CONSPICUOUS GIVING

A Dissertation

by

LINDSAY ALEXANDRIA ANDERSON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2011

Major Subject: Sociology

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ABSTRACT

Conspicuous Giving. (May 2011)

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When discussing charity, it is important to recognize that charity and other forms of giving are not solely done out of altruism, but can also be done out of greed and self promotion. It is especially important to recognize when those in power or those who have fame participate in this form of giving, because their actions may be emulated by others.

This self aggrandizing giving has been done historically throughout multiple cultures as a way to gain or keep prestige, and also as a way to keep the boundaries between the classes strong. This is an important idea because, as I argue, giving as a way to gain public recognition and to keep social boundaries in place is still occurring today. This form of giving is what I label *Conspicuous Charity*. This is giving in which the main focuses of the participation in charity are the public and social benefits (such as prestige and recognition) to the givers, whereas the assistance to those in need is but a secondary benefit. The conspicuous use of charity also can take a broader approach, which I label *Conspicuous Giving*. This form of giving is presently being used as a way to keep those with fame, such as media celebrities, in the limelight, those with high

standing in the global hierarchy at the top, and those at the top of the racial hierarchy separated from those at the bottom.

In order to flesh out the concept of *Conspicuous Giving*, other forms of giving are also discussed such as Christmas gifts, bribes, and feasting. These cultural events are discussed within the context of multiple cultures as ways to show that using giving in a predatory manner is not a phenomenon unique to Western or even American culture. However, I argue that when it comes to this behavior, Americans are at the forefront of this movement into postmodernity.

DEDICATION

The following project is dedicated to my maternal grandmother,

Jossie Vell McCuiston-Hankins, who believed in me long before I even knew what

belief was.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When discussing charity, it is important to recognize that charity and other forms of giving are not solely done out of altruism, but can also be done out of greed and self promotion. It is especially important to recognize when those in power or those who have fame participate in this form of giving, because their actions may be emulated by others.

This self aggrandizing giving has been done historically throughout multiple cultures as a way to gain or keep prestige, and also as a way to keep the boundaries between the classes strong. This is an important idea because, as I argue, giving as a way to gain public recognition and to keep social boundaries in place is still occurring today. This form of giving is what I label *Conspicuous Charity[1]*. This is giving in which the main focuses of the participation in charity are the public and social benefits (such as prestige and recognition) to the givers, whereas the assistance to those in need is but a secondary benefit. The conspicuous use of charity also can take a broader approach, which I label *Conspicuous Giving[2]*. This form of giving is presently being used as a way to keep those with fame, such as media celebrities, in the limelight, those with high standing in the global hierarchy at the top, and those at the top of the racial hierarchy separated from those at the bottom.

This dissertation follows the style of *American Sociological Review*.

[1] Term coined in Anderson, Lindsay. 2009. "Conspicuous Charity." pp.273-308 in *Co-Opting Culture: Culture and Power in the Sociology and Cultural Studies* edited by B. Garrick Harden and Robert Carley. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

[2] Term coined in this dissertation

In order to flesh out the concept of *Conspicuous Giving*, other forms of giving are also discussed such as Christmas gifts, bribes, and feasting. These cultural events are discussed within the context of multiple cultures as ways to show that using giving in a predatory manner is not a phenomenon unique to Western or even American culture. However, I argue that when it comes to this behavior, Americans are at the forefront of this movement into postmodernity.

As the original idea of the study of conspicuousness can be attributed to Thorstein Veblen, other concepts of his are also discussed within this document, all of which along with *Conspicuous Charity* and *Conspicuous Giving* can be placed within Veblen's concept of barbarism ([1899] 1994). An aspect of predatory barbarism recognized by Veblen is the use of consumption as a way to gain prestige, or as he labeled it Conspicuous Consumption ([1899] 1994). Western and especially American culture has within the last few decades emphasized the ideas of thinness and fitness. Though these ideas have historically been recognized as positive and even connected to morality ("fitter bodies mean fitter souls"), only within the last generation or so has thinness been so closely connected to Conspicuous Consumption and the rise of public figures promoting goods that must be bought in order to reach the "ideal" body. No longer is fitness and thinness to be achieved naturally by working in the fields or at the factory, now it is to be achieved quickly using diet pills, Nike Air Jordan shoes, and multiple gym memberships all of which are promoted by celebrities.

  This emphasis on thinness is not for health but instead is predatory because American culture is demanding that people consume and at the same time (regarding food) *not* consume in order to achieve the unachievable. These false ideals of perfection along with conspicuous use of charity and consumption are promoted as making you fit in to the "in crowd" while at the same time singling you out as the best, a truly predatory and postmodern ideal.

CHAPTER II

CELEBRITY CHARITY

With the increased number of natural disasters that have plagued the world in recent years, benefits and charities have become forefront in the media and in people's minds. The most publicized of these charities are ones that invoke the names and the use of celebrities. I intend to discuss how within Western culture, works of charity and philanthropy can be conceptualized as consumption of cultural capital, and how these works can be interpreted in many cases as merely an expedient way to gain social capital or higher social standing within a predatory society (Veblen [1899] 1994). I use the terms cultural and social capital as an extension of similar usage by theorists ranging from Pierre Bourdieu (1979) to the postmodernists (such as Baudrillard). Even though this use of munificence has been traditionally frowned upon, I will use Thorstein Veblen, David Riesman, and other social theorists to argue that such misuse is universal and trans-historical. I also contend that it has produced tangible benefits for the socially powerful (or those who wished to be) starting early in western civilization, throughout the era of the Robber Barons, and continuing with contemporary celebrities. These benefits have also been sought by those I label the "New" Robber Barons.

I argue that it is important to question the benefits to the givers (both historical and current) of philanthropy and charity, especially the benefits of those who can be labeled the socially powerful, because their actions are emulated by the rest of society, indeed understanding the benefits of giving is becoming progressively more important for two reasons. First, contemporary society is becoming increasingly more celebrity-

oriented where recognition is due to conspicuous social status earned through aggressive

self promotion, as opposed to status gained through accomplishment. Due to this fixation

on fame, celebrities influence many aspects of society, including people's very behavior.

This is an important component of what David Riesman (1961) called other-directed

society, which is guided by the norm of conspicuous consumption. Riesman takes and

elaborates this idea directly from the work of Thorstein Veblen (1899). The second

reason giving should be explored and questioned is that the incentives behind giving

have not previously been explored in-depth, and therefore charity cannot be adequately

understood. The amalgamation of these two subjects into one topic is in itself important.

By doing such, I bring a new perspective to the discourse on celebrity and of giving and

the necessary conversation between the two.

This amalgamation also needs to be discussed since understanding who

celebrities historically were, and why they give to charity, is to understand what charity

is, and has evolved into. Charity is no longer the realm of the noble, wealthy, and

privileged; it has now become a multi-billion dollar enterprise that encompasses aspects

that even three generations ago would have been unimaginable. If the benefits to givers

are not properly examined, giving may become just another empty gesture in a multitude

of empty gestures, as they are depicted by Jean Baudrillard and other postmodernists.

This work brings forth several important questions which arise from the overall

question being addressed, who truly benefits most from giving? Is it the high profile

giver, or the receiver? If it is the giver in most cases, as I suggest, how do they benefit?

Other questions such as, historically, why have the wealthy and powerful felt it

beneficial to be publicly acknowledged and widely acclaimed as generous? Is the giving of charity, or the participation in philanthropy, a 'performance' especially when a person's celebrity is used? To what extent is giving an example of what Riesman called "fake sincerity?" (Riesman [1961] 2001:196) Can a celebrity who solicits donations for a cause be perceived as genuine if they do not contribute money themselves, or if their participation in a cause is paid? Finally, do celebrities, following in the footsteps of the socially powerful elites that came before them, use giving, which happens to directly follow publicized negative behavior, in order to 'atone for their sins'? All of these questions are just more specific queries within the overall question: To what extent is giving to charity and participating in philanthropy a means to engage in conspicuous consumption and waste, and also to gain social prestige?

As the main question addressed within this work focuses on the conspicuous nature of giving, many of the examples of giving selected for use within this work will be portrayed as negative (or selected because of the negative results that occurred from the participation in giving). I contend that when giving is publicized, especially within the media, too often it is presented as positive merely because it is giving, and the self-serving aspects of giving are many times overlooked. Positive examples of giving will not be highlighted within this work simply because the argument made does not refute the idea that positive giving can occur, but instead argues that conspicuous aspects of giving many times go unnoticed.

This overall inquiry is inspired by the ideas of Thorstein Veblen. In his work *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) Veblen discusses what he labels a 'Cultural Prism.' This metaphor gives form to Veblen's argument that it is not the act that is important, but the motivation within the context of the social and cultural structure that surrounds the actor. Extending Veblen's argument to charity then, it is not the act of charity itself that should be analyzed, nor even whom it helps, but the structural basis for the motivation of the giver behind the charitable act.

