (p. 165).

Scholars arguing on the discursive constructions of poverty and the Third World observe that the problems of the Third World are related to the macroeconomic monetarist theories that emphasise the free operation of market forces, and the underlying issues the World Bank deals with are never significantly discussed (Escobar, 1995; Blackmon, 2008; Servaes, 2007).

According to Stiglitz (2003), the World Bank's current dysfunctional financial and development structure is not present to the public and therefore Westerners go on believing the agency is doing all it can to assist developing countries. Moreover, this discursive constructions perspective further notes that foreign aid agencies like Food For Peace ultimately contribute to the spread of commercial interest in developing countries. "Of the fifty largest customers of United States commodity corporations, thirty are developing countries, and of these thirty the majority are or were major recipients of Food for Peace" (Escobar, 1995, p. 166). Goldthorpe (1996) adds, "Aid is better than no aid does not stand true. In some cases it is better to borrow on commercial terms on the open market if substantial ties exist" (p. 235). It could be argued then that this perspective believes the role of multilateral development aid is to create business opportunities for Western elites.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, in recent years, has become the great alternative solution for the future (Goldthorpe, 1996; Laird, 2000). Defined by the Bruntland Commission, sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Escobar, 1995, p. 193). Sustainable development according to Escobar (1995) “would make possible the eradication of poverty and the protection of the environment in one single feat of Western rationality” (p. 192). Moreover, Clark (1989) states that:

We need to move peoples and nations towards sustainability by effecting a change in values and institutions that parallels the agricultural or industrial revolutions of the past. The question in this discourse is what kind of new manipulations can we invent to make the most of the Earth’s resources (Escobar, 1995, p. 193).

Discourses do not replace each other, but rather build on layers that can be somewhat separated, and as Escobar observes, the sustainable development discourse redistributes many of the concerns of classical development: basic needs, population, resources, technology, institutional cooperation, food security, and industrialism but does not completely eliminate those concerns (1995, p. 195). Furthermore, for Escobar, “sustainable development, despite its eco-friendly credentials, has emerged as a dominant development discourse not because it offers something completely new, but rather because it has pasted environmental managerialism upon the classical concern of development economics, that is, poverty” (Ganesh, 2007 in May, Cheney & Roper, p. 380). In this sense, sustainable development is also a discursively constructed term in which the very concept is Western and “is set up in such a way as to blame environmental degradation caused by third-world poverty and population displacement as the chief culprit behind unsustainable economic growth, rather than unsustainable patterns of consumption in the West itself” (Ganesh, 2007 in May, Cheney & Roper, p. 384). Therefore, in promoting sustainable development, this perspective indicates that the West is assisting the Third World in addressing the deprivations it has supposedly brought upon itself, disregarding its own devastating patterns of consumption that have further led to global economic inequality.

Goldthorpe (1996) and Escobar (1995) argue that economist's viewpoints often promote sustainability of nature while eroding sustainability of culture. This academic perspective recognises that building sustainability for future generations will require sustainability of nature, or environmentalism, as well as sustainability of development, which refers to preserving culture and learning to live and need less of the Earth's resources (Yunus, 2007; Laird, 2000; Escobar, 1995).

It is difficult to unmake development that has already occurred. Transformation of the current discourse of development requires a change in ideas and statements (Thompson, 2004; Servaes, 2007; Cooper, Hawkins, Jacoby, & Nielson, 2008; Huesca, 2001). "The central requirement for a more lasting transformation in the order of discourse is the breakdown of the basic organisation of the discourse" (Escobar, 1995, p. 216). The process of unmaking development, according to this perspective, is slow and painful and there are no easy solutions. Development requires time and patience. From the West, Escobar (1995) states that the change is much more difficult to perceive because development is self-destructing and being unmade by social action, while at the same time continuing to destroy people and nature (p. 217).

Sustainability, as argued by many scholars on the discursive constructions of poverty and the Third World, is one of the most important global issues of the 21st Century (Escobar, 1995; Laird, 2000; Risley, 2008; Stiglitz, 2003; Sachs, 2005). Western as well as Third World critics of development are beginning to realise the severity of global climate change, globalisation and the constant exploitation of Earth's natural resources. Therefore, this perspective states that it is essential for a transformation in the current discourse from the flow of information and communication to occur as well as a transformation of Western aid and development agencies.

This fourth and final perspective has examined the ways in which the West has socially and discursively constructed the Third World and its 'condition'. It has talked about the discourses of hunger and the power of symbolism brought about by the media, aid and development agencies, and academia. This perspective has also looked at how the hegemonic nature of the World Bank continues to dominate and reinforce economic inequality, which according to Escobar (1995), can only be unmade through a transformation of the current development discourse and the review of current sustainable development initiatives. Below in Table 1, I have provided a synopsis of how these four academic perspectives view the role of communication and what solutions they present for mending the economic and communicative inequalities that exist in the world today.

Table 1

Academic perspectives

Academic perspective	Role of communication	Solutions
Poverty can be alleviated with the correct information transformation	Communication complements development, but structural changes must come first.	The Third World has the ability to develop suitable communication outlets with only minor assistance from the West.
Communication enables globalisation, and globalisation creates economic inequality	Communication has allowed for the existence of globalisation; and and therefore, communication has contributed to the global economic inequalities that exist today.	Third World nations and their governments must establish communication outlets relevant to the needs and culture of its people.
Impoverishment means being cut off from the circuits of global communication	Communication can assist and hinder global development processes such as political, social, economical, and civil.	Women and communities must be made active partners in development at the social and political level.
Poverty as a concept is discursively constructed	The media have desensitised, dehumanised, and classified the 'condition' of the Third World via communication outlets. Communication has led to misunderstanding / misrepresentation.	Deconstruction of 'sustainable development', transformation of current discourse, transformation of Western aid and development agencies

Chapter 2: Summary

Chapter two has examined four academic perspectives of communication and Third World development. In this chapter, I have looked at how information can be used for poverty reduction, how communication has allowed for globalisation to occur and the economic inequalities that have resulted due to globalisation, how impoverishment segregates individuals from global communication circuits, and how poverty is a socially and discursively constructed term.

The works of Schramm (1964), Rogers (1976), Mohammadi (1997), Mowland (1996), Freire (1990), and Escobar (1995) continue to be invaluable. From these four academic perspectives one can begin to see how multidimensional and complex the issue of poverty is, and how communication can assist but also hinder the development process. First, poverty has political, social, and economic connotations, and is a partial product of cultural misunderstanding. Second, Western media have desensitised and dehumanised the individuals and ‘condition’ of the Third World, which has led to communicative misunderstandings. Therefore, as we have seen from Table 1, communication outlets should be established by Third World nations and governments rather than the West in order to ensure that information is relevant to the needs and culture of the people. Also, women must be made active players in the development process in order for economic growth to increase. Lastly, a transformation of the current discourse of development, and the deconstruction of sustainable development initiatives is crucial for obtaining economic, social, and political equality for the future.

These four academic perspectives have provided a strong basis for answering my two research questions. The next chapter will discuss the research methods used to conduct this qualitative communication study, as well as examine the methodological implications behind my chosen methods.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Research Methods

Before I discuss my methods for conducting this research and the methodology behind it, I would like to address my position in regards to this research. This study was inspired by three things, a service trip to Guatemala when I was 20 years old, my brother Grant's recommendation for reading Jeffrey Sachs' award winning book, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, and my own career aspirations of one day joining the Peace Corps. These three events furthered my desire of wanting to know more about global poverty and what current initiatives are occurring in the international development field. After five months of reading books by authors such as Rogers, Schramm, Lerner, Stevenson, Stiglitz, Yunus, Escobar, and many more, I began to envision what my research might conclude. From here, I spent countless hours reworking my research questions, trying to pinpoint what I wanted my study to entail. The following sections will explain my reasons for addressing my research questions using particular methods, and will discuss the methodological implications behind these chosen methods.

Overview

To adequately answer my two research questions, I conducted 11 semi-structured qualitative interviews. I interviewed eight informants from three specific aid and development agencies in New Zealand, and three informants who are not affiliated with these three organisations. I used the data collected from these three unaffiliated informants to further emphasise statements that were made by the other eight. All interviews were audio taped with the consent of the informant, and the average interview lasted 45 minutes. In addition to semi-structured interviews, I collected a sampling of each organisation's communication materials. These artefacts were infrequently used as supplementary information to complement the interview data, and to further answer my research questions.

Informants

I interviewed eight informants who are currently employed at NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS. I also interviewed three informants who are not affiliated with these three organisations, Rachel, Peggy, and Sam. Rachel and Peggy are currently professors and the University of Waikato and Victoria University respectively. Sam is currently the Communications Manager at the Council for International Development (CID). I chose to interview these three informants even though they are not affiliated with the organisations I chose to focus my research because of their extensive experience working in the international development industry. They have worked and consulted with organisations such as NZAID, Oxfam NZ, Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA), as well as several groups and organisations based in developing countries.

When I initially began this study, I was unaware of the large number of aid and development agencies based in New Zealand. To narrow my focus, I referred to the 2008 New Zealand Directory of Development Organisations (Wesselink, 2008), which describes itself as the guide to international organisations, governments, private sector development agencies, civil society, universities, grant makers, banks, microfinance institutions, and development consulting firms. From this directory, I began to conduct online background research on various organisations listed in the document. Finally, I decided to focus my study on NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS. I chose these three organisations for a number of reasons. First, NZAID is the aid and development agency of the New Zealand Government; and therefore, I chose this agency due to its status and position within government. Second, Oxfam NZ is an international NGO that is part of the Oxfam International network, which is based in Western countries around the world. I previously knew of Oxfam's work and therefore wanted to include Oxfam NZ in my study.

Third, I came across CWS after transcribing an interview for my thesis supervisor. I found the interview to be inspiring and therefore wanted CWS to be the third and final element of my study. Also, CWS is a home-grown NGO and is New Zealand's longest serving aid and development agency, which I thought would add to the dynamic nature of this study.

After determining the three organisations I wanted to focus my research, I began recruiting informants. I first examined each organisations' website and found that these three organisations print the contact details of their staff online. So, I focused on contacting communications managers, programme managers, and media coordinators. My initial contact with my informants was via email (Appendix B). After receiving confirmation from one initial contact within each organisation, and interviewing those informants, the initial informant recommended others within their organisation whom they thought would add to the richness of my study. I did not have set criteria for which my informants needed to meet, but rather focused on interviewing as many informants as I was permitted from these three organisations. I was surprised to find that informants from NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS were more than willing to lend me their time and expertise, which made the interview process run smoothly.

I conducted my 11 semi-structured interviews within a two-week period. I spent one day in Auckland interviewing Janna, Jason, and Michael of Oxfam NZ, four days in Wellington interviewing Peggy, Sam, Mike, and Catrina, and three days in Christchurch interviewing Liz, John, and Mandela. I interviewed Rachel in Hamilton previous to conducting the other ten interviews. My interview with Rachel provided a strong basis for the following ten interviews. I conducted these interviews either at offices or in conference rooms, according to each informant's preference.

Before the interview began, each informant was required to sign a consent form, which gave the informant the option to remain anonymous. Again to my surprise, my informants were more than willing to disclose their identity and the organisation they represent. After each interview, I reflected on the various issues we discussed and logged my personal views of the conversation. By keeping a reflective journal, I was able to track my feelings and personal perspectives throughout the interview process.

Due to their positions, and involvement in daily decision-making processes for the organisations, I viewed these informants as *key informants* who would be able to provide a deeply situated view of the organisation as well as be able to speak as organisational representatives (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). I chose to interview a variety of key informants because of the descriptive and complex nature of my two research questions. Since my research questions address issues that are difficult to describe and hard to observe, qualitative interviews were particularly helpful (Lindlof, 1995). Furthermore, no survey instruments exist that address the relationships between communication and poverty, and for this reason, a face-to-face interview approach with these eleven key informants gave breadth to this investigation and allowed me to clarify any unfamiliar concepts. While a close analysis of just one of these organisations could have given me more explicit insight for answering my research questions, my chosen research method allowed me to obtain a broader range of answers, which address all my research questions, providing a richer and more descriptive thematic analysis to this study.

Methodology

This study stems from qualitative research theory. I chose qualitative research due to its vast and complex area of methodology that seeks out the ‘why’, not the ‘how’ of its topic through the analysis of unstructured information (Ereaut in Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Gorman & Clayton, 1997). Zyzanski, McWhinney, Blake, Crabtree and Miller (1992) observe that qualitative research designs are unique and flexible and are constantly evolving throughout the research process (Crabtree & Miller, 1992).

Pickard (2007) states, “The emerged design of qualitative research does not allow for a detailed plan before the research begins; ‘the research design must therefore be “played by ear”, it must unfold, cascade, roll, and emerge”” (p. 14).

Due to the nature of my two research questions, which seek to grasp the personal and organisational perspective of informants from NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS surrounding issues of communication and poverty, qualitative research deemed most appropriate and effective. Furthermore, the data that arose from my interviews is not quantifiable because of its depth and richness, and therefore qualitative research is the best form of analysis. Qualitative research has also given me the freedom to design, and redesign the details of this study, which has in turn allowed the findings to unfold on their own.

As I mentioned above, this study seeks depth and richness of individual perspectives and experiences, and so in-depth, semi-structured interviews was my primary method of execution. According to Webb (1995), an in-depth interview can be defined as “an unstructured personal interview that uses extensive probing to get a single respondent to talk freely and to express detailed beliefs and feelings on a topic” (Stokes & Bergin, 2006, p. 28). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that “A major advantage of the interview is that it permits the respondent to move back and forth in time – to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future, all without leaving a comfortable armchair” (Pickard, 2007, p. 172).

Each interview I conducted was approximately 45 minutes in length, and all were face-to-face audio taped interviews. For these qualitative interviews, I used the attached interview question instrument (Appendix A), which was semi-structured to encourage additional probing for specific details. This instrument addressed four general areas: background, nature of work, partner groups and organisations, and relationships between communication and poverty.

The interviews gave me the opportunity to ask direct, scheduled questions, but also gave me the freedom to diverge from the interview instrument in order to explore specific experiences and points-of-view. For example, in my interview with Janna and Jason – I interviewed these two informants together – I began to realise how important lobbying is to Oxfam NZ. From this insight, I was able to further question these two informants about the specifics of Oxfam NZ's lobbying techniques and whether or not they are deemed effective.

After my data collection, I transcribed each interview from the audiotapes and included my own post-interview thoughts and reactions in the transcriptions. Many of these post-interview thoughts arose while I was writing in my reflective journal. As I transcribed the interviews, I used an orthographic approach, engaging in initial data analysis (Wood & Kroger, 2000; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Upon completion of the transcriptions, I chose to open code my interview data (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). First, I read through all the transcripts. I then began to make note of common topics in the margins of the transcripts.

To identify the reoccurring topics, I loosely followed Owen's (1984) threefold thematic criteria of recurrence, repetition, and emphasis. After my initial coding and noting of common topics, I revisited my transcripts and searched for topics that specifically pertained to my two research questions of how aid and development agencies in New Zealand construct poverty in the context of international development, and how aid and development agencies in New Zealand view the relationships between communication and poverty. The findings for my first research question were clear; however, the data for my second research question required a closer analysis. For my second research question, my thesis supervisor and I identified the three main areas in which common issues were apparent. From here, I concentrated on identifying interview material that fit within these three main areas.

When my analysis of the transcriptions was complete, I examined the supplementary material collected from each organisation. I used these materials to further back the findings from my transcriptions. The materials collected from these organisations' websites were important in identifying whether or not their print materials match and/or contrast with the informants' points-of-view. No textual analysis of these materials was conducted for various reasons. First, the vast amount of materials I collected was impossible to analyse within the given timeframe of this study. Second, this material can be seen as justification for the findings that emerged from the interview transcriptions, but lack the rich, in-depth explanations that drive this study. It should be noted that when addressing my second research question, I relied solely on the data collected from my interviews because this data presented rich descriptions of the three main areas identified by my supervisor and myself. Print material deemed ineffective for discussing these three topics and therefore I used these materials to back the findings that answer my first research question rather than my second.

Chapter 3: Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined my research methods and the methodological implications of this study. I have discussed the reasoning behind my method of qualitative, semi-structured interviewing, as well as shown how the findings that answer my two research questions emerged. In the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I address the answers to my research questions. Chapter four will focus on answering my first research question of how aid and development agencies in New Zealand construct poverty in the context of international development.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONSTRUCTING POVERTY IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The primary objective of this chapter is to answer my first research question of how aid and development agencies in New Zealand construct poverty in the context of international development. In order to answer this question, I focused on interviewing informants from three aid and development organisations, NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS. I chose these three organisations because they are very different in nature, and I wanted to obtain a broad and rich perspective of my research topic. I was pleased to find that the informants I chose to interview were very much aware and interested in my research topic. This chapter will explore how poverty and international development are communicatively framed in terms of aid and development agency practice.

Chapter four is organised as follows. In the first section, I provide a brief overview and history of each organisation. Second, I talk about the constructions of poverty that arose from my interview data. Also in section two, I will examine the official and unofficial definitions of poverty recognised by these three organisations, and how these definitions reflect the ways in which these organisations view the causes of poverty. Third, I will look at how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS view international development, and how these views are influenced by the ways in which they construct poverty. Finally, I review the findings that answer my first research question by providing a chapter summary.

Who are NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS?

Before discussing my first research question, it is important to understand who NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS are and what they stand for. This section will assist in understanding the organisational practice of these three organisations, and why they view and construct poverty and international development in the way in which they do. It will also provide a strong basis for answering my research questions.

NZAID

Established in 2002, NZAID is the New Zealand Government's international aid and development agency. The agency is responsible for delivering New Zealand's Official Development Assistance (ODA) and for advising Ministers of Parliament (MPs) on development assistance policy and operations. Before I interviewed Mike Bird, NZAID's Civil Society Programme Manager, I was unsure about the complete nature of NZAID, "Is it a government agency? Is it a non-profit organisation? Or, is it just primarily funded by the government and that is what is meant by semi-autonomous? Mike explained it to me like this:

Oh it is definitely part of the government, and the semi-autonomy is that it is a semi-autonomous agency within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). So, it is definitely a government agency, and the way we work with MFAT is that we share some of the same services like payroll and human resources and other things like that. The semi-autonomy means that we have our own recruitment and sort of staff management policy and processes, which means we are not part of the sort of rotating placements that MFAT have, and so we can hire people with development expertise and experience. And then the other difference is that we provide a separate line of advice to the minister should it be required. So our minister likes to see one string of policy above us...you know...we concur with what MFAT is saying and they concur with what we are saying, but should we need it, we can present an alternative policy above us. And that is our semi-autonomy.

From Mike's lengthy explanation, we can begin to understand how NZAID must work in co-ordination with other sectors of government, yet is able to develop its own voice on international development and poverty improvement initiatives. This statement also reveals NZAID's unique sectoral position. The agency is clearly not an NGO or private sector organisation, but rather it is directly tied to the New Zealand government and is expected to work within the laws and policies established by government.

As a government body, NZAID works closely with sovereign governments and the United Nations. The agency provides funds to New Zealand based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who are working bilaterally with overseas partners, as well as working multilaterally through international channels such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). NZAID does not directly provide assistance to local communities in developing countries, but rather supports New Zealand NGO efforts.

When I asked Mike about the current work of NZAID, he responded by saying:

The agency's primary objective is to fund New Zealand NGO initiatives through two types of funding schemes, the KOHA-PICD Fund and the Humanitarian Action Fund. The KOHA-PICD Fund is available to New Zealand NGOs who are working in partnership with developing country NGOs and is for community-based development, or rather long-term projects. Then there is the Humanitarian Action Fund, and it is available to humanitarian-sector NGOs.

This insight from Mike explains the nature of NZAID's development work, domestically and internationally. NZAID provides government funding to several NGOs such as Oxfam NZ, CWS, ChildFund New Zealand, and World Vision New Zealand that are supporting grassroots development programmes and backing emergency relief efforts.

Oxfam NZ

Oxfam NZ is an international non-profit organisation and a member of the Oxfam International network that, according to the website, "works to overcome worldwide poverty and injustice" (<http://www.oxfam.org.nz/index.asp?s1=about%20us&s2=FAQS>). Founded in 1991, Oxfam NZ is "dedicated to finding lasting solutions to poverty and injustice" (<http://www.oxfam.org.nz/index.asp?s1=about%20us&s2=FAQS>).

The organisation primarily focuses its international development efforts in the Pacific and East Asia; however, programmes and humanitarian relief is also supported in Africa. Moreover, Oxfam NZ is a secular organisation, which means that it has no affiliation to religious organisations. Being a non-profit organisation, Oxfam NZ relies on public funding, but also receives funding from the New Zealand Government for specific projects. This government funding is provided by NZAID through the KOHA-PICD Fund and the Humanitarian Action Fund.

When I spoke with Oxfam NZ's East Asia Programme Manager Michael Riach, he explained the two ways in which the organisation works:

We work in two ways. We either work directly with our own projects or we will initiate a programme and we will have staff to implement it with local people. Or, we find local people who have projects, initiatives, or programmes, and we get behind them to support them.

This quote from Michael reveals how differently from NZAID Oxfam NZ conducts business in that Oxfam NZ has the freedom to directly carry out and support projects and local people, whereas NZAID's work is more indirect and is concentrated on funding the overseas support carried out by NGOs like Oxfam NZ.

CWS

CWS is New Zealand's longest serving homegrown aid and development agency. This non-profit organisation was established in 1945 by the National Council of Churches. Like Oxfam NZ, CWS relies on the support of the New Zealand public to raise funds for international aid projects. CWS also receives government funding from NZAID to support international partners and projects.

Unlike Oxfam NZ, CWS does not employ overseas staff, but rather bases staff in New Zealand. When I asked CWS Communications Manager Liz Martyn about the current work of the organisation, she responded by saying:

CWS works in several areas. We do campaigning and advocacy work, we do emergency response work, education within New Zealand, and we do community development overseas. Community development is the thing that drives it. We work in partnership with grassroots organisations in 20 different countries, and those tend to be quite long-term partnerships. And the way we deal with them is that it is not just the money, but also with the campaign and advocacy work we do and the education work we do in New Zealand.

From Liz's explanation, we can see how CWS conducts business differently, yet similar to that of NZAID and Oxfam NZ. For starters, like that of Oxfam NZ, CWS relies on government funding from NZAID. Being an NGO, CWS works directly with partners overseas. CWS's direct assistance is that of the organisation directly communicating and funding partners, whereas NZAID's assistance is indirect because the agency channels its assistance through New Zealand NGOs. Furthermore, unlike Oxfam NZ who employs overseas staff, CWS chooses to base staff in New Zealand and support community development projects by raising funds domestically. This statement also indicates that the majority of CWS's work is focused on educating the New Zealand public on the projects and people the organisation is supporting, as well as campaigning for funds and the review of government policies that affect its partners.

This section has provided a brief overview of the three organisations I will focus on throughout this study. From these insights, we can begin to get an idea of the nature of NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS, which will assist in understanding to organisational practice and perspective of these three organisations. Also, the various ways in which NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS work, reflect the way in which they define and construct poverty and international development. Below in Table 2, I have outlined NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's objectives, stated their sectoral positioning, and listed their methods of intervention. Table 2 will assist in clarifying the position of these three organisations.

Table 2

The nature of NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS

	Objectives	Sectoral positioning	Method of intervention
NZAID	To provide funding to New Zealand based NGOs through the KOHA-PICD Fund and the Humanitarian Action Fund	Government aid and development agency	Working in partnership with New Zealand NGOs and sovereign governments and multilaterally through the World Bank and United Nations
Oxfam NZ	Work to overcome worldwide poverty and injustice. Dedicated to finding lasting solutions to poverty and injustice.	International NGO and secular organisation	Implementation of development projects, supporting local people and projects, lobbying, fundraising, education, advocacy, emergency relief
CWS	To support community development via international partnerships, and to educate the New Zealand public	Religious NGO	Advocacy, campaigning, emergency relief, lobbying, fundraising

Constructions of poverty

This section will look at how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS construct poverty. More specifically, this section will identify the official and unofficial definitions of poverty that arose from my interview data, and will examine how these various definitions are linked to the ways in which these organisations view the causes of poverty. Definitions and causes of poverty were talked about with five informants.

Definitions of poverty

Though poverty elimination is at the centre of all three of these organisations' missions, it is defined and viewed differently. When I initially began researching these three organisations, I came across the following two definitions of poverty printed on NZAID's website, which endorse the World Bank and Copenhagen Declaration definitions.

According to the World Bank, people living in "poverty" are those who live on less than two dollars per day, "extreme poverty" as those living on less than one dollar per day.

The Copenhagen Declaration of 2002 defines poverty as "a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information"

(<http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/faqs/nzaids-work.html#faq-11>).

As I dug deeper, I found that NZAID's 2002 Policy Statement acknowledges three types of poverty: absolute extreme poverty, poverty of opportunity, and vulnerability to poverty. According to the document, absolute poverty is "an inability to meet basic needs." Poverty of opportunity is present when "opportunities to participate in economic, social, civil, and political life are seriously limited." Being vulnerable to poverty is when "individuals, communities, and countries are particularly vulnerable to circumstances likely to damage their livelihoods, ability to meet basic needs, and their ability to participate actively in economic, social, civil, and political life" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2002).

From these insights, it is apparent that NZAID recognises five official definitions of poverty. These definitions are generic and used as the official policy guide of several aid and development agencies that are tied to government and that work with multilateral giants like the World Bank and IMF. On paper it would appear that NZAID concentrates solely on the economic definitions of poverty which are often prompted by the World Bank and IMF; however, when I asked NZAID's Communications Manager Catrina Williams how the agency deals with such a large and complex issue like poverty, and how they communicate poverty to the New Zealand public,

she responded saying:

We have had to deconstruct it down. If you talk about poverty to most New Zealanders, people would think of Africa, and maybe Asia, pictures of starving children with flies on their face. That is kind of the basic level, and I am not saying it is good or bad, what poverty means to most New Zealanders. And I think you have a converse of that where people would say, there are people living in poverty in New Zealand. So I think it is kind of a relevant term. It is difficult to kind of use without depth or explanation.

When Katrina explained this to me, I could see from her body language and tone that this is a difficult topic to communicate to the public without overwhelming them with complex explanations and statistical figures. Further questioning into this topic revealed that NZAID has made it their mission to deconstruct the complexities of poverty by specifically defining the different levels of poverty that exist in the Pacific, a region which NZAID focuses the majority of its development efforts. Katrina further explained:

A lot of New Zealanders think the Pacific is this kind of paradise and happy place where poverty and instability do not really exist. From this perspective, we have made it our mission to talk about the different kinds of poverty and the consequences of what the different types of poverty mean and the impact they have on real people. It is easy to talk about poverty and not connect it to real people. What we are trying to do is make that connection.

Katrina's explanations of how NZAID views poverty are unofficial definitions of poverty. Her descriptions of poverty reveal that NZAID's unofficial definitions of poverty focus on explaining the dimensions of poverty that exist throughout the Pacific, attempting to humanise the concept of poverty. We can also see that these unofficial definitions are country specific and vary from nation to nation. Moreover, we can see that NZAID recognises official definitions of poverty in government documents such as its 2002 Policy Statement and its 2007 Pacific Strategy, but communicates to the New Zealand public using unofficial definitions in order to deconstruct the issue and explain the causes. Furthermore, because NZAID is the aid and development agency of the New Zealand Government, it is confined to government policy and can only work in partnership with sovereign governments who share the same development policy, and for this reason, the agency endorses official definitions of poverty.