Along with this Veblenist idea of cultural motivation comes the concept of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. In these terms conspicuous refers to the item or act which exists primarily to be seen by others. Veblen argues that the elite, in order to remain elite, or rise higher within their class, finds various ways to publicly show that they are wealthy and privileged. By consuming goods that are recognized as expensive, name brand, rare, or by owning more of an item than is necessary, the art of conspicuous consumption is practiced. In these instances one is consuming not according to biological needs, but according to culture, ego, class, and status. "Ownership began and grew into a human institution on grounds unrelated to the subsistence minimum." (Veblen [1899] 1994:26) Owning, consuming, and more importantly, being able to show that one was in a position to own and consume became and still are important today. From this concept of ownership arose the leisure class. (Veblen [1899] 1994)

This class of people, who due to their status and possession of resources, are able to conspicuously practice leisure through activities such as putting time and money

into hobbies, or by not having to work at all. Discussing conspicuous consumption and leisure Veblen states, "it appears that the utility of both alike for the purposes of reputability lies in the element of waste that is common to both. In the one case it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods." (Veblen [1899] 1994:85)

Veblen argues that those who have the wealth and power to have leisure time form habits, specifically cultural habits that they then use to set them apart from the masses. These are cultural habits that mark them as exceptional. According to Veblen, these habits take the shape of conspicuous and wasteful actions that have the primary purpose to publicize the wealth, class, and pride of individuals. "In order to gain and hold the esteem of men it is not sufficient merely to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence." (Veblen [1899] 1994:36)

Examples of some cultural habits that Veblen used throughout his work are manicured lawns and domesticated pets such as dogs. Well kept lawns are conspicuous in that their upkeep is obviously expensive not only monetarily, but in man-power and natural resources such as water. Veblen argues the same effect that is achieved by regimented landscaping could be accomplished by something as simple as a herd of cattle being kept on the grounds, however, "a herd of cattle so pointedly suggests thrift and usefulness that their presence in the public pleasure ground would be intolerably cheap. This method of keeping grounds is comparatively inexpensive, therefore it is indecorous." (Veblen [1899] 1994:135) Veblen goes on to comment on the cultural habit of removing trees and shrubbery that naturally occur and replacing it with plants that are

not native to the area, which then require much more attention and resources. Thus, the inexpensiveness of leaving the natural growth takes away from the dignity and honor of the lawn and its owner. (Veblen [1899] 1994)

Dogs and other domesticated pets are similar to this idea of 'flash but no substance.' As a pet, the family dog holds no 'industrial' purpose, and caring for a pet is expensive, wasteful, and using Veblen's argument useless. "The dog has advantages in the way of uselessness as… [h]e is the filthiest of the domestic animals in his person and the nastiest in his habit." (Veblen [1899] 1994:141) Supporting this idea is the fact that dogs are bred for deformities such as small size and 'attractive' ears, which make them even more useless to have, and as such conveys more prestige. The less utility dogs and other pets have, the more they are considered culturally beautiful (another concept that Veblen connects to waste and the conspicuous).

These examples and others are described by Veblen as markers of status; the very fact that they exist merely for show, not for actual work or productive use is a testament to the wealth and status of their owners. The owners receive honor and prestige vicariously through this sort of waste. (The idea of 'vicarious waste' is one that can be found in multiple cultures at all class levels, but nowhere is it more practiced than by the wealthy and powerful.) "In order to be reputable it must be wasteful." (Veblen [1899] 1994:96) By waste, especially that of the conspicuous, it is meant that the object or action is not a necessity, it is superfluous, and in this superficiality lies its cultural value. Veblen posits that these wasteful habits that are possible due to conspicuous leisure time should be considered predatory in nature because they are used to gain prestige through

conspicuous waste. Prestige comes from conspicuous waste, publicized waste, the extravagance that the wealthy and socially powerful employ must be seen, must be shown off, or it is for naught.

The tendency towards conspicuous consumption, leisure, and waste is heightened in modern culture. Veblen separates time into four periods marked by what he refers to as differing 'habits of life'. These four periods are primitive, quasi-peaceful, barbarism, and (where we are now) modern barbarism. He posits that "the institution of a leisure class has emerged gradually during the transition from primitive savagery to barbarism; or more precisely, during the transition from a peaceable to a consistently warlike habit of life." (Veblen [1899] 1994:7) Veblen labels the two periods primitive and quasi-peaceful as 'peaceable' where there wasn't much individual ownership but there was a great deal of cooperation. In contrast, the two proceeding barbaric times are labeled as 'warlike and predatory'. The transition from the peaceable to barbaric time period was explained by people taking on a more exploitative frame of mind. Force, aggression, and the accumulation of the trophies that comes from these barbaric behaviors became highly prized, and in contrast, gaining possessions in other manners such as cooperation or actual labor came to be looked down upon. "The institution of a leisure class is the outgrowth of an early discrimination between employments, according to which some employments are worthy and others unworthy. Under this ancient distinction the worthy are those which may be classed as exploit; unworthy are those…which no appreciable element of exploit enters." (Veblen [1899] 1994:8) If something does not employ exploitation (a spin-off of which is conspicuous) it is not considered honorable, this

defined the period of barbarism and is carried on into what Veblen labels modern barbarism.

Currently the idea of exploitation (barbarism) is still very prized and active in current culture, especially by those who are wealthy and culturally or socially powerful. However, instead of (or sometimes in addition to) hunting large game or plundering villages, the predatory habit is now channeled into private ownership, economic control, and a one-upmanship form of conspicuous consumption, leisure, and waste. Veblen argues,

> it appears that the leisure-class life and the leisure-class scheme of life should further the conservation of the barbarian temperament…but with the substitution of fraud and prudence, or administrative ability, in place of that predilection for physical damage that characterises the early barbarian. (Veblen [1899] 1994:240)

Veblen goes on to argue that "human life must seek expression in one direction if it may not in another; and if the predatory outlet fails relief is sought elsewhere." (Veblen [1899] 1994:338) When the conspicuous consumption of clothes, jewels, or large multiple homes are no longer enough, another niche must be found in which conspicuous waste and consumption can be employed. My argument is that charity and philanthropy are, and historically have been, among these niches that can be easily exploited. Your actions can be touted not just by you, but also by those you helped. Charity is a realm where those with wealth and fame can strive to be the biggest, the best, the most adored, the ones who care the most, and according to Veblen, that's what

it is mostly about – feeding your narcissism in a culture of narcissism[3] so that you can feel adored. Prestige can be gained through conspicuous waste such as charitable spending, participation in awareness concerts, or lending your name or face to a charity for its promotional use.

According to Veblen, cultural habits, one of which is conspicuous consumption, are participated in by all social classes. Even the poor participate in publicized waste, and they take their cues from the wealthy and elite. This 'copy and paste' of cultural habits is important to identify and study because those that are not wealthy are merely emulating what they see in the larger culture, vis-à-vis the media. If what they are emulating is a shallow form of giving, what they themselves give is insincere. So, if the charitable actions the rest of society make in order to 'keep up with the Jones' is solely to impress, their motivation are self-serving.

Influenced by, and extending Veblen's concept of 'conspicuous consumption' is David Riesman's idea of the 'other-directed individual' which is one of the three social characters described in his work *The Lonely Crowd* (1961). Similar to Veblen, Riesman promotes the idea of certain characteristics and actions being attributed to certain social groups of people. According to Riesman, in order for society to function it must have the ability to promote conformity among its members. Society must have it set up to where members want to do what society demands, such that the outer compulsion of society becomes the inner compulsion of the individual. Riesman argues that the three social

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[3] This term was coined by Christopher Lasch (1991 [1979]) and I use it here as the rough equivalent of Veblen's concept of modern barbarism.

characters upon which his arguments are based can be found in different time periods depending on the population situation; these specific characters are what are necessary at that time in order for society to work. Riesman labels these three social characters as traditional-directed, inner-directed, and (currently society is in the phase of) the other-directed. In order to use Riesman's idea of social characters to support the claim of *conspicuous charity* only two of the three types will be focused on; inner directed and other-directed.

In the historical analysis of giving that will come later in this work, the time period and actions of the Robber Barons are addressed in detail. In this work, this unique class of individuals will be labeled as inner-directed. This is due to their actions and character as a group which conform to Riesman's description of inner-direction and the society in which this social character can be found. "Such a society is characterized by increased personal mobility, by a rapid accumulation of capital (teamed with devastating technological shifts), and by an almost constant expansion: intensive expansion in the production of goods…" (Riesman [1961] 2001:14) As opposed to today's consumer society, this concept of personal mobility can be exemplified by how the Robber Barons rapidly accumulated their wealth by predatory means. Many of the Robber Barons earned their wealth due to the industrial revolution which led to a more mechanized factory system. New machinery created a greater need for employees and as such an immigration boom occurred that contributed to a rise in the population of the United States. What sets the inner-directed social character apart from that of its predecessor (the traditional-directed), and the other-directed character that evolved after it is the

inner-directed person's sense of individuality, the belief that they alone control the course of their own lives. Unlike the traditional-directed, the inner-directed is not following society's rigidly prescribed set of rules to forge who they are. While at the same time, distinct from the other-directed, they are not behaving in order to satisfy the 'jury of their peers'. This is not to say the inner-directed completely flout tradition or have no care for the opinions of others, instead they depend more on what Riesman labels their 'psychological gyroscope', this is what keeps an inner directed person 'on course'. (Riesman [1961] 2001)

I argue that even though historically the Robber Barons as a group can be classified as inner directed, and due to this, were not as concerned with public opinion as their contemporaries the other-directed, they still did participate in consumption and giving but for different reasons.

> The inner-directed person, though he often sought and sometimes achieved a relative independence of public opinion and of what the neighbors thought of him, was in most cases very much concerned with his good repute and, at least in America, with 'keeping up with the Joneses.' These conformities, however were primarily external, typified in such details as clothes, curtains, and bank credit. For, indeed, the conformities were to a standard, evidence of which was provided by the 'best people' in one's milieu. (Riesman [1961] 2001:23-24)

Regardless of the reasons, I argue that their participation in this narcissistic form of consumption laid the groundwork for the next socially powerful group, celebrities, to continue the tradition and take giving even further into the realm of conspicuous consumption of the esteem of others.

Following the inner-directed social character in dominance was the other-directed social character which, according to Riesman, is currently the principal social character. Once people began to intermingle more a new social character was required to deal with the new experiences and heightened sensitivity that developed from this. Due to this mingling of people, the gyroscope was no longer an adequate 'psychological device' because it was not flexible enough to handle the new demands of the changing society. A new social character arose and with it a new 'psychological device', the radar. Now people no longer needed to 'stay on course' as it is now more important to be able to receive multiple signals from different external sources and quickly incorporate them into behavior. Instead of the stability of the inner-directed person society now required the other-directed person to be flexible with likes, dislikes, and opinions; all of which are constantly in flux.