Oxfam NZ can also be seen as having official and unofficial definitions of poverty. The organisation takes a social justice approach to addressing poverty by stating that “poverty is an injustice that needs to be addressed.” According to the Oxfam NZ website, the organisation’s vision is “to strive to achieve a safer, fairer world where all people can enjoy a life of hope and opportunity, free from poverty and suffering” (<http://www.oxfam.org.nz/aboutus.asp?s1=aboutus&s2=Ourvision>). Furthermore, Oxfam NZ emphasises that its focus is on addressing the root causes of poverty, as well as the need to challenge and change unjust policies and practices that reinforce poverty (<http://www.oxfam.org.nz/aboutus.asp?s1=about&s2=Ourvision>). These observations can be seen as official definitions of how Oxfam NZ approaches poverty. Oxfam NZ’s official definitions of poverty are much different to that of NZAID in that the organisation views poverty as a lack of human rights, therefore emphasising social justice by addressing injustice; whereas NZAID’s official definitions are more economically driven.

The official and unofficial definitions of poverty acknowledged by Oxfam NZ are not as concrete as those of NZAID, and are therefore more difficult to separate. When Michael was explaining the ways in which Oxfam NZ portrays and communicates poverty to the New Zealand public, he said, “We put an emphasis on discourse and people in crisis, and education is the link between poverty and communication. We try to portray poverty in simple language so people can understand the causes.” Michael’s enthusiastic nature when speaking of Oxfam NZ’s work led to a discussion on the organisation’s liberal outlook on poverty, and me asking what the organisation’s primary message is. Michael answered, stating:

Oxfam is trying to create awareness and influence people to take action, whether it is here in New Zealand volunteering, or donating money to a bigger cause overseas. It is not just an Oxfam responsibility...this is not just a development organisation responsibility.

From Michael's statement we can see how Oxfam NZ's unofficial definitions of poverty complement its official definitions because the organisation is first defining poverty from its perspective, then explaining the causes of poverty, and then calling on the New Zealand public to take action and responsibility for ending poverty. Social justice that is emphasised by the organisation's official definitions is also apparent in its unofficial definitions.

When I asked Communications Coordinator Janna Hamilton what Oxfam NZ's primary goals are, she said, "to raise awareness of the New Zealand public, and to educate the public about poverty, development, current issues, and what they can do in New Zealand to help." It is evident from these insights from Michael and Janna that Oxfam NZ's official definitions of poverty serve as a basis for the way in which the organisation unofficially defines poverty and communicates poverty to the public.

Unlike NZAID and Oxfam NZ, CWS constructs poverty from a religious point-of-view making links with the Bible. Since CWS is the development agency of the National Council of Churches, an unofficial religious definition of poverty is inevitable. The theological implication of poverty according to Liz is that "God did not create the world to be the way it is today." This statement implicitly draws on the biblical nature of poverty stating that God did not create inequality, but rather humans created the vast inequalities that exist in the world today. In contrast to this informal definition is that of CWS's official definition of poverty. The organisation's mission, which is stated on the website, is "to act to end poverty and injustice throughout the world by: funding groups that are tackling poverty and help them build decent livelihoods in their own communities, responding to humanitarian emergencies, raising awareness of development issues within Aotearoa New Zealand, and campaigning against the causes of global poverty and injustice" (<http://www.cws.org.nz/about-us>). CWS's official definition of poverty draws on the organisation's secular positioning, and views global poverty as an injustice that needs to be addressed.

Furthermore, from CWS's official definition of poverty, we can see a similarity in the values of Oxfam NZ and CWS in that both NGOs emphasise the importance of ending injustice and promoting equality of rights.

By examining these official and unofficial definitions of poverty, we can begin to see how certain constructions may be useful in some contexts but not in others. Economic constructions of poverty, as well as the use of statistical figures, may in some instances be misleading and yet in other circumstances be productive. For example, statistics used by NZAID that emphasise the affects of global climate change and foreign debt on developing nations are useful when aid and development agencies are initially attempting to engage the public, or when aid and development agencies are wanting to quickly raise funds for emergency and humanitarian relief. On the other hand, statistics can be counterproductive and further contribute to the misrepresentations of poverty and Third World development if aid and development agencies print staggering figures on the number of people dying from starvation and disease without also explaining the nature of the situations that have caused such drastic figures. In my interview with Catrina, she explained to me why statistics are often helpful when addressing poverty.

Statistics and numbers really help people to understand. It gets people thinking about what is right. Sometimes you have to be blunt and up front about these things. But I do think you have to be careful in not overwhelming people with numbers because there is a danger in people thinking the problem is so big and that they can never do enough to make a difference. We try to inform people of what the issues are while giving them hope and positive messages.

From Catrina's statement we can see how statistics can be used for breaking down the complexities of poverty, but can quickly overwhelm people if the issues are not further explained.

In this segment, I have examined the various definitions of poverty that are recognised by NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS. From these observations, it is clear that each organisation recognises official and unofficial definitions of poverty, and that these definitions work together to uphold the organisations' missions.

Below in Table 3, I have mapped the official and unofficial definitions of poverty recognised by each of these three organisations. This table will assist in summarising the ways in which NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS define poverty, and will provide a basis for linking these definitions to how these organisations view of the causes of poverty.

Table 3

Definitions of poverty

	Official definitions of poverty	Unofficial definitions of poverty
NZAID	<p>1.) Poverty=living on less than \$2 per day – Extreme poverty=living on less than \$1 per day</p> <p>2.) A condition causing severe deprivation of basic human needs</p> <p>3.) Absolute poverty=inability to meet basic needs</p> <p>4.) Poverty of opportunity=economic, social, civil, and political life are seriously limited</p> <p>5.) Vulnerability to poverty=vulnerable to situations damaging livelihoods, the ability to meet basic needs, and ability to participate in economic, social, civil, and political life</p>	<p>1.) Deconstructs the complexities of poverty through the use of statistical figures.</p> <p>2.) Defines the causes of poverty via statistics</p>
Oxfam NZ	<p>1.) Poverty is an injustice that needs to be addressed.</p> <p>2.) Striving to achieve a safer, fairer world where all people can enjoy a life of hope and opportunity, free from poverty and suffering.</p>	<p>1.) Portrays poverty in simple language via statistical figures.</p> <p>2.) Places an emphasis on discourse and people in crisis</p> <p>3.) Education is the link between poverty and communication.</p>
CWS	<p>1.) To act to end poverty and injustice in the world by funding groups tackling poverty and to help them build decent livelihoods, by responding to humanitarian emergencies, by raising awareness in New Zealand, and by campaigning against causes of global poverty and injustice.</p>	<p>1.) Poverty is a human invention, against the wishes of God.</p>

Causes of poverty

The ways in which NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS define poverty is also connected to how they view and communicate the causes of poverty. When examining the websites of NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS, it was clear that these three organisations are attempting to explain the complexities of poverty by showing how poverty is not the peoples' fault but rather the result of political, geographical, generational, environmental, and gender issues. My website observations were supported by the data that emerged when interviewing my informants. In explaining the origins of poverty, Janna, Jason, Catrina, and Liz all mentioned how the organisation they represent strives to make the situations faced by those living in poverty a reality to the New Zealand public. Here, I will uncover and explain how the definitions of poverty identified above are linked to how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS construct and deconstruct the causes of poverty, which can be seen as political, geographical, generational, environmental, and gender related.

I want to begin by talking about political causes of poverty. Michael from Oxfam NZ and John Gould of CWS explained how the lack of a strong and stable government, as well as the lack of communication, can result in political and civil unrest. As the International Programme Team Project Coordinator at CWS, John has been working in the international development field since the age of 21. John's extensive experience coordinating development projects prompted my question about what types of projects he is currently working on. He began by telling me about the rainwater-harvesting project in Zimbabwe, which soon led to a conversation about the civil unrest and brutality that is currently taking place under the rule of Robert Mugabe. My interest in this topic furthered my questioning of the specifics surrounding the current issues in Zimbabwe. John slowly, yet thoughtfully stated:

If a government can gain control of the distribution of food aid, it is a good way of almost buying or bribing rural communities into supporting them. And if you are a hungry individual in Zimbabwe, you are not too worried about where your next meal is coming from as long as it comes from somewhere. And if the government show up with sacks of maize and say do not forget to vote for us in the next election, it is a good way of gaining popularity even when it is blatantly obvious to those who can see things a bit more objectively that the government has totally mismanaged every aspect of society and things are in total collapse.

It is apparent from John's statement that food has been used as a political tool by the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe in order to win support from rural communities. Furthermore, this observation reveals that when people are not mobilised and are forced to rely on outside, or government assistance, they are often used as political leverage.

Civil unrest is not just the result of an unstable government. When I asked Michael to detail the projects Oxfam NZ is involved with overseas, he began to talk about the sorts of projects Oxfam NZ's partners are currently working on in the Pacific. This led to his insights on the violence that erupted in East Timor last year. With enthusiasm, Michael explained how the situation escalated:

People got really frightened because of rumour, gossip, and false stories. Facts were not shared equally and openly from Dili, and there were all sorts of reports of coos and shootings, and not all of it was true. People in rural areas did not get the full story, and they did not get it quick enough.

From Michael's statement it is apparent that the violence in East Timor was mainly due to a lack of communication. Because rural communities are isolated from urban cities where government and communication initiatives are concentrated, Oxfam NZ is working to improve rural communication channels through the development of a rural Internet service in East Timor. Michael furthered his comment by stating:

The other problem is when the country has floods and the roads are washed out...to actually say, or to communicate to the main city or near town, they cannot come to the meeting, or that a problem needs fixed. Or recently there was a plague of locusts, which would make it very useful to communicate to the fisheries and agricultural ministries to say hey look, there is a plague of locusts, come and help. Also, if there is a major violence again, or, even if it is just getting a commodity price from an international market so if a coffee buyer comes to the community and says hey we will give you 30 cents a kilo for your coffee beans, villagers can say, well no, the going rate is 60 cents.

These detailed explanations given by Michael and John support my statement of how the various definitions of poverty recognised by these three organisations is linked to how they view the causes. In this instance, lack of infrastructure has caused a lack of communication, which has led to civil unrest, that continues to hinder economic growth, resulting in the continued isolation and poverty of rural communities, ensuring their continuing lack of awareness about their political rights as citizens.

Michael and John's insights reveal how empowering local people via the support of local development projects commit Oxfam NZ and CWS to fighting the injustices that exist in developing countries.

Lack of political voice and isolation can also be seen as generational in some countries. When I asked Liz what types development projects CWS is currently supporting, that of the Dalit community in South India grabbed my attention. Liz explained to me how the Dalit communities have been exploited and discriminated for generations. She describes the support CWS is providing to these communities as follows:

With these communities it is about working with networks that are giving them the skills needed to demand the rights that they have. Our partners organise self-help groups and then the groups will lobby the local government for funds for a postal service, or electricity, or new roads. And so those sorts of things are quite crucial in getting their income opportunities and getting their produce out of the village and into a market, that sort of thing. The postal service has been really important because the post refused to deliver to the Dalit because they are known as the untouchable cast. And so if you haven't got an address, you then can't write to government saying, hey, we need a bus service because there is nowhere for them to reply.

Liz's description backs up my statement of poverty being generational. This quote further backs my explanation of how poverty is political and geographical in that the Dalit communities lack political voice due to generations of hierarchical cast systems, which is partially due to where they reside geographically. Furthermore, Liz's insights reveal how CWS views the causes of poverty, and the organisation's official and unofficial definitions of poverty are linked to how it views these causes. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, CWS believes God did not create the inequalities that exist in the world today, but rather humans did. This unofficial definition is linked to CWS's work with the Dalit communities in South India in that the organisation is attempting to overcome the injustices that exist in these communities by addressing the inequalities that we humans have ultimately created. Secondly, CWS's official definition of poverty focuses on addressing injustice by assisting local people in building decent livelihoods, and by supporting the Dalit communities, CWS is building sustainability for the future.

When analysing my interview data, every informant spoke of global climate change and its effects on situated cultures and local communities; and therefore, the geographical causes of poverty are also closely linked to the environmental causes of poverty. In the Pacific, a region where NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS focus their development efforts, climate change has greatly affected economic development, which affects sustainability for the future. The climate change agenda was a topic that was strongly emphasised by three of my informants, yet all 11 saw it as an important issue now and in the future.

Climate change was most emphasised by Janna, Jason, and Michael of Oxfam NZ. Jason stated, “Climate change is one of the main focuses of what we do because it is threatening the people we work with.” Moreover, climate change not only increases the intensity of natural storms, but it also affects the identity of traditional cultures that rely on the land and sea for survival.

The Tuvaluan culture is an example of how climate change can affect the culture and identity of a people. The nation of Tuvalu, which is a small island located in the Pacific, has been greatly affected by global climate change. Local farmers have been forced to grow root crops in buckets rather than in the ground due to rising sea levels. Fresh drinking water supplies and crop production are steadily declining, resulting in food insecurity and economic concern (@World, 2007). Sen (1999) notes that, “Shocks and vulnerabilities can significantly affect poverty levels in a country, both by pushing more people into poverty and by blocking the upward progress of those who might have been on the verge of rising out of poverty” (McNamara, 2003, p. 25). CWS partner Reverend Lusama commented on Tuvalu’s growing problem stating, “The identity of a people is strongly linked to the environment. If you move a people you lose a people” (@World, 2007, p. 3).

Tuvalu is not the only island in the Pacific that has been greatly affected by global climate change. Papua New Guinea is also feeling the affects. When I asked Jason about the specifics of the main projects he is working on, he responded by saying:

Well I just got back from Papua New Guinea last month where we were shooting a video on climate change and how it is affecting the people of that nation. In the Cartaret Islands, people are being evacuated from their homelands because climate change is making the island unliveable. And the video we were filming was a documentary of a partner known as Sisters of the Planet. What the video aims to do is bring voice to those who are most affected by climate change, and to raise awareness that climate change is real and that it is already destroying the homes and nations of many people living in the Pacific.