With this new social flexibility and personal instability came a different philosophy: "an 'abundance psychology' capable of 'wasteful' luxury consumption of leisure and of the surplus product." (Riesman [1961] 2001:18) From this new philosophy arose a man characterized by Riesman as "shallower, freer with his money, friendlier, more uncertain of himself and his values, more demanding of approval" than the inner-directed man. (Riesman [1961] 2001:19) The other-directed social character can be used to categorize and bring structure to the argument regarding celebrity involvement in charity and philanthropy. "What is common to all the other-directed people is that their contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual – either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through the mass

media." (Riesman [1961] 2001:21) I posit celebrities are an excellent example of Riesman's other-directed social character. Their very existence as celebrities is dependent on staying popular and being able to predict, dictate, and conform to the constant changes of fashion and culture.

Even though celebrities are not personally acquainted with each member of the public, they must be constantly aware of the public sentiment towards them and be able to adjust their public persona to that of what is expected of them. The understanding that they must [publicly] conform is instilled early in their career, beginning, as Riesman argues, the outer compulsion of their society (the society of celebrity) and becoming internalized until it is an inner compulsion. True to the description of the other-directed person celebrities as a group need to be adored and admired. Most importantly though, their radar must constantly be in tune to the changing public mood so that they can do what is necessary to stay in the capricious affections of the public and the media. "While all people want and need to be liked by some of the people some of the time, it is only the modern other-directed types who make this their chief source of direction and chief area of sensitivity." (Riesman [1961] 2001:22) This sensitivity is, according to Riesman, what makes the other-directed type, and as I argue, celebrities in their dealings with charity, "capable of a rapid if sometimes superficial intimacy with and response to everyone." (Riesman [1961] 2001:25)

Within the broad social characterization of the other-directed Riesman specifies a position of social power labeled 'taste-maker'. The ever fickle 'jury of one's peers' that

guides the actions of the other-directed replaces the inner gyroscope of the inner directed. The 'jury of one's peers' does have leaders, tastemakers, and individuals who set the bar of consumption and fashion. These 'tastemakers,' I argue, are in fact celebrities, and as long as they play their role (and play it well) they are allowed to keep their position of power and influence within their jury, the members of which include not just the public or other celebrities, but the media as well. This leadership requires a finely tuned radar, in order to stay popular or 'hot' celebrities must know exactly when (using the example this work addresses, charity) to take up causes, what causes to promote, and when to drop causes that no longer enhance their image. The description of the 'tastemaker', and how one comes to be a tastemaker can not only be applied to celebrities, but also directly back to Veblen and the concept of conspicuous leisure. The rank of 'tastemaker' is achieved "by acquiring unusual facility in one's duties as a consumer –in performance, that is, of the leisurely arts. With good luck one may even become a taste and opinion leader, with great influence over the jury." (Riesman [1961] 2001:73)

No longer is the inner-directed trained in the use of etiquette "as a means of handling relations with people whom one does not seek intimacy." (Riesman [1961] 2001:74) This behavior was exemplified by Robber Barons and people of their class using charity in a way to avoid actually having to deal with the lower classes personally. Instead, with the other-directed, and consequently celebrities the training is now that of consumer tastes, and what matters is the "ability for continual sniffing out of others' tastes…an intense interest in the ephemeral tastes of the 'others' [.]" (Riesman [1961]

2001:74) Due to this transition in etiquette and social character changes occurred concerning the distinction made between personal and private life. The inner-directed held strict reign on their private lives and it was considered improper etiquette to make this realm public. Whereas the other-directed, exemplified here by the celebrity, is allowed no distinction between private and public. Their lives and its intricacies are public domain, as are the celebrities themselves. One must not take this lightly as this distinction between the two social characters is important. Celebrities must constantly perform within both the public and private spheres and mold themselves and their actions to fit the whims of the public and media.

Concerning the arguments regarding the cultural motivations (especially those of celebrities) behind participation in charity and other forms of giving, Riesman's argument concerning fake sincerity is extended and expounded upon. According to Riesman, "it is obviously most difficult to judge sincerity… because such a premium is put on sincerity, a premium is put on faking it." (Riesman [1961] 2001:196) Using this concept of fake sincerity, I further argue that the benefits to the giver are far more important than the actual charitable results. Why? Because the cultural motivations held by those with social power are then replicated by those that are influenced by or emulate the socially powerful and charity without apparent sincerity lacks meaning.

Another theorist who discusses waste and consumption is Jean Baudrillard. Whereas Veblen defines these two concepts in more economic terms, Baudrillard instead focuses more on their conspicuous nature and describes consumption as a 'manipulation

of signs.' By asking the question "does not affluence ultimately only have meaning in wastage?" (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:44) Baudrillard emphasizes and addresses the meaning behind the conspicuous nature of wastage, especially that of those that he labels 'affluent.' "And, again, it is by 'wasteful expenditure' that the aristocratic [see socially powerful as well] classes have asserted their pre-eminence down the ages." (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:43) Separating the idea of 'waste' from the long held assumption that waste is irrational, Baudrillard argues that it is in fact a rational and purposeful action that continues where utility leaves off. "Within this perspective, a definition of consumption as consummation – i.e. as productive waste – begins to emerge, a perspective contrary to that of the 'economic'…" (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:43) Baudrillard sees waste and its' conspicuous nature as much more socially useful and necessary than Veblen. Where Veblen argues it is a way to 'show off' and indicate status, Baudrillard argues it is an essential tool in order to be a social being in this society, that society is so predicated on conspicuousness and waste that not to participate, no matter what your social level, is to alienate yourself from society.

In this manner, Baudrillard can also be seen as fleshing out Riesman's idea of the other-directed society and person. Where Riesman describes how society is becoming more and more other-directed, Baudrillard's work addresses the fact that society has now achieved this status, and as such, how people interact and advance within it. "[I]t is a matter not of 'conformism' or 'non-conformism'…but of optimum sociality, of maximum compatibility with others… It is, rather, a question of being mobile with everyone else, and rising up the coded rungs of a strictly demarcated hierarchical

ladder." (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:171) Baudrillard makes sure to differentiate the current society, and those within it, from that of the 'traditional self-made man'; similar to Riesman's inner-directed society. According to Baudrillard, social risers are not trying to prove or assert themselves as in the past. Instead, their main goal is "relating to and gaining the approval of others, soliciting their judgment [see Riesman and jury of peers] and their positive affinity." (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:171) Baudrillard marks this social change as a transition from 'transcendent accomplishment' to 'reciprocal solicitation', or inner motivation transforming to other or outside motivation.

Referring to the idea of 'manipulation of signs' and bringing in how these ideas can apply to celebrities and *conspicuous charity*, Baudrillard argues that in this 'industrial culture of sincerity' sincerity is no longer the opposite of cynicism or hypocrisy, instead the 'signs' of sincerity are consumed and "cynicism and sincerity alternate without contradicting each other". (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:173) Sincerity itself is no longer an option; true sincerity forms a dichotomy with hypocrisy and cynicism, and if it is now, as Baudrillard says, interchangeable, it has lost its meaning. Instead, there are merely 'signs' of sincerity, such as commercials with beseeching celebrities, rubber bracelets which conspicuously show an affiliation with one of hundreds of causes, or philanthropies using the name of a celebrity. These consumed signs according to Baudrillard "aim also to conjure away the real with the signs of the real…" (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:33) What people are observing (consuming) is not sincerity, and because of this neither is it charity. Instead, to use a metaphor, where there is smoke does not necessarily mean there is fire.

Baudrillard's idea of calculated status behavior can be applied to the argument I present, that celebrities use charity as a way to not only socially climb, but to cement their status as a celebrity. Baudrillard posits that it "is, indeed, no question of not being mobile [socially]… the individual, who is defined as the sum of his relations, of his 'valencies', is also always accountable as such: he becomes a unit of calculation and enters voluntarily into a sociometric (or political) plan/calculation." (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:171) When someone becomes a celebrity, or strives to become a greater one, I argue they are entering into a contract of sorts, that in order to be treated as a celebrity they must make sure to define themselves as one by their behavior. Celebrities must go beyond merely being wealthy or famous, they must be prominent in the media and they must obey (using Baudrillard's term) the 'laws of ostentatious'. They enter into this role and social group knowingly, and as such, they must play by the rules, or using Baudrillard's language, 'play the game'. "To enter the cycle of consumption and fashion is not simply to surround oneself with objects and services as one pleases; it is to change one's being and directedness." (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:170) According to Baudrillard, individuals are no longer autonomous, nor are their values; they are now subject to the constantly changing values of the group and this governs all behavior, especially that dealing with status.