From Jason's descriptions, we can see how Oxfam NZ's official and unofficial definitions of poverty are present in how the organisation views the causes of poverty. As I mentioned in the last subsection, Oxfam NZ's official definition stresses the organisation's commitment to achieving "a safer, fairer world where all people can enjoy a life of hope and opportunity, free from poverty and suffering." The organisation's unofficial definition states that education is the link between poverty and communication. Therefore, Jason's narrative illustrates how these definitions are intertwined in that Oxfam NZ is attempting to educate and raise the awareness of the New Zealand public via video communication while at the same time remaining focused on its official definition which endorses a safer and fairer world free from poverty and suffering.

During my interviews, it was noted by nearly every informant that gender empowerment is a key element in addressing injustice and promoting equal rights. The context in which inequalities between men and women develop is the outcome of socially constructed norms and structures, ideologies and politics, people and attitudes, both historically and contemporary. As I discussed in the literature review, women are frequently the missing link to improving livelihoods in the Third World. Therefore, gender discrimination is one of the multiple causes of poverty.

Reducing gender discrimination by supporting women's groups and women in decision-making, are examples of how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS have shown they are committed to promoting gender equality. Every informant I spoke with mentioned women's roles in development and poverty reduction. NZAID's Pacific Strategy for 2007-2015 states that, "Gender inequality affects a country's ability to govern effectively, grow sustainably, and eliminate poverty" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2007). The document further states that, "Empowering women is one of the most effective development tools." Servaes (1999) argues that empowerment is making sure that people are able to help themselves. An academic definition of empowerment noted by Melkote, Srivinas and Steeves (2001) states that empowerment is "a process in which individuals and organisations gain control and mastery over social economic conditions, over democratic participation in their communities, and over their own stories" (p. 37).

When I asked Liz and John of CWS about the nature of the projects CWS is currently supporting, I found that the majority of the programmes involved women. In my interview with John, I asked him to explain the types of cultural issues he encounters when working with overseas partners. This question led to a discussion on women's roles in society. John explained:

One of the things we do often find is that when we focus support on women they are really kind of cornerstones of their communities and often when the men of the communities see what kind of benefits the projects are bringing, they kind of like to get engaged and assist the women with those programmes. It has often helped to narrow gender gaps because women get empowered because of their leadership roles in these programmes and men see how this benefits them. But occasionally you do get sort of a male backlash. They feel excluded, but generally the outcomes have been positive. It is an area that involves sensitivity and an appreciation of those areas at the time.

This insight from John supports CWS's official definition of poverty because the organisation is attempting to build decent livelihoods while at the same time fighting the causes of global poverty and injustice by funding projects that support women's empowerment and women's roles in decision-making.

Also from John's statement, we can see how women are often the missing link to effective development; however, when women are given the support to become leaders in their communities, women and men alike reap the benefits. Due to the structures of traditional communities, John's description shows how difficult it is for women to be seen as equal. Therefore, gender issues can be seen as a product of cultural tradition that involves understanding and compassion.

From the following insights, it is apparent that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's definitions of poverty reflect the ways in which each organisation views and communicates the causes of poverty. NZAID's official definition of poverty of opportunity and vulnerability to poverty reflect the agency's commitment to reducing gender discrimination by supporting women in decision-making. In addressing gender inequality, NZAID is reducing women's vulnerability to the issues surrounding poverty by increasing their opportunity to participate in social, economic, civil, and political areas of life.

Oxfam NZ's official and unofficial definitions of poverty also reflect its outlook on the causes of poverty. In explaining the severities of global climate change, the organisation is addressing its official definition of poverty by upholding its commitment of working to provide a safer, fairer world where all people can enjoy a life of opportunity, free from suffering. Moreover, Oxfam NZ's unofficial definition of poverty, which views education as the link between poverty and communication, can be seen in the organisation's explanations of the political causes of poverty. As Michael indicated, the violence that erupted in East Timor was partially due to a lack of communication, and therefore by supporting the implementation of a rural Internet service, Oxfam NZ is attempting to provide an education and communication tool for rural communities.

CWS's official and unofficial definitions of poverty reflect its view of the causes of poverty being generational, environmental, political, and gender related. The organisation's support for the Dalit communities in South India and for women's groups in Zimbabwe, reflect its commitment of acting to end poverty and injustice through the support of groups tackling poverty, and by assisting them in building decent livelihoods. Furthermore, CWS's unofficial definition of poverty stating that "Poverty is a human invention against the wishes of God", is backed by its views of poverty being political and environmental.

This section on the constructions of poverty has examined the official and unofficial definitions of poverty endorsed by NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS. From these various definitions, it is apparent that the ways in which these three organisations view the causes of poverty is directly linked to their definitions of poverty. Moreover, this section revealed that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's official and unofficial definitions of poverty shape the way in which they communicate the causes of poverty to the New Zealand public. The third section of this chapter will look at the connections between poverty and these three organisation's approaches to international development. More specifically, this section will show how the constructions of poverty mentioned in section one are related to the organisations' views of development, as well as how these constructions of poverty relate to the organisations' key implementation activities.

Approaches to international development

It was apparent from my interview data that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's approaches and outlook on international development reflect the way in which they construct poverty. This data arose when I asked informants how their organisation defines development, and how they personally define development. In this section, I will examine NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's approaches to international development. I will then show how their views of development reflect their constructions of poverty. Finally, I will look at how their overall approach relates to their key implementation activities.

When analysing NZAID's 2002 Policy Statement, I found that the agency defines development as "a way of overcoming poverty." It further emphasises that the agency "seeks to be strategic and outcome-focused in its operations, ensuring that the poverty elimination focus is central to its partnership building, planning, and implementation activities." Moreover, when I asked Mike how he personally defines development, he linked development to human rights stating, "When encountered by injustice, it is important to identify and acknowledge the fact. And so development is about equipping people with the knowledge and confidence, and maybe some tools, to do something about the imbalance of power." From NZAID's 2002 Policy Statement and Mike's personal definition of development, we can see how NZAID acknowledges official and unofficial definitions of development, and as I indicated in the last section, the agency must remain close to its official definitions in order to abide by the laws and policies of government. However, from my website observations as well as my interviews with Mike and Catrina, it is clear that NZAID has taken a rights and partnership approach to development.

Working multilaterally with international aid and development agencies such as the World Bank and IMF is an example of NZAID's rights and partnership approach, and is a way in which the agency can be, as it characterises, a "good international citizen." To understand the difference between multilateral and bilateral aid, NZAID defines multilateral aid as "the aid delivered by international organisations in which donors' money is joined before being delivered by the international organisation on all donors' behalf." Bilateral aid on the other hand is described by the agency as "money that is given directly from one country's government to another" (<http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/faqs/nzaids-work.html#faq-11>).

With a small international aid budget in comparison to other Western nations, working multilaterally through international aid and development agencies allows NZAID to assist in ending global poverty. One of the ways in which NZAID does this is by endorsing the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were discussed in detail in my introduction. The agency's 2002 Policy Statement states that "development takes time," and views the MDGs as a "long-term focus for eliminating poverty and creating economic growth and equality" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2002). The MDGs are international targets for development; they are not country or case specific. NZAID seems to be aware of this because the policy statement says:

The agency recognises that it needs to work with partners on a case-by-case basis to identify and select the targets and indicators that are most relevant for the circumstances of the partner and for the particular aid programmes and projects.

This statement shows how NZAID has taken a rights and partnership approach to development in that agency's multilateral development funding intentions are to support programmes and projects that are in the best interest of both parties, the funders and the partners receiving aid. This statement also reveals the narrowly defined criteria that NZAID must work within, and these criteria can be seen as a reason why the agency endorses official and economically driven definitions in its government documents.

Even though NZAID is restricted in the ways in which it can work, the agency still insists on supporting a rights and partnership approach to development. NZAID's rights and partnership approach focuses on empowerment of people and people helping themselves. My thorough conversation with Catrina about NZAID's development approach prompted this answer:

I think when we talk about poverty it is easy to get into this sort of victim attitude. We have not deliberately stayed away from that because it has never been part of how NZAID operates. We hope our communication efforts reflect our approach to development and tell the positive stories of how we are assisting, whether it is through government assistance or empowering people to overcome development challenges.

Being a government body, NZAID's development activities must work in co-ordination with the New Zealand Government. Catrina described to me the difficulties that often arise when conducting day to day business:

As a government department, there are a lot of things we cannot do in terms of our communication that a private sector or an NGO could do. As a public sector organisation, we are unable to campaign or lobby in our communications, and our communication approach must always be appropriate for a government agency. There are a lot of constraints and rules that we have to work within.

From this statement, we can see how NZAID's implementation activities are severely limited. Because NZAID is unable to advertise, lobby, or campaign, the agency is unable to reach a broad audience base, and for this reason, as I outlined in Table 2, NZAID's methods of intervention, or key implementation activities, are focused on working in partnership with New Zealand NGOs and sovereign governments and multilaterally through the World Bank and the United Nations.

In contrast to NZAID's rights and partnership approach to development, which can be seen as limited due to the bureaucratic constraints of government, Oxfam NZ represents itself as a social justice and liberal NGO that calls on the New Zealand public and government to "take action against poverty," as well as live up to their responsibilities and accountabilities. The Oxfam NZ website states that development is a basic human right and that "every child, woman and man has the right to development." The website further illustrates the organisation's commitment to "fighting for a world where all people can: meet their basic needs for food and shelter, be healthy and skilled, live without fear or violence, be heard, and live free from discrimination"

(<http://www.oxfam.org.nz/aboutus.asp?s1=aboutus&s2=Ourvision>). From these insights we can see the similarities between the way in which Oxfam NZ constructs poverty and its outlook on development. The organisation's definitions of poverty and its views of development both address the need to fight for justice and human rights, as well as fighting for a safer world free from poverty and violence.

Working with communities at the grassroots level, training local people and local groups in management and planning skills, and working in partnership with organisations, institutions, and governments at the national and international level is also a way in which Oxfam NZ contextualises international development (<http://www.oxfam.org.nz/aboutus.asp?s1=aboutus&s2=Ourvision>). Furthermore, the organisation uses repetition in its press releases to emphasise the importance of speaking out against global poverty. The repetitive use of words such as: must, should, action, threatening, urgent, and essential reinforce Oxfam NZ's liberal stance.

In my interview with Janna, she enforced Oxfam NZ's commitment to getting government involved in global poverty initiatives by stating that the organisation strives "to get government parties to commit to spending New Zealand's overseas aid budget in a way that supports a sustainable rights-based approach to development in poor countries." This account from Janna also shows how Oxfam NZ has adopted a social justice and rights-based approach to international development. This statement further reveals how Oxfam NZ's views of development and constructions of poverty influence its key implementation activities.

Before I interviewed three informants from Oxfam NZ, I was aware of the organisation's robust and liberal stance on global poverty and international development, and for this reason, I specifically asked a few questions that I did not ask the other informants. For example, my conversation with Janna and Jason Garman, Oxfam NZ's Media Coordinator, was brief and to the point. I spoke with these two informants together, and knowing that they are the primary producers of the media releases that reveal the organisation's social justice and human rights-based approach, I asked them if lobbying the New Zealand Government was an effective way of bringing about change. Jason gave me an intelligent half smile and said:

Certainly. Lobbying is a broad term though. You can lobby your mom to bake you an apple cake, you can lobby your local Rotary Club to give you a grant to volunteer in a developing country, or you can lobby your government to live up to its promises on international aid. All are based on the premise that it is possible to influence people. I believe people can be influenced and decisions can be impacted. The better our lobbying techniques, the better our result.

From Jason's statement, we can see that Oxfam NZ's constructions of poverty and views of development are directly linked to its methods of intervention, or key implementation activities. Lobbying, campaigning, advocacy work, fundraising, and education are the primary activities that Oxfam NZ engages in. Through campaigning and government lobbying, the organisation is attempting to affect change at all levels by raising awareness and educating the New Zealand public about poverty, development, current issues, and what they can do at home to support these initiatives.

As an affiliate of the international network Oxfam International, Oxfam NZ, like that of NZAID, works in partnership with the United Nations and World Bank and views these multilateral agencies as "valuable resources for international aid and development" (<http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/faqs/nzaids-work.html#faq-11>). CWS however views multilateral development initiatives as a hindrance to impoverished rural communities, and therefore focuses its efforts solely on bilateral development projects arguing that: "local people know their needs best, local aid prompts faster recovery from natural disaster, local aid avoids dependency, and local aid is more cost effective" (<http://www.cws.org.nz/what-can-i-do/emergencies>).

Being New Zealand's longest serving aid and development agency, CWS focuses on community development and believes, in Liz's words, that "development should stay local and be initiated by the community and local NGOs." When talking about CWS's development practices, Liz stated, "We are quite committed to working with local organisations so that the money and the expertise stay within the community, as well as finding ways for people to improve their situation within their own communities." Liz's explanation shows how CWS's view of development reflects its constructions of poverty in that the organisation chooses to support local people via funding rather than implementing its own development projects overseas. Moreover, by funding local partners who are implementing local projects, CWS is "acting to end poverty and injustice in the world by funding groups tackling poverty." The organisation is also "helping them build decent livelihoods."

Interested in Liz's previous response, I furthered my investigation into the organisation's approach to development by asking her what her definition of the word development is.

Liz grimaced and responded by saying:

Ooo...that is a tricky one. Well, we...there are all sorts of types of development anyway, but at CWS it is about looking at community development. So it is really about pairing with communities so that they can better their conditions and improve the livelihood of the community they live in. And so it is about addressing the inequalities.

In this quote, and specifically in reference to the final sentence, we can see how CWS has chosen to take a rights-based approach to development. The use of the word 'inequality', which refers to the unequal opportunity or treatment of the poor based on social and economic disparity, reveals the organisation's commitment to working for equal rights. By 'addressing' the social and economic inequalities present in the Third World, CWS is attempting to redistribute power back to local communities through empowerment, and funding community based development projects is the organisation's way of achieving this goal.

From these observations, it is clear that CWS's view of development reflects their constructions of poverty and vice versa. As I outlined in Table 2, CWS's primary method of intervention, or key activities, is that of education and advocacy of the New Zealand public. By explaining the various causes of poverty and reporting on the community development projects that the organisation is funding, CWS is educating the public about the complexities of global poverty and inequality. Therefore, it is apparent that the organisation's constructions of poverty influence its view of development, which is connected to its key organisational activities.