Continuing the argument that celebrities (and others who have historically held social power) have a responsibility to uphold the conspicuous standards of their group is the idea that those that are not celebrities learn and emulate the forms of conspicuous consumption that are put into play. "In fact, the field of consumption is a structured

social field, where not only goods, but needs themselves…pass from a key group, a leading elite, to the other social categories as these 'rise' relatively on the social ladder… needs and satisfactions trickle down…which is the maintenance of distance…" (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:62) As Veblen argues, these conspicuous habits seep down to those that are trying to rise socially and even those who are not, but are simply following the trend. This type of emulation does not, as one would suppose, bring the classes and groups closer together in shared activity, but instead creates even more layers of distinction. The activities the socially powerful are presenting are not only conspicuous and wasteful, but also contain *only the signs* of sincerity as opposed to actual sincerity, and from this true sincerity or generosity is even more lost in the fray. Another habit Baudrillard attributes to maintaining this distinction between groups is leisure; this idea echoes that of Veblen. Baudrillard argues "Leisure, which is still very unequally distributed, remains, in our democratic societies, a factor of cultural distinction and selection." (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:156)

The focus on distinction while employing only the signs of sincerity is a crucial idea presented by Baudrillard. It leads to other conclusions that have repercussions for society. Baudrillard makes the point that the consumption of signs of human emotions: warmth, sincerity, reciprocity, and human solidarity are more important than the actual feelings themselves. He further argues that we are encircled by fake emotions and false relationships with others, and not only does that not bother us, but we continue the cycle ourselves. We have now lost true interaction, generosity and giving are signified not actually given or performed, and the intimacy that we seek (or think we have) does in

fact not exist. "The loss of …human relations is the fundamental fact of our societies. It is on this basis that we are seeing the systematic reinjection of human relations – in this form of signs - into the social circuit, and are seeing the consumption of those relations and of that human warmth in signified form." (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:161)

This lack of authenticity is what is behind Baudrillard's theory of simulacra. Simulacra is defined as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal." (Baudrillard 1994:1) It is a copy of a copy where the true meaning is lost and irretrievable. Baudrillard emphasizes the distinction between what he labels simulacra from merely simulation or pretending because these have true meaning they are just hidden, there is a point of reference. With simulacra there no longer exists the anchor that moors emotions, gestures, or actions to the meaning that once existed. Baudrillard quotes Ecclesiastes, who succinctly states "The simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true." (Baudrillard 1994:1) This idea of simulacra can easily be applied to giving. If people are just participating in giving in order to gain social benefits, and their participation is predicated on others participating, and they inspire others to participate, where is the original idea of charity? If what you are basing your idea of charity off of is itself distorted, and you then manipulate the idea to suit your own selfish needs, and it is then distorted more so by others, charity no longer means sacrifice in order to assist others, the meaning of charity is lost, it is imploded. It is, to quote Baudrillard "but another spiral in artificiality." (Baudrillard 1994:11)

Historical Conspicuousness of Charity

In order to make the argument that the meanings of charity, philanthropy, and

giving as a whole are lost, these ideas first must be defined in terms of what they were

socially, so the discussion of what they are in contemporary society can be had. "Charity

expresses an impulse to personal service; it engages individuals in concrete, direct acts

of compassion and connection to other people." (Friedman and McGarvie 2003:31)

Since the argument I make centers on Western culture and society, specifically the

United States, the history of charity will be discussed within this Westernized context.

Throughout history those in power have always participated in giving. These acts

have resulted in much criticism of their charitable motivations. Even before the Common

Era:

> Cicero divided money givers into 'the prodigal' and 'the generous.' He deplored
> the former's [prodigal] lavish expenditures to flaunt their wealth and win
> popularity by sponsoring feasts, distribution of food, gladiatorial contests, and
> fights with animals. These attempts to curry favor with the public had no lasting
> results and were soon forgotten. (Bremner 1994:7)

Another source of such historical criticism concerning charity can be found within the

Bible. "Jesus measured generosity not by the size of the gift but by the sacrifice it caused

the donor. Two coppers put in the treasury by a poor widow were of more significance in

His eyes than that the magnificent contributions of the rich because they gave out of

their abundance, she out of her very subsistence." (Bremner 1994:13) This ideal is also

shown through the Christian practice of tithes, giving ten percent of your accumulated

worth. In this way munificence is determined through what you forgo, not what you possess in excess. Jesus was attributed within the Bible as not only criticizing the lack of sacrifice in reference to charity but also ostentatious shows of charity. Jesus told his disciples "When you do a charitable deed do not sound a trumpet before you." (Bremner 1994:12)

Jesus, and references to his words, are not the only source for criticisms found in Christianity concerning charity. The German monk Martin Luther, who inspired the Reformation and influenced the Lutheran and Protestant religious traditions, is known for lambasting the practice of buying indulgences. "He who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences… he who sees a needy man and passes him by, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but god's wrath." (Bremner 1994:28) Indulgences were purchased by sinners in order to receive absolution, and the money from this was used by the Church in various manners, one of which was assistance to the needy. This use of indulgences was used as an excuse by many to not participate in giving since their funds were already being used to help those in need. Although this was only one aspect of many concerning indulgences that was found to be problematic, it greatly affected charitable giving and participation.

Religion was not the sole area in which criticisms of charitable motivations existed. Although it did contain many of the most vocal dissenters, there were philosophers who also bemoaned the use of giving conspicuously and selfishly. For example, English philosopher Thomas Hobbes argued that self-interest and self-protection were central motivations of human behavior. "Hobbes could not conceive of

anyone practicing philanthropy except to enhance the esteem or 'honor' in which he is held in the community or to promote his own security and power." (Bremner 1994:42) Dutch physician and philosopher Bernard de Mandeville "defined charity so strictly as to exclude any action bearing the faintest whiff of self-regard…discount the role of altruism and benevolence in human affairs." Mandeville is also quoted as having said that "'Pride and vanity have built more hospitals than all the virtues together.'" (Bremner 1994:58) In another reference to pride (and supporting what Hobbes argued concerning the 'honor of the giver') Mandeville argues that "Pride and avarice also figure in the exchange: the beggar's plea flatters our ego and makes us feel both obliged to give and expectant of a reward for our generosity." (Bremner 1994:85)

These ideas concerning the practice of charity that stem from Christianity and philosophy were epitomized in the United States by the New England Puritans, who saw charity as their spiritual duty. Charity was an important enough concept as to be central in many of John Winthrop's sermons, including one of the most famous 'A Model of Christian Charity,' commonly known as 'A City upon a Hill'. This speech is well known for arguing that the wealthy have a holy duty to look after the poor and that the Puritans should be "a godly community, overflowing in charity." (Friedman and McGarvie 2003:32) The Puritans' ideas of charity are important because at this time the idea of charity was defined more in terms of motivations than results. "In Winthrop's evangelical view, the Puritans would not only love and assist one another, but also do so for the right reasons. They would rise above the petty calculations and narrow self-interest that so often drive human cooperation." (Friedman and McGarvie 2003:32) The

Puritans focused more on the original idea of Christian charity, and set their society up as a reaction to Catholic sale of indulgences which they saw as mercenary, buying your way into Heaven, instead of earning salvation by helping those in need. It is ironic that even though the Puritans focused so much on charity and how it should be enacted, they fell short of this selfless ideal, as does our resulting society today.

Where charity is considered aid to individuals with roots mainly in religion, philanthropy more concerns reforming and aiding society as a whole, and has more secular roots.

> Coined as a term in late seventeenth century England, it became associated with the Enlightenment, for it sought to apply reason to the solution of social ills and needs. Philanthropy can take secular or religious forms. Either way, it aspires not so much to aid individuals as to reform society. Its object is the promotion of progress thought the advance of knowledge. By eliminating the problems of society… philanthropy aims to usher in a world where charity is uncommon – and perhaps unnecessary. (Friedman and McGarvie 2003:31)

A year before the American Revolution, the second wave of benevolence, philanthropy, got its first footholds into what would later develop into the United States starting in Philadelphia, the 'City of Brotherly Love.' Philanthropy, as it was in the colonies, was still seen as a personal act and a way for those with power and resources to attempt to improve what they considered the 'human condition.' During its inception in the colonies philanthropy was defined and promoted as "a voluntary enterprise of private persons, moved by 'an Inclination to promote Publick Good." (Friedman and McGarvie 2003:37)

Philanthropy differs from charitable giving in that charity can be ambiguous giving on only one occasion, where philanthropy is usually multiple acts of giving over time with rational and socially approved and defined goals, which generally has to do with improving social conditions. Philanthropy focuses more on cultural improvements which impact society as a whole; such causes are usually education, art, music, or humanitarian in nature. This enacting of philanthropy historically resulted in the creation of hospitals, museums, schools, orphanages, and monetary investment in the arts and music.

Since it was those with the resources and social clout who funded philanthropies, it was their vision of a 'good society' that was enacted. "By virtue of their leisure, breeding, education, and success, the rich were deemed ideally suited to minister to their cities' needs, particularly in periods when governmental functions were limited." (McCarthy 1982:3) This change came when charitable organizations, which where grassroots in nature, became structured similar to that of for-profit organizations. Where there were once volunteers and emotional investment now there were employees, offices, and management; and many times assistance to those in need was lost in the bureaucracy. This transitional period concerning approaches to munificence is known as the 'Age of Benevolence.' This period was when philanthropy came to be a widely used method of benevolence.

Presently, instead of personalized charity between neighbors and friends within the same community, benevolence has as a general social pattern become more

professionalized, more goal-oriented, and the emphasis on formal giving has morphed from charity to philanthropy. As philanthropy was at its origins more purposeful it was able to succeed where structured charity failed. Philanthropy focuses on reform and organization, as opposed to assistance, as charity does, and this distinction is what made philanthropy more attractive to large donors. The idea of moral reform was the focus of philanthropy and "the new philanthropic institutions reduced charity to a token act. Now, an individual could contribute funds to a house of industry for the poor or to a refuge for unwed mothers, secure that he or she would never come in contact with any of the inmates." (Friedman and McGarvie 2003:44)

Though it would be simple to dismiss this idea of philanthropy (a way to impose personal beliefs on the public) as something relegated to the past, it would be foolish to make such a broad generalization. Just within the last century in the United States philanthropic organizations went from 12,000 in the 1940's, to 300,00 in the 1960's, to roughly 1 ½ million organizations in 2000. (Friedman and McGarvie 2003) These numbers show that people, specifically in this case Americans, have a tendency to use giving as a way to control their society and how it functions. Their motivations may not be as altruistic as they are self-benefiting.