Chapter Four: Summary

In this chapter, I described how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS construct poverty in the context of international development. I discussed these constructions by looking at: official and unofficial definitions of poverty, the causes of poverty, and organisational approaches to international development. First, when discussing definitions of poverty, it was apparent that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS endorse official and unofficial definitions of poverty. It was also clear that these three organisations find poverty to be a difficult and complex issue to explain. Secondly, upon examining NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's various definitions of poverty, it was apparent that these definitions reflect the ways in which these three organisations view the causes of poverty. The implications concerning the causes of poverty resulted in a discussion on the political, geographical, generational, environmental, and gender concerns surrounding the issue. Third and finally, by investigating NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's approaches to international development, it is clear that their views of development are influenced by the ways in which they construct poverty. Furthermore, the key implementation activities of NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS are also influenced by their constructions of poverty and views of development. Therefore, from this chapter, we can see how the concept of poverty is multi-layered, and is defined in terms of aid and development agency practice. In the next chapter, I address the ways in which my informants view the relationships between communication and poverty.

CHAPTER FIVE: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND POVERTY

This chapter focuses on answering my second research question of how aid and development agencies in New Zealand view the relationships between communication and poverty. Through the course of my interviews with eleven informants, we talked about the various ways in which communication and poverty are connected. From these conversations, three topics emerged: communication with local people and local organisations, communication about local people and local organisations, and dealing with communication issues. This chapter will therefore examine how these three topics are framed in terms of aid and development agency practice.

Chapter five is organised as follows. In section one, I look at how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS communicate with local individuals and local organisations, as well as the language and communication barriers that arise when working cross-culturally. Second, I discuss how these three organisations communicate poverty to the New Zealand public. Third, I talk about the implications of accountability, transparency, and legitimacy that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS use as a means for dealing with communication issues. Finally, I review the findings that answer my second research question by providing a chapter summary. Now, I turn to how these three organisations communicate with local people and local organisations.

Communication with local people and local organisations

This section will discuss how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS describe the ways in which they communicate with local people and local organisations, as well as uncover the barriers that exist when working with individuals from diverse cultures. More specifically, this section will look at the metaphorical implications that these three organisations use to describe their relationships with the impoverished communities, and how these metaphorical frames contribute to cultural misunderstanding.

Truth Windows: Working directly with communities. My interview with Michael revealed how Oxfam NZ's support for local individuals and organisations reflects its outlook on poverty and international development. As Michael and I were discussing the various aspects of his work, he abruptly changed topic and said he is working on a local communication development project I may find interesting. This project is known as the Truth Window. As it was explained to me, the Truth Window project captures the story of rural people's lives. When I asked Michael to explain to me the objectives of the project, he stated:

Well, one of the main objectives of the project is to keep overseas partners aware of what is going on in rural communities, and to stress the importance of persistence. And so with the Truth Window project, rural communities design their own projects, and they create a business plan and elect officers to a council. Also, communities right now are producing maps as a way of problem solving. Most of them are pictorial maps and it allows those who are illiterate to participate in their own development. It is sort of a way of solving a communication problem by creating an opportunity. And...you know...these maps are practical and important tools for communities and allow the community to monitor their own framework.

From Michael's description, we can see how Oxfam NZ's constructions of poverty and view of development that highlight justice as a key issue, reflect the organisation's development initiatives in that the Truth Window is explicitly designed to address injustice by distributing power back to local individuals and communities. Furthermore, the Truth Window project is framed to support Oxfam NZ's commitment to issues of discrimination, poverty, and injustice.

Michael's notion of the Truth Window also bears several metaphorical implications. For starters, Michael attempts to use this metaphor to uncover the truth of rural people's lives by describing the issues they face. By reporting on these issues, it is apparent that Michael recognises that problems exist when communicating with local people and local organisations; and therefore, his implementation of the project is attempting to address these problems.

However, this notion of a Truth Window also implies that since Oxfam NZ is aware of the issues in communication, and is addressing these issues by working directly with local individuals, the organisation therefore knows the ‘truth’ about the lives of those living in poverty, when in reality, this may not be the case.

As Michael mentioned in chapter four, Oxfam NZ works in two ways: directly with its own projects and staff, or by supporting local individuals and organisations who have begun to implement their own programmes. As I have shown above, the Truth Window is an example of how the organisation works directly with its own projects and staff. In contrast to this approach is Oxfam NZ’s partnership with Women in Business Development Incorporated (WIBDI) in Samoa, which is an example of the organisation’s support for local organisations implementing their own programmes.

Partnerships: Working with community organisations. With the support of Oxfam NZ, WIBDI has recently launched a new marketing campaign aimed at exporting virgin coconut oil to the Body Shop. Prior to my interview with Michael, I was aware of Oxfam NZ’s partnership with WIBDI via the Oxfam NZ website and also from my interview with Rachel Simon-Kumar, Senior Lecturer and International Student Advisor at the University of Waikato. This prior knowledge prompted my questioning of Oxfam NZ’s status with WIBDI. As I explained to Michael how I first learnt of WIBDI, he smiled and responded, “Mmm... Well they have been very successful. We cannot claim all the credit for that. But we are their main partner. We linked them to the Body Shop, but they developed that market themselves.” From this response we can see how this further upholds Oxfam NZ’s commitment to “supporting local people and projects.” By linking a local organisation like WIBDI to an international network like the Body Shop, Oxfam NZ is upholding its commitment to fighting for a safer, fairer world where all people have equal opportunities, as well as addressing the causes of poverty, gender discrimination being one of the main causes identified in chapter four.

Oxfam NZ's partnership with WIBDI is therefore one of funding and networking in that local organisations develop their own programmes and markets, while Oxfam NZ assists in funding and linking these partners to the global economic market.

CWS's partnership approach for communicating with local people and local organisations implies collaboration, equality, and equitability. In contrast to Oxfam NZ, CWS focuses solely on funding local partners who are initiating their own programmes, rather than implementing its own development projects overseas. One way that CWS upholds its local and partnership approach for communicating with impoverished communities is by supporting overseas projects that are empowering women.

The organisation's partnership with the Africa Women Filmmakers Trust (AWFT) is an example of how it collaborates with local partners, with the intention of socially and economically empowering local organisations. AWFT is a local women's organisation in Zimbabwe that uses participatory video for the social and economic empowerment of marginalised communities, with the intention of bringing about social change. When I spoke with John about the specifics of CWS's partnership with AWFT, he began to talk about the constraints faced by the organisation stating:

I think it is worth saying that when they were first established, Zimbabwe was in much better shape and they...they sought quite a lot of funding to get themselves established and were probably able to do a lot more in those early days than they are at the moment. And they have to be extremely careful in the way they operate...in a way to sort of try and portray themselves as a-political and not radical or challenging in any way.

John's statement shows how difficult and complex the issues surrounding the implementation of development programmes can be in particular countries, and for this reason, CWS upholds its commitment to supporting bilateral development projects via funding only arguing that "local people know their needs best, local aid avoids dependency, and local aid is more cost effective."

Furthermore, it is apparent that CWS's partnership consists of supplying local people and local organisations with the tools and funds needed to implement their own projects. Partnership in this sense also indicates that CWS is a source of funding, while local people and organisations are the implementers and developers. Due to the cultural and language barriers that exist when implementing overseas development projects, this type of partnership attempts to avoid such barriers by keeping development local.

A strategic focus on women's empowerment and women's roles in decision-making has also been at the forefront of NZAID's development initiatives. Because of the bureaucratic constraints of government, NZAID is unable to directly support local individuals or local organisations. However, through the Pacific Governance Programme, NZAID has been funding femLINKpacific in Fiji, a women's community media organisation. Established in 2002, the local radio station is trilingual, allowing participants the opportunity to speak their local language. Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, co-founder of femLINKpacific, contests that "in the absence of requests for a female view in decision-making, femLINKpacific is bringing Fiji the voices of women" (2008, p. 6). In my interviews with Mike and Catrina, we did not discuss the specifics of development initiatives NZAID is currently funding. Mike did however inform me that when NZAID is reporting on the success of local initiatives via its monthly magazine, the agency "strives for transparency by defining the issue and explaining the implications of success through NGO and government partnerships."

From Mike's comment, it is apparent that the agency's partnership is indirect in that its partners are sovereign governments and New Zealand NGOs. This partnership can create difficulties when it comes to attribution because NZAID is not the sole funder of international development programmes. Therefore, the agency must be cautious in the way it chooses to frame its partnerships, especially when reporting on successful projects it has contributed to.

There are three final points to be made in reference to the concept of ‘partnership’. From these insights, it is apparent that the term ‘partnership’ is a dominant way of describing relationships between local communities and local organisations in the developing world, and funding bodies like NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS. Moreover, one advantage of the term ‘partnership’ is that it discursively constructs equality, which is important given the history of development. For example, CWS chooses to solely act as a funder giving local people and organisations the complete power to initiate and implement their own programmes and projects. On the other hand however, the concept of ‘partnership’ can obscure basic economic inequalities between organisations in the West and the developing world in that it disregards the fact that there is an imbalance of power between Western aid and development agencies and Third World organisations. Since Western aid and development agencies are the primary funders of development initiatives in the developing world, they have a greater sense of power because they are economically more stable and have greater access to large amounts of funding.

So far, I have shown how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS communicate with local individuals and local organisations, and how their constructions of poverty and views of development influence the projects and people they choose to support. Though these three organisations have been successful in their partnerships discussed above, barriers to development exist. The cross-cultural barriers that arise when working overseas was discussed in detail with three informants, though all eleven saw cultural barriers as one of the biggest obstacles to international development.

Miscommunication. When I asked Michael what types of cultural issues he faces when working with overseas partners, he began to describe the miscommunication that can occur when implementing local development projects.

While I might have an understanding with a local partner and that partner may be agreeing to the information, they might not actually be understanding. We might have a different understanding of what we are agreeing to. And so it also takes quite a lot of time to get something converted from English to say the same thing in another language, as well as to understand if we are going to provide funding and whether the objectives for that funding and way of tracking the project’s progress are agreed upon.

The first sentence of this quote explicitly implies that cultural and communication barriers are the result of local people and local organisations' misunderstanding of the partnership agreement, which further indicates that cultural misunderstanding is not the result of Western NGO's imposing their culture upon the communities they fund, but rather misunderstanding occurs because local communities do not understand the culture of the organisation funding the project. What further leads to the miscommunications between local people and organisations and Western NGOs is the translation of documents from English to other languages. Translation from one language to another is in of itself a cultural and communication barrier because some words are not translatable.

Michael was not the only informant that described the cultural issues that arise when working cross-culturally. My interview with Mike revealed the problems NZAID faces when working with overseas partners. When I asked Mike to explain to me the cultural barriers that exist for NZAID, he responded saying:

Though NZAID has been more successful in communicating the ways in which it can and cannot work, we have experienced difficulties in the past in getting a project off the ground when doing things at distance. For organisations that rely on external funds, it is often hard for them to say no to funding even when it is going to be really difficult for them to manage the work they are taking on. In the end, the priority and mindset has not been shared equally.

From this statement, we can see how it is implied that NGOs in developing countries are at fault for the failure of development projects being implemented in their communities. However, if NZAID is aware that certain local partners rely on external funds and are unlikely to deny funding even when they are in fact unable to manage the work, the agency is ultimately responsible and at fault for the miscommunication of the projects terms and conditions.

In my brief interview with Mandela, Administrative Coordinator for CWS, we talked about three issues surrounding communication in the Third World. As a Zimbabwean native, Mandela informed me that his perspective is from a Third World point-of-view.

When Mandela and I were discussing the cultural barriers that exist between the West and the Third World, he stated that a poverty of vocabulary exists in Third World countries, which ultimately hinders the communication of messages. When I asked Mandela to further his explanation, he defined this language barrier as the ‘sophistication gap’ and said:

It is not easy for local villagers to understand the climate change agenda for example. One cannot say lets chlorinate this water so it is safe. For starters, there is no word for chlorination or chloride. So one then has to begin thinking how best to use the word chemical without adding fear to the community. If one uses the word chemical, to local villagers, chemicals are poisonous. There is a barrier there, and so there is a vocabulary gap compounded and it is a huge challenge for communicators of development. In other words the resources have to strive to find the best language and way to communicate to rural communities or communities that are less privileged.

From Mandela’s passage it is clear that several issues exist. First and foremost, we can see how language can cause miscommunications between development workers and local individuals and organisations. Second, by stating that a poverty of vocabulary exists within the Third World, and referring to this poverty as the ‘sophistication gap’, implies those who are living in poverty are unformed, ignorant, and therefore unable to understand how aid and development workers are assisting. Moreover, it is also fair to say that when implementing local development projects, Western aid and development agencies have the ability to manipulate the situation by ‘talking around’ local individuals and organisations. What is meant by this, is that aid and development agencies from the West inflict their culture and views of poverty and international development on local communities, which makes it easy for local individuals and organisations to become lost in translation. Lastly, by referring to people as ‘local villagers’, CWS is adding to the miscommunication of who their partners are, where their partners reside, and why the organisation has chosen to work with such partners.

This section on communication with local people and local organisations has examined the ways in which NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS communicate with local individuals and local organisations. Through the various development initiatives described above, it is apparent that how these three organisations construct poverty and view development influences the individuals and organisations they choose to support. Moreover, this section revealed the cross-cultural barriers that exist when working with overseas partners, and how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS frame these barriers. The second section of this chapter will look at how these three organisations communicate poverty to the New Zealand public, and how their strategies reflect their constructions and approaches to international development.

Communication about local people and local organisations

When analysing my interview data, it is evident that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's communication strategies for communicating poverty to the New Zealand public also reflect its interpretations of poverty and outlook on development. This data arose when I asked informants how their organisation communicates poverty and international development to the New Zealand public. In this section, I will examine NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's strategies for communicating to the public. Then, I will show how their strategies influence their views of development and reflect their constructions of poverty. Lastly, I will discuss the barriers that exist for these three organisations when communicating with the public.

As a government aid and development agency, NZAID takes a *government and bureaucratic* approach to communicating with the New Zealand public. This is a restricted, yet strategic approach in that the agency faces constraints brought about by government law and policy. Furthermore, because NZAID must work within the boundaries of government policy, and is therefore unable to utilise television and radio advertising or lobby for funds, it is difficult for the agency to target uniformed audiences. Therefore, communicating poverty is strategic for NZAID, and one way that the agency works strategically is by tailoring its communication about development around what the public wants to know.

Catrina explained how NZAID does this by stating:

We do an opinion poll every two to three years, and we do that in conjunction with the Council for International Development. It is quite a wide-ranging poll that really looks at New Zealand's attitudes and opinions of international aid. And we really kind of hang our communication activities off that. We know that New Zealanders are supportive of what we do, that they think it is the kind of thing we should be doing to be a good international citizen. And that is 75-80 percent of people think that. But then only 25 percent of the people actually know that the government has an aid programme.

From Katrina's description, we can see how difficult communication is for NZAID in that the agency is not only limited to the ways in which it can communicate, but that these limitations have contributed to the low awareness rate of the agency's existence.

Furthermore, in targeting a well-informed constituency, NZAID drastically limits its engagement with the New Zealand public, as well as risks misunderstanding of who and what the agency stands for. Also, since NZAID chooses to centre its communication activities on what an already well-informed audience wants to know, rather than attempting to broaden its audience base, the agency itself is its greatest communication barrier.

Presently, when communicating poverty and international development to the New Zealand public via its monthly magazine, *Currents*, NZAID uses human-interest stories portraying hope, respect, and strength, which explain its contribution to programmes being implemented by overseas partners. The agency makes clear that it does not implement overseas development programmes but rather provides funding to New Zealand NGOs that work with local partners in developing countries. When I spoke with Mike about the effectiveness of NZAID's communication strategy, he stated that by exploring different forms of communication and targeting a broader audience-base, the agency could improve its communication effectiveness.

Further questioning led to Mike recalling his experiences speaking to New Zealand youth about NZAID's contribution to international development and poverty elimination.

I have talked to university students a few times, and also junior high level students trying to get messages across that way. It has been great. There is an openness and sense of inquiry for them wanting to know how things work and why things are the way they are. It is possible to get these messages across to younger aged kids, and perhaps we should do more of that.

Mike's insights reveal NZAID's need to further explore alternative ways of communication. It is also apparent that targeting a younger audience base could raise awareness of who the agency is and what the agency stands for.

As a local Christian NGO, CWS's communication approach is *local and interpersonal* in that the organisation focuses on educating New Zealand's youth and communicating to local parishes about the organisation's work domestically and internationally. Through the use of video studies, teacher guides to development, youth posters and magazines, the organisation uses messages and images that entice a younger audience. The tone of the text is light and constructed in a way that children can understand and relate to. No statistics are used. Instead, CWS introduces a child of the same age of its target audience and describes whom the child is by naming the child, providing information about where the child is from, and the obstacles the child faces. They do not scar children by talking about the disparities of poverty, but rather use words such as 'very poor'. Each publication also provides a map indicating the geographical location of the country in which the featured child resides, which allows New Zealand children to visually picture where countries are located. In my interview with Liz, we talked extensively about CWS's communications strategy, and she explained the logic of the organisation's initiatives by stating:

We try to look at the steps that are being taken, and we do not want to give people a false perception of what we are doing. We do not want people to think that if they sponsor a child it is going to make a difference, because to us, it is not. We do not want to help one child but rather look at the structures that are causing it for all children. And those are really difficult issues to deal with.

From Liz's response, we can see how the ways in which CWS communicates poverty and international development to the public are influenced by its commitment to "educating the New Zealand public" and to its "advocacy" for addressing the injustices that affect the world's disadvantaged. Moreover, the learning tools provided by CWS educate New Zealand children on poverty and gives them a chance to think about the issues in greater depth. They also raise the awareness of poverty from a child's perspective. According to Liz, "The idea is that by educating kids about poverty and the issues surrounding poverty, they will in turn become more proactive and well-informed adults with the ambition and dedication to ending global poverty and inequality."

Because CWS is a religious NGO, its communication materials promote empathy, spirituality, and prayer. The organisation also provides worship resources to local parishes and calls on parish assistance when emergencies strike, which is another example of the organisation's local and interpersonal approach to communication. Providing resources to churches allows parishes to promote and support CWS's development initiatives, and for this reason, communication for CWS is primarily paper and resource based. Liz explained to me the logic behind this approach by stating:

We are looking at the website becoming more important and looking at an e-bulletin because we think this is important. At the moment I guess it has been...most of our supporters are older and members of the churches and so we feel these have good information and any feedback and evaluation we get back is always positive. The problem is people knowing that they are there. It is the promotion of the communication resources that is an issue.

From this quote, we can see how CWS has taken a local and interpersonal approach to development and poverty reduction at all levels. For starters, the organisation has chosen to specifically target local church parishes for funding, as well as educate New Zealand youth. Second, this quote backs CWS's commitment to keeping development local by supporting community development via international partnerships through funds only. However, an evident gap exists in the public's CWS addresses. Targeting young people and those who are avid church attendees, leaves a very liberal and often proactive audience unattended – high school and university students as well as young adults.

From Mike's experiences speaking with high school students about NZAID's work, we have seen how this audience is eager and attentive, and therefore, both NZAID and CWS should explore alternative forms of communication for addressing these audiences.

In contrast to NZAID and CWS, Oxfam NZ's approach to communication can be seen as *corporate and professionalized* in that the organisation relies heavily on the use of celebrity branding, which has become a popular way in which aid and development agencies throughout the West have gained public support and raised funds. My conversations with Janna and Michael revealed Oxfam's logic behind its communication approach, and why the organisation chooses to align itself with celebrities like Bob Geldof and Neil Flements. When I asked Janna what the goals and objectives of the media and communications team are, she stated, "We are selling the Oxfam name, and with every piece we want to paint a picture of what Oxfam stands for and what Oxfam is."

Michael further emphasised Oxfam NZ's approach arguing:

Yeah, I mean you get someone like...recently Bob Geldof and Bono came to New Zealand and both those guys have powerful messages and support Oxfam's messages, and they were really willing to talk and mention Oxfam and support our work. And I think that because they have such a huge following in their musical work that it does flow off. It is just raising profile. I mean this is a really hard message to sell.

From these insights, it is apparent that Oxfam NZ uses celebrity branding to raise the profile of the organisation, to raise funds for overseas development, and to educate the public about who Oxfam NZ is and what the organisation is doing to fight global poverty and inequality. By aligning itself with individualistic celebrities who have used their status as a means for speaking out against the injustices that exist, Oxfam NZ is appealing to a broad audience base. In appealing to a broad national and international audience, Oxfam NZ is able to expand the scope of its fundraising opportunities.

This celebrity partnership that Oxfam NZ has with celebrities who endorse the organisation's name, can be seen as benefiting both Oxfam NZ and the celebrity endorsing the organisation's name, while the issue – people living in poverty – becomes lost in the universal constructions of poverty.

This sort of partnership raises the profile of the Oxfam NZ name, and the name of the celebrity, but it fails to address its ultimate objective of ending global poverty and inequality. Individuals living in the Third World who are affected by poverty, will never be seen as equal if NGOs and celebrities from the West continue to use status and power as a means of raising awareness. Furthermore, this is not an example of Oxfam NZ giving “voice to the voiceless”, but rather an example of how the organisation frames, speaks, mediates, and positions poverty and those who are affected by it.

As I mentioned above, Oxfam NZ has adopted a corporate and professionalized approach to communicating with the New Zealand public; however, when I was examining the press releases printed on Oxfam NZ’s website, it was also clear to me that the organisation is carrying its social justice and liberal approach to development through to its communication approach with the public. Headlines such as: *Climate change: Rich countries offer little in new climate talks*; *Food crisis: Aid and trade both crucial to address food crisis*; and *Partnership or powerplay? Oxfam paper calls for rethink on EU trade deals*; indicate Oxfam NZ’s urgency for the New Zealand public and the New Zealand Government to take action against global inequality. Such headlines can also be seen as a form of lobbying in that the organisation is calling on the government to review its policies, and at the same time educating the public about policies that hinder the economic and social growth of developing nations. These press releases can further be seen as addressing the ways in which New Zealand has contributed to global inequality, and what New Zealand can do to address the issues it has assisted in creating. Therefore, Oxfam NZ is showing the New Zealand public why it is important to be concerned with poverty elsewhere.

Throughout my interviews with eleven informants, one theme continued to emerge. This theme is that of how the New Zealand media has, and continues to create problems for these three organisations when communicating poverty and international development to the public.

The media have long been a powerful force behind the images and messages that depict the Third World and its 'condition'. When I asked John if he had any suggestions for communication and development practice, he paused, then responded saying, "I think the media needs to do some real soul searching about the issue they have already raised in terms of what the impact some of the stereotypes they create are having."

In my interview with Catrina, she explained to me the difficulty NZAID has in communicating development and poverty via the media.

One of the main ways we try to communicate is through the media, and it is a pretty crowded media space in New Zealand. It is not easy to get these sorts of issues into the media for a variety of reasons. And another thing, I also think the kind of paradigm of poverty in the media...it is such a huge issue that often the media and journalists do not know how to approach it because it is just so big. So, I think, what is the entry point? Without being overwhelmed by the doom and gloom of it all, how do you talk about poverty, and how do you report it?

From this statement, we can see how difficult it can become for New Zealand aid and development agencies to communicate their messages about poverty and international development through the media in that poverty is a vast and complex issue that is often daunting to tackle. Furthermore, since the media often choose not to report on global poverty issues, it is hard for New Zealand aid and development agencies to communicate their messages to the wider New Zealand public, which further adds to the misconceptions and misrepresentations of people living in developing countries.

The problematic attitude of the New Zealand media was also mentioned during my conversation with Liz. She stated:

Poverty and development is just not deemed to be a story for them. It is not an issue that they see people being interested in. But, I mean you look at all the people in New Zealand, there are a lot of people who want that information. But it is not coming through.

Liz's comment reveals the communicative barriers that exist for aid and development agencies in New Zealand. With a media that is indifferent to global poverty and international development, New Zealand aid and development agencies face great obstacles in raising awareness of global poverty issues, as well as what is being done to address the inequalities that exist.

From these insights, we can see how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS alike view the media as one their greatest communicative barriers. These accusations raise question as to whether the media are in fact indifferent to global poverty and international development issues, or if New Zealand aid and development agencies are placing blame in order to divert attention away from their own organisational practices.

By stating that the New Zealand media do a poor job of reporting on global poverty and international development, NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS do not have to completely justify or explain their organisational initiatives, which in turn lessens public scrutiny while at the same time contributing to the long-lived misconceptions and misrepresentations of poverty and Third World development. However, if one were to track the number of instances in which the New Zealand media report on global poverty and international development initiatives, one would understand why these three organisations have made such allegations. Therefore, one can see how these accusations brought forth by NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS are justifiable, and at the same time relieve these three organisations from their duty of clearly explaining their organisational practices.

This section has examined the communication approaches NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS use to communicate poverty and international development to the New Zealand public. From these insights, we can see how these three organisations' communication strategies reflect their approaches to development and constructions of poverty. This section has also revealed the difficulty NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS face when communicating messages through the New Zealand media.

Below in Table 4, I have outlined NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's communication approaches and methods for implementation. Table 4 will assist in clarifying the communicative position of these three organisations.

Table 4

Communication approaches

	Approach	Method of implementation
NZAID	Government / bureaucratic approach	Conducts opinion poll and focus groups every 2-3 years, human interest stories via monthly magazine
Oxfam NZ	Corporate and professionalized approach	Celebrity branding, press releases calling on public and government to take action
CWS	Local and interpersonal approach	Church bulletins, education of youth via video studies, teacher guides, youth posters, promoting empathy, prayer, and spirituality

Dealing with communication issues

This section will look at the implications of accountability, transparency, and legitimacy of NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS. More specifically, this section will discuss how these three subjects are key forms in which NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS deal with issues that arise when communicating with and about local people and local organisations. During my conversations with eleven informants, several of them talked about the subjects of accountability, transparency, and legitimacy as a means for gaining organisational credibility from the New Zealand public. These subjects were discussed in detail with Catrina and Mike of NZAID, and briefly mentioned by Liz of CWS. My interviews with Michael, Janna, and Jason did not reveal in-depth explanations of Oxfam NZ's ways of dealing with communication issues; however, it was apparent from my interview data that ways of obtaining accountability, transparency, and legitimacy exist within the organisation.

When looking at how these three organisations obtain accountability, transparency, and legitimacy, it is important to first understand the definitions of each concept. According to Ganesh (2003), "Legitimacy refers to the extent to which an organisation searches for justification for its existence from its environment, whereas accountability refers to the extent to which an organisation is publicly required to justify its actions to its environment" (p. 565). Suchman (1995) argues that legitimacy "reflects a positive normative evaluation of the organisation and its activities" (p. 579). Moreover, transparency is the state of being transparent, and one way organisations portray themselves as transparent is by being completely open and up-front about the ways in which they conduct business.

As a government body, NZAID is more susceptible to the pressures of attribution and being held accountable for the funding they provide for overseas assistance, which is largely due to the fact that it is taxpayer money. One way that NZAID works to obtain legitimacy is by implementing the agency's monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Catrina described NZAID's method as a basic stakeholder relationship strategy by stating:

It is important that NZAID communicates to overseas partners, government officials, and NGOs about how we work, what the principles of our work are, why we are doing it, and what we want to achieve. It is basic stakeholder relationship strategy in that informing people of who we are, what we do, and the results we get, allows us to build strong and open relationships with the people we partner with.

We can see from this quote that by being transparent and accountable for the ways in which it conducts business, NZAID is attempting to gain legitimacy. This statement further indicates that organisational legitimacy is essential for building strong and open relationships with overseas partners and the New Zealand public.