"Helping others can knit society together or pull it apart. Without a compelling social program, charity can dissipate into transient encounters between unequals. But without direct, mutual bonds between givers and recipients, philanthropy sacrifices practical effectiveness and moral purpose." (Friedman and McGarvie 2003:48) This

statement shows the interplay that is often found within giving between charity and philanthropy. During the 'Age of Benevolence' philanthropy became more widespread, but this is not to say that charity was no longer practiced or necessary. Instead, philanthropy arose and took its place beside charity as a way to practice giving. Both were practiced extensively, both were used for similar causes; it was what the giver wanted to accomplish that accounted for the differences between the two forms of benevolence.

According to Robert Hall, 'Social Motivation' is "the motivation to do something that will not result in tangible economic or status gain—where the drive is more internal than external, and the purpose is larger than just self-gratification." (Hall 2006:12) This definition of social motivation can easily be used to define the motivation behind participating in charity and philanthropy as well. The idea of selfless giving with no personal benefits is what giving should be according to some social ideals; however, many times this component of self-sacrifice is not present in giving. Many scholars separate the idea of giving into two separate and opposite ideals. "Altruistic helping has been defined as behavior motivated by the desire to increase another's welfare, while egoistic giving has been defined as motivated by the desire to reduce one's own personal distress or to receive rewards for giving." (Piferi, Jobe, and Jones 2006:171) This idea of egoistic giving can be easily applied to benevolence that is given in order to shape society into a specific image. Using society as a mirror in order to reflect your own beliefs is not only selfish and self-serving, but is exploitative, or in the words of Veblen,

predatory, because you are enacting change using those who are in need in order to gain prestige in the eyes of society.

Veblen argues that giving, especially bequests can be considered 'honorific waste.' (Veblen [1899] 1994) By using money and resources to further your own name, or that of a family member, it is a publicized way to demonstrate the 'superiority of your soul.' The benefit to others can be seen as merely a bonus. "Nonetheless, motivation is not simply an academic question; it goes to the heart of any definition of charity, philanthropy, or civility." (Friedman and McGarvie 2003:361) By labeling giving such as this 'honorific waste,' Veblen is questioning the cultural motives behind the benevolence. His idea of the 'Cultural Prism,' motivations being more important than the outcome can be applied here.

> The questions of why people become involved, who benefited, and in what ways are relevant to determining the moral quality of charitable and philanthropic acts. However, it is probably less important to search for philosophical truths or absolute answers to these kinds of questions than to be cognizant of the relationship between motives and ends and the broader societal implications. (Friedman and McGarvie 2003:361)

Noblesse Oblige

A cultural motivation that is powerful in influencing those with social and financial power to participate in giving, especially historically, is Noblesse Oblige. "Noblesse oblige means 'nobility obligates.' Originally, Noblesse Oblige was used to suggest that certain requirements of behavior could be legitimately imposed upon persons of noble birth." (Murray 2006:1) Noblesse Oblige was a class based set of

standards and/or obligations that was passed down generation to generation among the aristocracy concerning the cultural markers and principles of their class. "Noblesse oblige can take many forms. In the Old World, it represented the duties attendant upon noble birth. But in a country devoid of hereditary aristocracy and the trappings of baronial tradition, it took on new meaning." (McCarthy 1982:ix) Since the Unites States historically has had no aristocratic or noble class this new meaning was transformed from Noblesse Oblige into Richesse Oblige. The idea behind this concept is that the wealthy have an obligation to the society which enriched them. No longer was class and birth the standard, now it was material wealth.

Financial affluence was seen as a blessing, and one was culturally and socially required to 'spread the wealth' as it were to those that were less well off. "'To whom much has been given, much is expected.' This suggests the view that those who have great wealth have a duty to use it for a larger purpose than their own interests." (Singer 2006:61) Ownership of wealth has culturally been connected to an idea of public service, the wealthy are seen as stewards of society, and as such a duty is imposed on them, a duty that should be expressed through giving. "Civic stewardship –the notion that successful citizens owe a dual obligation of time and money to the communities in which they have prospered-is a uniquely urban interpretation of this ancient ideal." (McCarthy 1982:ix)

Noblesse Oblige was more than a duty to society, more than an obligation due to noble status; it was in its own way a cultural contract. One that was not agreed to, but imposed on those that had the ability to fulfill its mandates. Much of it was dedicated to

conspicuous shows of status, cultural habits, leisure activities that those of other classes

could not participate in. However, one aspect of Noblesse Oblige was supposed to be

less predatory, free of exploitation, and that was the obligation of giving. Yet, this did

not occur because giving was used as a way to gain prestige as well, it was used in a

self-serving way and when Richesse Oblige became instilled into the culture it too took

on these predatory aspects. Noblesse Oblige and its counterparts, is an important concept

because I argue that that these ideals were appropriated by social groups who wanted to

achieve a type of cultural nobility. However, they were not noble, they were not

aristocrats, and in some instances they were not even the extremely wealthy (in these

instances they were culturally powerful) these were people who were looking for ways

to validate their societal status.

<div align="center">Richesse Oblige: Robber Barons, Past and Present</div>

In the United States those that historically were the most closely tied to the idea

of Noblesse Oblige and more specifically, Richesse Oblige, were the wealthy

industrialists of the past that were dubbed Robber Barons. "Indeed, the terminology used

to describe Gilded Age magnates frequently incorporated royal metaphors. Businessmen

were dubbed 'robber barons' their wives 'society queens,' and their undertakings

'feudalistic.'" (McCarthy 1982:104) The way that they used their wealth to extend their

social and cultural power was reminiscent of the royal practice of patronage, and it was

from the aristocracy this powerful class took its cues. Where the famous used to be

counted among religious, political, or military leaders, now those who held social power

and sway were the conspicuously wealthy. These wealthy and influential persons used

their wealth to create, cement, and maintain their social (and at times cultural) status.

They commandeered the idea of Noblesse Oblige, and transformed into the more fitting

Richesse Oblige, and due to this, received both the benefits and responsibilities that

came along with this ideal.

> Noblesse oblige is simply one of many donor motivations for giving. It should be
> considered at the same time as other donor motivation, including public
> recognition, …acquisition of social status…Andrew Carnegie's wealth achieved
> for him a kind of nobility, a nobility which then required him to give away much
> of his fortune because of noblesse oblige. (Murray 2006:2)

Though the Robber Baron class was loosely following the idea of Noblesse

Oblige, by creating their own standards and forging their own interpretation of this ideal,

I argue they were instead participating in Richesse Oblige. The difference being that

Richesse Oblige is defined more materialistically and is achieved more by personal

mobility than birth. The figures placed within Richesse Oblige can also be considered

inner-directed social types because they created the niche in which their class existed,

and these individuals were more influenced by themselves than by their peers or others

in their class as the aristocracy was. The Robber Barons, or as Riesman (borrowing from

Veblen) refers to them 'Captains of Industry,' were fiercely individual-minded, driven,

and successful men who could not rely on tradition to lead them as their predecessors

had because of how they earned their wealth: industry. This industrial boom was new to

society and different approaches to these new situations were needed. "…Captains of

Industry who thought themselves responsible for American productivity, whereas they

merely engrossed the instinct of workmanship of the race, charged mankind for what, as

a body, it already 'owned,' and wasted what others had produced in a frenzy of extravagant, usually vicarious display." (Riesman [1961] 2001:71)

Veblen's theory of 'modern-day barbarism' can also be applied to this distinct class of individuals. These industrialists amassed their wealth at the expense, and with the labor, of the working class poor, their very name 'Robber Barons' implies the predatory actions they took in order to achieve their status.

> In order to stand well in the eyes of the community, it is necessary to come up to a certain, somewhat indefinite, conventional standard of wealth; just as in the earlier predatory stage it is necessary for the barbarian man to come up to the tribe's standard of physical endurance, cunning, and skill at arms. A certain standard of wealth in the one case, and of prowess in the other, is a necessary condition of reputability, and anything in excess of this normal amount is meritorious. (Veblen [1899] 1994:30)

Their reputation and status came from their ability to accumulate wealth and to conspicuously display it. The more wealth they accrued, and the more proficient they became at exhibiting it, the more accomplished they were considered, and the more they came to embody Richesse Oblige. The Robber Barons personified Veblen's concept of the modern-day barbarian. Instead of their own labor, they grew wealthy off of the labor of others. Their business practices many times contained force and certainly aggression, and they had, and continuously sought, extensive economic control. Private ownership was also highly valued among this group. When it came to displaying their wealth, these 'Captains of Industry' interjected a conspicuous one-upmanship aspect into Richesse Oblige that resulted in lavish display and was centered on the goal of distinguishing themselves as superior.

> [E]xtraneous motives are commonly present among the incentives to this class of work- motives of a self-regarding kind, and especially the motive of an invidious distinction. To such an extent is this true, that many ostensible works of disinterested public spirit are no doubt initiated and carried on with a view primarily to the enhanced repute, or even to the pecuniary gain, of promoters. This…remark would hold true especially with respect to such works as lend distinction to their doer through large and conspicuous expenditure; as, for example, the foundation of a university or of a public library or museum. (Veblen [1899] 1994:340)

Philanthropy and patronage were two of the most conspicuous methods of giving used by the Richesse Oblige. "Patronage, and particularly institutional endowment, was depicted as a self–serving means of seeking notoriety, undertaken by donors contriving to 'cover their nakedness with the mantel of respectability,' and win unmerited praise." (McCarthy 1982:103) Participating in giving bestowed upon the wealthy members of this class honors and societal approval that they otherwise might not have had access to, or deserved. By using giving, Robber Barons, and others of the Richesse Oblige could practically purchase prestige. This is evident by the fact that their money went to assist those in need while at the same time bettering their public reputation. Their charitable and philanthropic practices had the ability to cast a glamour over their daily and business practices. Giving was used not only to promote themselves, but it was also helpful in disguising their exploitation of the community that they claimed to be assisting.