Reviewing NZAID's Pacific Strategy, I found that the agency "strives to provide aid effectiveness through mutual accountability" stating:

Achieving accountability and transparency involves strengthening oversight functions within governments, particularly parliaments; using broad consultative processes (which include civil society and the private sector) in formulating national development strategies; and jointly assessing progress in a transparent way (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2007).

From this statement, it is apparent that NZAID believes that by strengthening internal relations with governments and parliament, the agency is being more accountable and transparent, and by achieving accountability and transparency, the agency is ultimately gaining legitimacy. Furthermore, this statement further upholds NZAID's partnership approach to development, and also reveals the bureaucratic constraints that exist within government. Therefore, from these insights, it can be concluded that NZAID believes legitimacy is achieved via accountability and transparency, and accountability and transparency are obtained by strengthening internal and external stakeholder relationships – internal being parliament, external being other governments, partner NGOs, the New Zealand public, and ultimately those living in poverty.

Being a local religious NGO, CWS deals with communication issues less strategically than that of NZAID. My interview with Liz revealed CWS's strategy for communicating with stakeholders. She explained:

It is about communicating to our supporters in New Zealand about what we are doing and what difference it is making, as well as building up that link. It is also about informing our stakeholders about where their money is going and assuring them that their money is being used responsibly.

This statement reflects CWS's *local and interpersonal* approach to communicating with supporters in New Zealand. In being transparent and accountable for how funds are spent and what impact they are making, CWS is gaining legitimacy and credibility from the New Zealand public.

Further questioning on this topic revealed that CWS views stakeholder relations as a means of relieving cultural barriers. Interested in this finding, I asked Liz to explain how this is done. She responded stating:

Well...Last year our partners from the Philippines, Cambodia, India, and Sri Lanka met and shared their experiences and found that they all share the same objectives and have the same problems, just slightly different strategies for dealing with the issues. And so by communicating with our partners on the ground, and then retelling their stories in our reports and magazines, we are effectively communicating with our local partners as well as the public.

By being transparent with domestic and international partners, CWS is upholding its commitment to "funding groups tackling poverty and assisting them in building decent livelihoods", as well as raising awareness and educating the New Zealand public about how their money is assisting in the "fight against global poverty and injustice".

Therefore, these insights show how CWS takes local, community approach to gaining legitimacy through actions of transparency and accountability.

As I mentioned above, my interviews with Michael, Janna, and Jason did not produce conversation around Oxfam NZ's strategy for dealing with communication issues. However, from my interview data, it is apparent that the organisation works in particular ways, and these ways can be seen as a means for acquiring organisational legitimacy by being transparent with overseas partners and the New Zealand public.

From my interview with Jason, he explained his role in communicating with partners on the ground and stakeholders within New Zealand.

As part of the communications team, we are not directly involved with any overseas development projects. We converse with the programme managers in each region about what is occurring on the ground...And so Michael for example...he is like a messenger for the communications team. He bridges the gap between the people and the media materials...like the stories that are covered. We then write up the stories he talks about, and even will produce videos if we have the permission from the people we want to video.

From Jason's statement it is clear that Oxfam NZ strives for transparency through the communication of staff working with overseas partners and staff who are based in New Zealand. Moreover, by retelling the stories of local people and local organisations via media materials, Oxfam NZ is attempting to redistribute power back to impoverished communities by educating the public about who Oxfam NZ is, what they stand for, and what they are doing to address injustice, while at the same time gaining legitimacy by being held accountable for its actions. This approach to acquiring legitimacy backs the organisation's liberal and social justice approach to development, as well as its professionalized approach for communicating with local people and local organisations.

Chapter 5: Summary

In this chapter, I examined how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS communicate with local people and local organisations, their strategies for communicating poverty and international development to the New Zealand public, and their ways of dealing with communication issues. I have also discussed the barriers that exist when working cross-culturally, and the obstacles these three organisations face when communicating their messages through the New Zealand media.

First, when discussing how these three organisations communicate with local people and local organisations, it is apparent that the local people and local organisations they choose to support reflect their constructions of poverty and views of development. It was also noted that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS face communication obstacles when working cross-culturally, and that these obstacles often result from the ways in which these three organisations frame cultural and communication barriers.

Secondly, upon examining the local people and local organisations NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS choose to support, it is clear that the ways in which they communicate with local people and local organisations reflects the ways in which they communicate poverty and international development to the New Zealand public. The implications surrounding the approaches and methods for communicating about poverty and international development resulted in a discussion on the media's disinterest in global poverty and the difficulties these three organisations face when communicating messages via the media. Finally, the ways in which these three organisations deal with communication issues uncovered actions of accountability, transparency, and legitimacy. The method in which accountability, transparency, and legitimacy are obtained by NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS are further influenced by their approaches to development and views of poverty. Therefore, from this chapter, we can see how these three organisations frame communication with local people and local organisations, communication about local people and local organisations, and communication issues in terms of aid and development agency practice. In the next chapter, I revisit the findings that answer my two research questions, and link these findings to the implications of theory that were examined in chapter two.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Communication plays an important role in the implementation of international development and poverty improvement initiatives, and all of my informants were eager to discuss this issue. During the interview process, my informants took time away from their busy day-to-day schedules to make sense of the issues surrounding international development and poverty reduction. In the process, they were able to think through their organisations' strategies for communicating poverty and international development, as well as ponder their importance. In this chapter, I revisit the findings from this study's two research questions and provide implications for theory and practice.

RQ1: How do aid and development agencies in New Zealand construct poverty in the context of international development?

From the data I gathered, it was apparent that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS define poverty in two ways, officially and unofficially. This research found that NZAID recognises five official definitions of poverty, which are generic and used as the official policy guide of many aid and development agencies that are closely aligned with government and that work multilaterally through organisations like the World Bank and IMF. These official definitions are present in most of the agency's government-related documents. However, from my interviews with Catrina and Mike, I found that NZAID also acknowledges unofficial definitions of poverty, which focus on deconstructing the complexities of poverty. From my interview with Catrina, it was clear that NZAID's unofficial definitions of poverty attempt to humanise the concept. One can also see that these unofficial definitions are country specific and vary from nation to nation. Therefore, it can be concluded that NZAID recognises official definitions of poverty in its government documents, but communicates to the New Zealand public using unofficial definitions.

When officially and unofficially defining poverty, Oxfam NZ takes a social justice approach to addressing the issue. This study found that the official and unofficial definitions of poverty that are acknowledged by Oxfam NZ are not as concrete as those of NZAID, and therefore are more difficult to separate. The organisation's official definitions of poverty emphasise the need to address injustice and the need to strive to achieve equality by taking action against global economic inequality. From my interview's with Michael, Janna, and Jason, it was clear that Oxfam NZ's unofficial definitions of poverty complement its official definitions in that the organisation first defines poverty from its point-of-view, then explains the causes of poverty, and finally calls on the New Zealand public to take action and responsibility for ending poverty. It was also evident from Michael, Janna, and Jason's insights that Oxfam NZ's official definitions of poverty serve as a basis for the way in which the organisation unofficially defines poverty and communicates poverty to the New Zealand public.

Different to NZAID and Oxfam NZ is CWS's religious approach to constructing poverty. As this study has found, CWS's unofficial definition of poverty draws on the theoretical implications of the concept stating that God did not create inequality, but rather humans created the vast inequalities that exist in the world today. In contrast to the organisation's informal definition is its official definition, which draws on the organisation's secular positioning viewing global poverty as an injustice that needs to be addressed. One can see from CWS's official definitions of poverty that a similarity in values exists between Oxfam NZ and CWS in that both NGOs emphasise the importance of ending injustice and promoting equality of rights.

In addition to defining poverty officially and unofficially, NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS attempt to explain the complexities of poverty by discursively positioning poverty as the result of political, geographical, generational, environmental, and gender issues. In my interviews with Janna, Jason, Liz, and Catrina, they all mentioned how the organisation they represent strives to make the situations faced by those living in poverty a reality to the New Zealand public.

Therefore, it was also apparent that the ways in which these three organisations define poverty are linked to how they construct and deconstruct the causes of poverty, which can be seen as political, geographical, generational, environmental, and gender related.

When talking about organisational approaches to international development, it was clear that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's approaches and outlook on international development further reflects the way in which they construct poverty. This data arose when I asked informants how their organisation defines development, and how they personally define development. From their responses, it was apparent that these three organisations' key implementation activities relate to their overall approach.

Though this study revealed that NZAID takes a rights and partnership approach to development, the agency is limited in the ways in which it can conduct business and communicate with the New Zealand public due to the bureaucratic constraints of government. Furthermore, this study found that NZAID must work within narrowly defined criteria, and these criteria can be seen as a reason why the agency endorses official and economically driven definitions of poverty and development in its government documents. Furthermore, since NZAID is a government body, the agency's implementation activities are severely limited. Because NZAID is unable to advertise, lobby, or campaign, the agency is unable to reach a broad audience base, and therefore recognises that its contribution to international development and poverty reduction is by supporting New Zealand NGOs and working with sovereign governments and multilaterally through the World Bank and the United Nations.

In contrast to NZAID, this study found that Oxfam NZ takes a social justice and rights-based approach to international development. My interviews with Michael, Janna, and Jason revealed the similarities between Oxfam NZ's constructions of poverty and its outlook on development in that the organisation's definitions of poverty and its views of development both address the need to fight for injustice and human rights.

Informant insights also revealed that Oxfam NZ's views of development and constructions of poverty influence its key implementation activities of lobbying, campaigning, advocacy work, fundraising, and education.

Similar to Oxfam NZ, CWS takes a local and rights-based approach to development emphasising the importance of local communities and local organisations implementing their own development projects. CWS's view of development reflects its constructions of poverty in that the organisation chooses to support local people and organisations via funding rather than implementing its own development projects overseas. Furthermore, as this study found, CWS's constructions of poverty influence its view of development, which further reflects the organisation's key organisational activities of education and advocacy of the New Zealand public.

From the two issues that arose from this answer, constructions of poverty and approaches to international development, one can see how poverty is a multi-layered concept in New Zealand aid and development agencies. NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's views of the term poverty can be seen as effecting, and influencing every aspect of organisational practice. This points to the need to further investigate the mindset of aid and development agencies and the limitations that arise when approaching poverty and international development from a particular point-of-view.

RQ2: How do aid and development agencies in New Zealand view the relationships between communication and poverty?

The discussion on constructions of poverty and approaches to international development went hand in hand with the discussion on how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS view relationships between communication and poverty. I discovered three key aspects of how these organisations view the relationships between communication and poverty. As they do so, they discursively create "poverty" itself as a category, that turns into a object for their intervention. The first way these three organisations characterised the relationships between communication and poverty was through communication with local people and local organisations.

Such communication was discussed as being both direct and indirect, and the term ‘partnership’ was used by every informant who talked about their organisation’s approach for communicating with local people and local organisations. From my interview data, it is clear that the term ‘partnership’ is a central way of describing relationships between local people and organisations in the Third World, and funding organisations like NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS. This discussion on communication with local people and local organisations also revealed the miscommunication that occurs when working cross-culturally. Conversations with informants uncovered that the language aid and development agencies use to construct impoverished communities and describe the misunderstandings that frequently occur, can further lead to the miscommunication of who these three organisations’ partners are, where they reside, and why these three organisations have chosen to work with such overseas partners. Moreover, due to the discursive language NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS use to refer to local people and local organisations, it was implied that impoverished communities are at fault for the misunderstandings and miscommunications that occur when working cross-culturally.

The second way that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS characterised relationships between communication and poverty was through communication about local people and local organisations. From my interview data, I found that these three organisations’ strategies for communicating poverty to the New Zealand public also reflect their interpretations of poverty and outlook on development. Conversations with Mike and Catrina uncovered NZAID’s *government and bureaucratic* approach to communicating with the New Zealand public. This is a restricted, yet strategic approach in that the agency faces constraints brought about by government law and policy. Therefore, communication about poverty and international development is geared toward a well-informed constituency, which drastically limits NZAID’s engagement with the public.

It can be concluded then that since NZAID chooses to centre its communication activities on what an already well-informed audience wants to know, rather than broadening its audience base, the agency itself is its greatest barrier to communication. This finding reveals NZAID's need to explore alternative ways of communicating poverty and international development.

CWS's *local and interpersonal* communication approach is much different to that of NZAID in that the organisation primarily focuses on educating New Zealand's youth and communicating to local parishes about the organisation's work domestically and internationally. From my interview with Liz, it is clear that CWS's local and interpersonal approach is present at all levels. By focusing on education of New Zealand youth, and by targeting local church parishes for funding, the organisation is upholding its commitment to keeping development local. There is however an evident gap in the audiences CWS chooses to target, and therefore, the organisation should also explore alternative ways of communicating with a broader audience.

In taking a *corporate and professionalized* approach to communication, Oxfam NZ relies heavily on the use of celebrity branding, which has recently become a popular way for Western aid and development agencies to gain public support and raise funds. Though this communication approach appeals to a wide audience base, it is unsatisfying in that it raises the profile of the Oxfam NZ name, and the name of the celebrity endorsing the advertisement, but fails to address the ultimate objective of ending global poverty and inequality. In this sense, there is a need for Oxfam NZ to reevaluate the messages it may and may not be sending when using celebrity faces as a means for addressing global poverty and inequality.

The third and final way NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS characterised relationships between communication and poverty was through dealing with communication issues. From my interview data, it was apparent that when talking about communication issues, these three organisations strive to obtain organisational accountability, transparency, and legitimacy in order to gain credibility from the New Zealand public. From my interviews, it was apparent that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS's organisational approaches for gaining credibility are much different to one another.

As my findings revealed in chapter five, NZAID deals with communication issues by discussing accountability and transparency in its government documents. This approach to gaining organisational legitimacy can be seen as bureaucratic in that the agency primarily focuses on these three subjects when talking about improving its relationship with parliament and other sovereign governments. Such an approach was described to me as basic stakeholder relationship. However, from my interview data, it was evident that NZAID's strategies for acquiring accountability and transparency are more heavily focused on strengthening relationships with parliament and other governments than with partner NGOs, the New Zealand public, and those living in poverty. Though it can be concluded that NZAID believes legitimacy is achieved through accountability and transparency, the agency risks not gaining legitimacy if it continues to primarily focus on bureaucratic stakeholder relationships.