> He [Richard Teller Crane] detested his fellow philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, whom he leeringly referred to as 'the Dr. Jekyll of library building and the Mr. Hyde of Homestead rioting and destruction.' Out of the millions Carnegie made through his workers, he bestowed 'paltry thousands' on libraries which his

employees could neither see nor use, a practice incomprehensible to the paternalistic Crane. (McCarthy 1982:117)

The wealthy philanthropists of this time wanted to assist the poor and needy, and they were more than willing to accept the credit for it.

Unlike the Puritans and other groups that came before them, the Robber Barons did not see giving as their Christian duty, instead participation was in order to meet their fulfillment of Richesse Oblige; giving was a useful tool in order to keep up with their wealthy peers. "They did not follow the advice Jesus gave to the rich young man to sell all he had and give to the poor because they believed that doing so would result in more harm than good and deprive them of the power and responsibility of deciding how their wealth should be used." (Bremner 1994:159) Charity and philanthropy became an expedient measure with which those who sought entrance into the upper classes could rise in status and regard. The wealthy already considered part of the Richesse Oblige also benefited from the use of giving to rise even higher within the ranks of this self-designated class of individuals. During this time "charitable giving and cultural patronage had been reduced to rungs in the social ladder, and the urge to do good inspired by the prospect of having one's good deeds immortalized in the society pages." (McCarthy 1982:169)

During the early 1800's the wealthy donated much of their time and resources to charitable obligations. However, as class and wealth became more stratified, there became distaste for dealing directly with the poor and unfortunate. "Rather than

personally mingling with the poor, the self-made man would remain aloof from squalor and want. His task was to bestow, not befriend." (McCarthy 1982:62) Veblen also mentions this particular aspect of giving, how donors are, and were able to authenticate their feelings of superiority by highlighting the contrast between themselves and those they helped. (Veblen [1899] 1994) Another change that was recognized during the shift from the early 1800's to later in the century was that society (and how people interacted within it) was measured more materialistically and quantitatively than ever before. Charity was used as a measuring stick of societal and self worth, who could give the most or the best was what was important, not the act of giving itself.

"According to Carnegie the worst thing a millionaire could do with his money was to give it to the 'unreclaimably poor.'" (Bremner 1994:159) This form of selective charity was embraced by the robber barons such as Carnegie, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, and Morgan, who used their charitable donations to invest in conspicuous cultural ways such as art, music, and research, but not directly to individuals. This type of largess helped the wealthy not only to keep control of how their money was spent, but on whom. As this shift in society occurred, so did the actual way in which charity was performed. Gone was personally giving alms to the poor, or door to door solicitation, and instead social events that benefited a cause came to be the norm (this form of charity is presently performed in abundance). However, these events were more centered on who was hosting and who attended, than who was actually benefiting. "By sponsoring an opera, musicale, or play in the name of charity, aspiring Society queens could enhance their reputations, sharpen their skills at social one-upmanship, and fulfill their charitable

obligations at a comfortable remove from misery and want at one and the same time."
(McCarthy 1982:30) These gatherings of the wealthy and influential practically
guaranteed the host or hostesses' name in the society pages and a heightening of their
prestige. This wide spread practice of 'cocktail charity' drew much criticism from other
socially influential members of society. "'Jesus never instituted a charity ball where
amid the voluptuous swell of dance, the rustle of silks, the sparkle of diamonds, the
stimulus of wine and women dressed décolleté, He could dissipate His love for the
lowly,' sneered another indignant cleric." (McCarthy 1982:102) However, the voices of
dissenters were ignored due to the growing power and control of the Richesse Oblige.

Serving the poor, and at the same time serving themselves, America has a rich
history of this small class of wealthy men, who left their names stamped on the United
States through their giving. These Captains of Industry used giving to monumentalize
themselves, their families, and their class. Critics vainly pointed out that "To pay out
money…to carve a family name on a gold brick, is not efficient giving." (McCarthy
1982:103) Not only did the Robber Barons use their donations in this self-serving way,
but later generations of their family kept this tradition going by continuing to give
money to the endowments in their ancestor's names, continuing the cycle. It cannot be
denied that their donations helped people indirectly and continue to do so today,
however my contention is they did it primarily for status, they did it for ego, and they did
it using a simulacra Noblesse Oblige that kept them superior and detached from those
that helped.

> Any form of benevolences…that removes us away from the unfortunate rather than identifying us more closely with them, or that draws attention to our own ease, gain, or accumulation, as against the unrest, loss, or poverty of those we seek to benefit, is a charity which feeds our pride rather than hungry orphans. (McCarthy 1982:102-103)

When Veblen discussed chicanery he was in essence discussing the use of fraud or deception in order to gain something at the expense of another person. Going back to his concept of modernity being a latter-day barbarism Veblen argues that the attitude of "force or fraud" (Veblen [1899] 1994:14) is a central tenet of modern day barbarism that was also present in the former period of original barbarism. Now "predatory fraud" is the way that the modern day barbarian proves his prowess and accumulates affluence. "The traits which characterize the predatory and subsequent stages of culture, and which indicate the types of man best fitted to survive under the regime of status [by this he means the leisure class], are (in their primary expression) ferocity, self-seeking, clannishness, and disingenuousness – a free resort to force and fraud" (Veblen [1899] 1994:225). The predatory self-concerned type of individual is the most likely to succeed in the current environment of the Leisure class.

The "method of forcible seizure" is considered by Veblen to be more "archaic" and has now been replaced by chicanery which is a more subtle use of predatory skills. (Veblen [1899] 1994:230) This inauthenticity is not only praised in the leisure class culture, but those who practiced it in the past are the ones who we consider 'great men.' Examples are leaders such as Alexander 'The Great' and Christopher Columbus, both of whom were brutal killers whose ambition consumed them. According to Veblen men

like this have "scored a brilliant (Napoleonic) success on the basis of an impartial self-seeking and absence of scruple" (Veblen [1899] 1994:226). A more historically recent example of this type of social character are those referred to as the Captains of Industry, who for Veblen, embodied chicanery.

As the Captains of Industry's time in power peeked and started to fall there arose to replace them another class of individuals whose social standing and control is to this day still in operation. Riesman puts it best when he states "the old captains of industry have been replaced by an entirely new type: the Captains of Non-industry, of Consumption and Leisure" (Riesman [1961] 2001:209). This transition reflects how even the Captains of 'Industry' were too connected to industry (or workmanship) in order to last when the leisure class fulfilled its promise of prominence. "The leisure class lives by the industrial community rather than in it. Its relations to industry are of a pecuniary rather than industrial kind…. but the scheme of life of the class is in large part a heritage from the past, and embodies much of the habits and ideals of the earlier barbarian period" (Veblen [1899] 1994:246). These new leaders, these Captains of Consumption, were not necessarily the wealthy, nor were they natural leaders of men, instead they were those that embodied chicanery and the trickery that is valued in the leisure centered culture of modern day barbarism.

Veblen gives examples of other predatory outlets aside from sports (to which he connects chicanery) such as religion, patriotism, duels, team and school spirit, and war. They also incorporate differing levels of make-believe, a sense of the dramatic, trash

talking, slang, and swagger, all of which (according to Veblen) signal an arrested

development and reversion to childhood. (Veblen [1899] 1994) All of these are

connected in that they earn honor for the winner or most skilled. However, these are not

based on only natural talent or luck but also on the trickery that is inherent in the

inauthentic nature of the leisure class.

> Chicane, falsehood, brow-beating, hold a well-secured place in the method of procedure of any athletic contest and in games generally. The habitual enjoyment of an umpire, and the minute technical regulations governing the limits and details of permissible fraud and strategic advantage, sufficiently attest to the fact that fraudulent practices and attempts to overreach one's opponents are not adventitious features of the game. In the nature of the case habituation to sports should conduce to a fuller development of the aptitude for fraud; and the prevalence in the community of that predatory temperament which inclines men to sports connotes a prevalence of sharp practice and callous disregard of the interests of others, individually and collectively. Resort to fraud, in any guise and under any legitimation of law or custom, is an expression of a narrowly self-regarding habit of the mind. (Veblen [1899] 1994:274)

Though the Robber Barons of the past are no longer in power their legacy

continues with the "new" or present-day Robber Barons. This continuation is best

exemplified by those whose greed and chicanery caused the present day economic

recession the US is experiencing. Due to issuing mortgages they knew could not

financially be supported and then speculating against them, these men and women made

a great deal of money at the expense of not only others, but the financial system as a

whole. I label these individuals present day Robber Barons because similar to those that

came before; they too benefited financially off of the work and skills of others, and were

ruthless in their quest for wealth and prestige. Many of our current Robber Barons can be found on Wall Street and in the backbone of our economy, the banking system. "We have placed abusive CEOs on pedestals, glorifying their excessive wealth, multiple mansions, mega-yachts, and luxurious private jets. For years we have empowered these people (almost exclusively men) to create a system that is scandalously wasteful, overtly reckless, and- we see now- ultimately self-destructive." (Perkins, 2010:1)

In the newspapers and in magazines these predators are praised; even given television shows like Donald Trump in order to watch barbarism practiced weekly from the comfort of people's homes. Donald Trump and others like him are the J.P. Morgans and John D. Rockefellers of present-day, destroying lives and being publically treated as heroes for doing so. "Gentlemen: You have undertaken to cheat me. I won't sue you, for the law is too slow. I'll ruin you. Yours truly, Cornelius Vanderbilt." (Unbossed 2009:3) Their waste and barbarism brings them prestige and we not only seek to emulate them but we also, through our predatory culture, enable them to continue.

> When the economy appeared to be melting down last September, Wall Street bank representatives began showing up in Congress like mobsters walking into a mom-and-pop business looking for protection money. 'Nice economy ya got here. (Crash!) It would be a shame if something were to happen to it.' Mobsters and Robber Barons have a lot n common. (Unbossed 2009:1)

We as a nation have not learned from our past economic mistakes, but what is worse is that we have put nothing in to place to prevent individuals like this from continuing to rise to power.

The most publicized example of a collection of present day Robber Barons are those at the helm of leadership at Goldman Sachs, the world's most profitable bank. Not only were they one of the major players in the schemes that damaged the economy, but they then received almost 13 billion in government bailout money, and then turned around and rewarded their employees with bonuses totaling around 20 billion. Because the unemployment rate at this time was over 10% and home foreclosures were at a record high, instead of getting the praise they would have in the past, they were instead vilified. I argue they were maligned not because our culture has stopped praising predators, but because in this instance the public was able to directly connect the barbarism that earned these bonuses to their own misery. However, Goldman Sachs, taking a move from the playbook of their Robber Baron predecessors, made a public announcement that they would consider give a portion of these bonuses to charity.

> We too often justify the unscrupulous actions of modern robber barons because they contribute money to philanthropy and the arts. We pay tribute to a person who has accumulated billions of dollars and in doing so has caused others to lose their jobs, closed the doors of small businesses, or ravaged the environment, and then donates a small percentage of his fortune to correcting those problems… (Perkins, 2010:2)

This move was pure brilliance, because not only did it calm a great deal of the public outrage, but it did not in actuality commit Goldman Sachs to giving anything. They stated that they were only *considering* the option of having mandatory charity connected to the billion dollar bonuses. Mention of this proposed charity actually occurring is not present on Goldman Sachs official website, nor in any publications. " A

Goldman Sachs spokesperson wouldn't comment on how much of their year-end pay Goldman employees would be required to donate, or even if the company has officially adopted the new charity plan." (Gandel 2010:1) So as of now, it can be assumed that the charity has not taken place. Because if they had given billions in charity, Goldman Sachs would have publicized their munificence for months as they are currently in great need of positive public relations, and in the past have never shied away from tooting their own horn. Goldman Sachs learned from their mistake. When your barbarism is exposed, later predatory behavior must be more subtle, and your prey must never realize that they are in fact, prey.

As the Robber Barons of the past time in power peeked and started to fall there arose to replace them another class of individuals whose social standing and control is to this day still in operation. Riesman puts it best when he states "the old captains of industry have been replaced by an entirely new type: the Captains of Non-industry, of Consumption and Leisure." (Riesman [1961] 2001:209) This transition reflects and incorporates Riesman's theory of the change from inner-directed society to other-directed being the dominant social character. I contend that this shift first occurred within the echelon of social leaders, that since by very definition an individual's social character does not change, a new set of social leaders were instead necessary in order for this societal transition to occur. These new leaders, these Captains of Consumption, were not necessarily the wealthy, nor were they natural leaders of men, instead they were those that embodied the other-directed personality and publicly performed according to the 'jury of their peers.' "[F]rom the beginning of this century until 1940, there was a

distinctive shift from interest in political and business leaders…to interest in

entertainers." (Fowles 1992:12)

This shift is important to note, because no longer were the cultural leaders

capitalistic minded and goal-oriented, now approval and 'being liked' were hailed as all-

important.

> The old-time captain of industry was also a captain of consumption: what
> standards were set, were set by him." "The new captain of consumption who has
> usurped his place in the public eye is limited severely to the sphere of
> consumption- which itself has of course greatly expanded. Today, the
> personalities from the leisure world, no matter how much loved, jack the strength
> and the situation of leadership. (Riesman [1961] 2001:212)

The Richesse Oblige and specifically the Robber Barons of the past expended a great

deal of energy and social influence towards the purpose of legitimizing their status,

proving their right to power, and expanding the influence of their class. Whereas, the

new Captains of Consumption, or more generally the other-directed person, is constantly

increasing the boundaries of consumption and leisure, always looking for the niche and

nuance with which to distinguish themselves. "These relatively stable and individualistic

pursuits [of the inner-directed social character] are today being replaced by the

fluctuating tastes which the other-directed person accepts from his peer-group."

(Riesman [1961] 2001:79)

Baudrillard also recognizes this shift between industry and consumption, and the

leaders that embody this movement; however he gives them different titles: 'Heroes of

Production' and 'Heroes of Consumption.' "In the West, at least, the impassioned

biographies of heroes of production are everywhere giving way today to biographies of heroes of consumption… in a word, the lives of *great wastrels*." (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:45-46) When Baudrillard refers to these Heroes of Consumption he uses many of the same traits that are contained within Riesman's other-directed social character. Both personalities seek the approval and opinions of others and let those shape their behavior, beliefs, and actions. Using Baudrillard's concepts, gone is the drive to produce that 'Heroes' or leaders such as the Robber Barons used to have, individuality is also no longer valued, instead esteem comes from reproductions. This concept of 'Heroes of Consumption' is now epitomized by celebrities, they are the ones who are currently the cultural leaders of society and exemplify this idea of waste that Baudrillard uses in a very similar way to Veblen. "We have to interpret the immense wastage of our affluent societies this way. It is that wastage which defies scarcity and, contradictorily, signifies abundance." (Baudrillard [1970] 1998:45) By signifying abundance waste can also be used to signify status, similar to Veblen's idea of conspicuous waste.

<p style="text-align:center">Popularity Oblige: Celebrity Conspicuousness</p>

"In the earlier period the biographies' subjects were 'idols of production' – people interesting because they achieved something in the world, made their own way, worked their way to the top, were useful to society... the intervening years however there is a shift to 'idols of consumption'." (Dyer 1979:45) These contemporary 'idols of consumption' exist within a field of conspicuous leisure, waste, and consumption. They stand in marked contrast to the cultural leaders that came before them not only in their

actions, but in their influences. Baudrillard titles these new social characters as 'Heroes of Consumption,' and when referencing them and their inner-drives he refers to them as 'liberated'. "The liberated man is not the one who is freed in his ideal reality, his inner truth, or his transparency; he is the man who changes spaces, who circulates, who changes sex, clothes, and habits according to fashion, *rather than morality*, and who changes opinions not as his conscience dictates but in response to opinion polls." (Baudrillard 1989:96) The 'liberated man', the 'Hero of Consumption' and the 'Captain of Consumption' all can be used to support Riesman's concept of the other-directed social character. I put forward that all of these different titles do the same thing, recognize and lead us to a social shift that occurred roughly after World War II that led to our current leaders of consumption, celebrities.

"The hero was distinguished by his achievement; the celebrity by his image or trademark. The hero created himself; the celebrity is created by the media. The hero was a big man; the celebrity is a big name." (Fowles 1992:12) Celebrities stand as the next stage in conspicuous leadership, they are neither the heroes nor captains that these theorists described; instead they take conspicuousness further and into realms that are far more public than these past leaders could. "The defining characteristic of celebrity is that it is essentially a media production, and its usage is largely confined to the twentieth century." (Giles 2000:3-4) Media is now far more wide-reaching than it ever has been and is entrenched within our society and our culture. This influence is so pervasive that it not only provides what people see, hear, and read; but what sets the agenda as to what they are influenced by and interpret as the norm. One of the aspects of the media that is

unique to our current time period is the creation and rise of the mediated celebrity. "A celebrity is merely a person who is known for this well-known-ness." (Giles 2000:3-4) Due to the cultural value put on conspicuous consumption within the last few generations, celebrities have risen to symbolize this ideal lifestyle. Celebrities participate in this lifestyle, promote this lifestyle, but more accurately they embody this lifestyle. Much of celebrities' cultural status, their fame, comes from their ability and skill at participating in conspicuousness and waste, and very few do it better.

This fame that celebrities achieve should be seen as a process, not simply a state of being. This fame is achieved, calculated, and regulated by not only the 'jury of their peers' but by the media itself. Fame is no longer bestowed upon an individual due to great deeds, bravery, or sacrifice, fame is now accomplished by how you promote yourself and your created publicized image. "Promotion is probably the most straightforward of all the texts which construct a star image, in that it is the most deliberate, direct, intentioned and self-conscious…" (Dyer 1979:68) The Hero has been replaced by the Star.

The star is a media-created idea that originated in Hollywood. There have always been celebrities in different fields, but the idea of stardom is a new phenomenon. Within the current Western culture the ideas of 'celebrity' and the 'star' have been imploded into one indiscriminate meaning. There used to be more of a distinction between the two, a celebrity was well-known, a star was well-publicized. "A star image is made out of media texts… sociologically speaking, stars do not exist outside of such texts; therefore

it is these that have to be studied" (Dyer 1979:1and68) These two terms are similar to the situation involving the usage of Noblesse Oblige and Richesse Oblige, though they have differing meanings they are used interchangeably to convey similar meanings. When one speaks of a celebrity now, one is speaking of a star, and vice versa.

Baudrillard recognized within his work how the media image takes precedence over the actual individual. In reference to stars he wrote they "embody one single passion only: the passion for images…They are not something to dream about; they are the dream." (Baudrillard 1989:56) Celebrities become cultural luminaries when their publicized media image becomes equal to, or more important than their talent. When their performance becomes secondary to their image, they truly become a star. When it comes to the interplay between stars as people, and stars as images, Richard Dyer puts it best: "it is assumed that we are dealing with the stars in terms of their signification, not with them as real people. The fact that they are also real people is an important aspect of how they signify, but we never know them directly as real people, only as they are to be found in media texts." (Dyer 1979:2)

These media texts contain the narrative of not only celebrities, but also reflect our society, our culture. Celebrities are merely the mode through which these stories and the resulting messages are presented. Celebrities are other-directed because our society is and demands this behavior of our leaders, our representatives. Many times in order to represent the culture accurately celebrities must display their consumption, their leisure, their waste, because if they do not we may demote them, we may even withdraw our

affection and attention. In order to receive our interest stars must seem tangible, approachable, not so much 'just like us' but real, sincere. "The performer puts himself at the mercy of both his audience and his emotions. This sincerity on the side of the performer evokes the audience's tolerance for him" (Riesman [1961] 2001:194) In this way sincerity is a performance, and as it is a performance it loses some of its meaning, a performance is a translation of something by an individual who enacts it, and some aspect are always lost in translation.