My interview data also revealed that CWS attempts to gain legitimacy via accountability and transparency. The organisation's approach for acquiring accountability and transparency reflects its *local and interpersonal* approach to communicating poverty. In being transparent with domestic and international partners, CWS is backing its commitment to keeping development local. In this sense, CWS has attempted to gain legitimacy at all levels – with local supporters and with overseas partners.

Stated in chapter five, my interviews with Michael, Janna, and Jason did not reveal Oxfam NZ's strategy for dealing with communication issues. However, from my interview data it was clear that the organisation takes professionalized approach to gaining legitimacy. Through the communication of staff working with overseas partners and staff who are based in New Zealand, Oxfam NZ is striving for transparency. In order to accurately assess Oxfam NZ's strategies for dealing with communication issues, more research is needed.

Implications for theory and practice

This study makes a contribution to the study of both communication and development theory, and theory on the discursive constructions of poverty. The four academic perspectives that were discussed in chapter two are significant to this study's findings, and so their relevance to this research is examined in this section. This study also suggests several implications for aid and development agency practice. Therefore, I will outline these findings and their suggestions for future research and practice.

There are four theoretical implications resulting from this study. The first implication for theory is that of information transmission and its relation to the findings discussed in chapter five. This academic perspective on information transmission contested that impoverished communities have the ability to solve the communication problem that exists in the Third World, with only minor assistance from Western nations. The idea of self-development, which is noted by Rogers (1976), was present in my research findings. Oxfam NZ's partnership with WIBDI, CWS's partnership with AWFT, and NZAID's partnership with femLINKpacific, are examples of how self-development can increase the chances of supporting successful development projects. By giving local people and organisations the power to design and implement their own projects and develop their own markets, these three organisations are providing only minor assistance to these groups. Moreover, this strategy to development attempts to lessen the cultural barriers that frequently arise when working cross-culturally. All eleven of my informants saw cultural barriers as one of the biggest obstacles to international development.

A second implication for theory is that of cultural imperialism. Though self-development partnerships attempt to lessen cultural barriers, this study found that problems exist in how NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS frame these barriers. The findings of this study revealed that these three organisations view cultural and communication barriers as a result of local people and local organisations' misunderstanding of the partnership agreement.

This indicates that these three organisations view miscommunication as a problem brought about by impoverished communities' lack of understanding, rather than the result of Western NGOs imposing their imperialistic ideas upon the communities they fund. Furthermore, the language adopted by Western NGOs in reference to the 'poor' often implies ignorance and lack of awareness. Stating that a poverty of vocabulary exists between the West and the Third World, and referring to this poverty as the 'sophistication gap', is an example of how poverty has become a product of misunderstanding. This condescending language contributes to what Escobar (1995) refers to as the cultural globalisation and imperialism of Western depictions of Third World conditions. These findings also reveal Western NGOs' need to acknowledge that traditional cultures will continue to exist. Therefore, if Western funders continue to refer to the 'poor' in the ways they currently do, misunderstandings will continue to occur.

The third theoretical implication relevant to this study is communication exclusion. This perspective focuses on the grassroots issues of development and the need for women to become more involved in development at all levels. Gender issues, which were discussed in chapter four, are seen by NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS as being one of the primary causes of poverty. Nearly every informant noted that gender empowerment is a key element in addressing injustice and promoting equal rights.

All three of these organisations work to promote women's roles in decision-making and women's presence in political, economical, and social life. By supporting women's roles in development, NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS are addressing what Roberts (2008) and Afshar (2000) note as diverse patriarchies and oppression of Third World women.

In addition to supporting women's roles in political, economical, and social development, this study found that these three organisations primarily focus on addressing grassroots issues of development. Michael's Truth Window project is an example of development at the grassroots level. This local community project that seeks to understand the development obstacles faced by local families reflects Mowlana's (1996) belief that by understanding how societies organise and define themselves, one can begin to obtain a greater understanding of the culture of that community. This notion of a Truth Window bore several metaphorical implications, which implied that Michael is attempting to uncover the 'truth' of rural people's lives by retelling their stories in his journal.

Reporting on these issues reveals that Michael is aware of the problems surrounding communication with impoverished communities. However, this metaphor also implies that since Oxfam NZ is aware that communication issues exist, the organisation therefore knows the 'truth'. As I stated above when examining the theoretical implications behind cultural imperialism, the ways in which these three organisations frame cultural and communication barriers is problematic. Michael's Truth Window project can be seen as another example of how Western aid and development agencies assume that since they are actively attempting to work in 'partnership' with local people and local organisations, they automatically have a better recollection of the issues faced by local partners. Moreover, presuming the 'truth', a lack of communication and understanding is apparent, which further denies impoverished communities access to communication outlets.

The fourth and final implication for theory is the discursive constructions of poverty that exist when aid and development agencies are communicating poverty and international development to the public. This study joins a large body of work in demonstrating that constructs such as poverty are discursive and multidimensional.

Since poverty is multidimensional and discursively constructed, there is a need to pay attention to how these constructions evolve. The fact that the social constructions of poverty are “the target of international development assistance, means that what constitutes poverty changes depending on the perspective of those charged with its assessment” (Green, 2006, p. 1113). Since Western aid and development agencies are the primary assessors of international development assistance, they also hold the power of defining and constructing poverty and Third World development. This study found that NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS are constructors of poverty. These constructions can be damaging if not explained clearly. As I discussed in chapter four, these three organisations have made a point to deconstruct the issues surrounding poverty by explaining the various causes.

Though Escobar (1995) and Freire (1990) argue that statistical figures and generic definitions of poverty further add to the stereotypes surrounding poverty in the Third World, Catrina noted that statistical figures are effective when aid and development agencies are initially attempting to engage the public, or when funds must be raised quickly in order to provide emergency and humanitarian relief. This study also found that statistics can be counterproductive and further contribute to the misrepresentations of poverty and Third World development if aid and development agencies print staggering statistics of hunger and despair without also explaining the nature of the situation. Therefore, aid and development agencies should be cautious in how they decide to tackle poverty and international development.

Overall, these four theoretical notions indicate a need to continue to address the issues surrounding communication, poverty, and Third World development. In order to effectively address these issues, it is important for academic research to continue to examine and understand the potential contributions of these four academic perspectives in understanding and acting upon issues of poverty and international development. This is essential because these four perspectives are very different in nature and contribute different insights to the field of practice.

Aside from theoretical implications, the results of this study hold several practical implications. First, it seems reasonable to state that aid and development agencies need to continue to deconstruct and explain the multidimensional nature of poverty. The ways in which aid and development agencies define and report on poverty ultimately shapes the ways in which poverty is communicated to the public, and how agencies themselves act upon poverty.

My second suggestion pertains to communication with local people and local organisations. Communication with impoverished communities can be seen as providing a better understanding of local peoples' and local organisations' situations. However, the language that aid and development agencies use to refer to the 'poor' can lead to further misunderstanding of the issues surrounding poverty and the people who are affected by it. Furthermore, there is a need for aid and development agencies to reevaluate their position and intentions when attempting to implement local development projects. Since agencies are attempting to penetrate the culture of local communities with the intention of 'developing' them, it is crucial that they see the people of these communities as equals. By implying that cultural and communication barriers are the result of the poor's misunderstanding, aid and development agencies are not actually attempting to understand the cultural values of their partners.

The third practical implication I offer is the need for NZAID and CWS to explore alternative options for communicating poverty and international development to the New Zealand public. Both of these organisations have limited their engagement with the public by specifically targeting a particular audience base. Though Oxfam NZ appeals to a broad national and international audience, the organisation's overuse of celebrity branding risks failure in addressing the ultimate objective of ending global poverty and inequality, and for this reason, there is a need for Oxfam NZ to reevaluate the messages it may and may not be sending to the public.

My fourth and final suggestion for aid and development agency practice is the need to further investigate how these three New Zealand organisations, as well as how other aid and development agencies, obtain organisational accountability, transparency, and legitimacy, and how these key subjects might shape the identity of these organisations. This study only scratched the surface of how aid and development agencies deal with communication issues. A deeper look into this subject could further reveal why aid and development agencies feel the need to constantly justify their work, and how these justifications assist in communicating with partners and the public.

Conclusion

During my thesis research, it was exciting to meet and talk with my 11 informants. These leaders from NZAID, Oxfam NZ, and CWS helped to further my understanding of the multidimensional and complex nature of poverty. It was fascinating to hear about all the different methods being used to construct and communicate poverty and international development. From this study, I found that even though these three organisations have different ways of achieving their missions, they all strive to end global poverty and injustice. It was inspiring and uplifting to find that all of my informants are dedicated and passionate about what they do. It was also interesting to hear the informants attempt to make sense of the relationships between communication and poverty, and how these relationships influence the ways in which their organisations communicate with local partners and the New Zealand public. Their responses mark an important step in understanding how communication is central to development and poverty reduction. They also show that communication about poverty and international development is constantly evolving along with the discourse of development. I value the time I was able to spend with every informant, and view this research as a step closer to my future career aspirations.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Main research objectives:

1. How do non-profit sector organisations in New Zealand construct poverty in the context of international development? (Website analysis of text etc.)
2. How do non-profit sector organisations in New Zealand view the relationship between communication and poverty? (qualitative interview analysis)

Area #1: Background

1. Could you tell me a bit about yourself, your educational background, work experience etc.
2. How did you become involved with ...? What were your motivations?
3. Could you touch on how and why you do what you do today?

Area #2: Nature of work

1. What is the current work of ...?
2. What development and local projects have you been involved with? (**Could you start with the present and work backwards?**)
3. What are the objectives of these projects?
4. Are any of the projects you are involved with linked in any way? How?
5. How do you use communication within these projects?
 - A. What challenges do you face in communication?

Area #3: Other groups/organisations

1. What other organisations do you work in partner with, in New Zealand as well as globally?
2. What are the objectives of the groups in which you partner with?
 - A. Do their objectives complement yours, or are they at odds?
3. Is global networking an efficient way of effecting change? Why or why not?
4. How do you coordinate with your national and global partners?
 - A. What is the most effective form of communication for communicating and coordinating with partners?

5. What sorts of issues within the poverty and development areas are especially dependent on global networking?
6. What types of cultural issues do you encounter when working with overseas organisations?
 - A. How have you worked together to resolve these issues?

Area #4: Relationships between communication and poverty

1. How do you define development?
2. How does ... define development?
3. Do you feel communication is relevant to development? In what ways?
4. How do you see communication as a means for alleviating poverty?
 - A. Should communication be its own development initiative? Why or why not?
 - B. How is communication used in development programmes funded by ... and its partners?
5. How does ... communicate poverty and international development to its publics?
 - A. Do you think ... is effective with its communicative initiatives? Why or why not?
 - B. What would make ... communication initiatives stronger?
 - C. What would you like to see ... do to improve communication with partners as well as stakeholders?
6. In your opinion, and from your personal experiences, what international development aid initiatives do you feel are most effective in providing long-term success? (Bilateral / Multilateral)
7. How do you feel the complexities of poverty can be understood?
8. Why should communities in New Zealand and other Western nations be concerned with poverty elsewhere?

9. Why do you feel little progress has been made in development communication in the last few decades?
10. What suggestions do you have for communication and development practice?
11. What is next in the arena of communication and poverty alleviation? Are there any current initiatives occurring?

Area #5: Conclusion

1. Is there anything you can think of that we did not cover today that you would like to tell me?
2. Do you have any questions for me, or would you like to further touch on a particular area we discussed today?

APPENDIX B: EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS / INFORMED CONSENT SHEET

Date

Dear (the name of the potential research participant):

I am contacting you in regards to participating in a research study for a master's dissertation. The purpose of this study is to examine how non-profit sector organisations in New Zealand view the relationship between communication and poverty. My main research objectives for this investigation are:

- How do non-profit sector organisations in New Zealand construct poverty in the context of international development?
- How do non-profit sector organisations in New Zealand view the relationship between communication and poverty?

My goals for this investigation are to understand how communication affects development projects, to acknowledge whether certain stakeholders and partners are hindering or backing communication development programmes, and to identify how non-profit sector organisations in New Zealand communicate poverty and development to its publics.

Due to your vast knowledge of poverty issues, as well as your extensive work experience, I feel you would be a valuable research participant. My research is qualitative, and my method is semi-formal in-depth interviewing. I feel this is the best method for my investigation because my aim is to gather a detailed and personal perspective of the research topic.

All information obtained during the interview will be stored in a secured database. Participants have the option to review and edit the interview transcriptions following the interview. Research participants also have the option of name and affiliation confidentiality. If participants choose to remain confidential, an alternate given name as well as organisation name will be used. Research participants, my supervisor, Shiv Ganesh, and myself will be the only persons with access to the interview data.

This study does not seek to harm participants in any way. I am simply attempting to gain a better understanding of how communication can assist, or is assisting, in poverty alleviation and development. The benefits of this study will vary. This study will assist in determining whether any parallels exist in how New Zealand non-profit sector organisations construct poverty in the context of international development via websites, press releases, reports etc. and how they view the relationship between communication and poverty via development programmes, emergency aid, development aid etc. The findings of this investigation will also contribute to the current discourse of development communication practice.

If you choose to accept this invitation, an interview will be conducted sometime in mid-September or early October. Option to opt out of the study is permitted up until November 1, 2008.

If at any time throughout the interview the participant would prefer not to answer a particular question, he or she may verbally tell the researcher to move on to the next question. Following the collection of data, all research participants have the option to request a summary of the findings. This summary will be emailed or posted to the participants requesting a copy.

If you would like more information about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or mobile. Consent to participate may be given via email or mobile, and each participant will be required to sign a consent form before the interview takes place. An initial meeting may be scheduled to discuss the terms and conditions of the investigation if the research participant feels it is necessary.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Michelle Campbell
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m_campbell@hotmail.com
027 722 7348

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