Stars are judged by how sincere they seem, how they measure up to our cultural standards of sincerity, and using Baudrillard's argument the focus is on gaining the approval of others (society) and performing the signs of sincerity accurately and appropriately. (Baudrillard [1970] 1998) Riesman's definition of the other-directed character agrees with this assertion and states that it is an internal need that drives sincerity. "Plainly, it is the other-directed person's psychological need, not his political one, that dictates his emphasis on warmth and sincerity." (Riesman [1961] 2001:196) If we use the idea of politics to describe the process by which people make decisions and the interplay of human group interactions, then it may seem that this statement seems to contradict Baudrillard. However, this is not the case. Within Riesman's description of society he emphasizes that in order for any society to function the outer compulsion of society must become the inner compulsion of the individual. So if the other-directed individual has a psychological need to emphasize warmth and sincerity this impulse must be influenced by, and come from other-directed society. Though it may seem that the individual possesses sincerity, it is impossible as, according to Baudrillard, sincerity

in its true form no longer exists. 'Sincerity' is merely a performance in a society where sincerity is but a cultural memory. In other words, societies come to value the simulacra of sincerity, not inner-directed, authentic sincerity.

Celebrities as other-directed cultural icons are socially and internally driven by the need to seem caring. They want to be seen as compassionate because they want to receive love in return.

> Such displays of empathy do not change the world for the better: they do not help the poor, diseased, dispossessed or bereaved. Our culture of ostentatious caring concerns, rather, projecting one's ego, and informing others what a deeply caring individual you are. It is about feeling good, not doing good, and illustrates not how altruistic we have become, but how selfish. (West 2004:1)

This 'ostentatious caring' is merely a way to conspicuously promote yourself as compassionate, and to receive the societal benefits of producing the signs of sincerity. Celebrities are trend setters, they bring fads into vogue and they set up actions and behaviors that are emulated. They manipulate themselves and their actions in order to win the adoration of the public. At the same time that they are influencing the public, they are simultaneously depending on the public.

A celebrity whose public identity depended on being seen as caring and compassionate was the late Princess Diana of England. Her public involvement in charity and philanthropy helped to bestow her other title, that of the 'People's Princess.' Once her marriage to Prince Charles of England became something that no longer kept her in the public's eye in a positive manner (due to the rumors and speculation regarding

adultery) she created a new role for herself, that of global humanitarian. At the height of her involvement with charity, Princess Diana was the royal patron for over seventy charities that ranged from AIDS to leprosy. She usually chose charities that were avoided by other endorsers, and through this tactic, gained public and media recognition for forging new paths and caring for people that no one else cared for. "Diana did not have a happy life, and there is the suspicion that by wanting to be 'a Queen of people's hearts,' she sought the public adoration as a way of compensation." (West 2004:74) The distrust of her motives has basis in actions of Princess Diana's that were not as expertly spun in the media, actions that contradicted her image as one who gave her all to the people. "She was, in fact, a rather ungenerous royal masquerading as lady bountiful. The publication of Princess Diana's will has, at last, revealed the truth behind the hype. While the total value of her estate was a staggering 21.7 million [pounds], not a penny was left to charity." (Tatchell 1998:1) In fact, in her will, she split her money to leave it to her already wealthy sons, the Princes of England, her godchildren, and her butler. (Court TV 2000) Another action of hers that seemed to contradict her persona of commitment to charity was when her marriage to Prince Charles ended in 1996 so did most of her involvement with charity. (Emma 2005)

The situation that celebrities find themselves in is a Catch 22. While they are the taste makers, leading the 'jury of their peers,' they are at the exact same time the group that this fickle jury has the most influence over. As Riesman simply put it, "opinion leaders who try to influence verdicts as well as to repeat them – a dangerous game indeed." (Riesman [1961] 2001:78) Being a taste maker is hazardous because you create

while at the same time attempt to incorporate, and there is a fine line between being

adored and abhorred and celebrities must walk this line every single day. Celebrities

embody culturally prized ideals such as wealth and beauty, yet this is not enough.

Because we place celebrities in a position of leadership they are also expected to behave

in ways that we ourselves wish we could. Western culture honors generosity while at the

same time expecting conspicuous consumption of its members, and celebrities are

required to epitomize, and at the same time reconcile, this contradiction.

> Americans, I suspect, like to see celebrities do charity because of our paradoxical expectations of them. We want them to be glamorous and live fantastic lives, and yet we also want them to be, in the words of Us magazine, 'just like us!' But if they're just like us, why should they have so much more than we do? (Poniewozik and Keegan 2005:2)

Celebrities are used by various interests as mediums to transfer the glamour that

is associated with their embodiment of these prized ideals on whatever they are

promoting, and charities have benefited from joining in on this craze. In order to 'sell

charity' celebrities are used (similar in method to 'brands') as if they were selling a

physical product instead of the idea of generosity.

> Britain is fast learning that if caring is to be a performance, celebrities should be centre stage. Being seen with the right cause is all-important, and celebrity agents will offer clients a charity matching service to ensure the "best fit" for their target demographic. As the Hollywood publicist Howard Bragman put it: "Celebrities are a brand, and a brand must stand for something." It is a symbiotic relationship: charities need profile and celebrities need meaning. The secret of the conscience industry lies in the shared interests of its partners. In a cynical age, conspicuous caring is good for your image; celebrities know that (Blackburn 2005:24)

Charity is no longer as associated with the idea of 'duty' as it was in the past, now it is promoted more as 'you making the difference' or 'every little bit helps.' Charity is purposefully moving away from the image of the dirty, suffering, and the poor, to the idea of 'the unfortunate' and those 'in need', and who better to help charity in this transition than those whose very occupation is projecting an image?

The way celebrity is defined and expressed in this society is through being visible, and without this visibility your fame fades. People who achieve celebrity status are not allowed to be in the background, they are not allowed to live private lives. Their entire lives are for all intents one big performance; a performance we watch on television, listen to on the radio, and read about in the tabloids. Whether they like it or not, in order to keep their status, celebrities must constantly publicly perform in not only their field, but in their private lives as well.

> The phenomenon [of celebrity participation in giving] is so pervasive as to raise the question, is large-scale, high profile social activism a latent trait in every would-be pop star and movie icon? Is there the urge to rescue the Earth, the children, the whales, the natural byproduct of selling millions of records or saving the world on-screen year after year? It would appear so, given the messianic aspirations of the entertainment elite that have never been more in evidence. (Chocano 2000:1)

Even though they are our cultural leaders, celebrities are not experts in charity or the causes associated with it. Most celebrities know as much as the average person about topics such as the Rain Forest or the killing fields in Darfur. Yet as leaders we expect them somehow to be more emotionally engaged and committed to topics that we ourselves are not. The cult of celebrity that our society is so wrapped up in has taken on

a life of its own, and now celebrities participate in giving not because it is right, not even because we expect it, but in order to stay in the forefront of our society's deeper spiral into consumption. No longer is the duty to participate in giving noblesse oblige because current society is no longer led by nobility, even Richesse Oblige has given way to a new form of class obligations, that of *Popularity Oblige*[4]. Those that hold the status of celebrity or star are popular, they are well known and their actions are closely watched and followed. Their popularity obligates them to participate in charity in order to (similar to the Robber Barons) give standing to their class and their place within it. In order for celebrities to stay central to our culture, our undisputed leaders in consumption, their participation in giving becomes a de-facto requirement. Charity is a useful cultural tool in order to separate themselves from the pack, to add that extra something to their credentials, caring.

> Ever since the Beatles grew their hair and began holding up the two fingered peace gesture, musicians and actors have regarded it as their prerogative to promote issues of global importance. As Bono from U2 once said: 'As a pop star I have two instincts. I want to have fun. And I want to change the world'. Most of the time, however, these artists do not know what they are talking about. Too often, their motive is only to help themselves. (West 2004:53)

Charity is a very public way of creating and maintaining a sought after image, however, very rarely do people consider the fact that if the public knows about a charitable donation then it was purposefully publicized through the media. "Parading their donations like undersized fig leaves – which fail to conceal their rampant

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[4] Term coined in this dissertation

voyeurism and vanity." (Cater 2002:1) A charitable cause that a celebrity participates in is something that they can be interviewed about, photographed carrying out, and when a cause is in style, celebrities flock to be associated with it. Due to this association that forms between the cause and the celebrity's image certain causes have difficulty finding celebrity endorsements such as mental health, domestic violence, or certain physical ailments. This idea is encapsulated by what Andrew Smith refers to as the 'sliding scale of sexiness.' (Smith 2002) Celebrities want the cause they are associated with to involve children, animals, cancer, or the environment; something that is universally seen as positive and is usually in style. "The trouble with trying to make philanthropy fashionable is that fashion is by definition fleeting-just as hemlines rise and fall…And that raises the question: What happens to the old cause when the fame and money move on to a new one-or when having a cause at all ceases to be fashionable?" (Wood 2007:26) Celebrities pick and choose their charities based on popularity because they want to be included in the goodwill that certain issues invoke. It is curious how so many celebrities admit to, and are publicized for, having drug, alcohol, and sex addictions, yet very few endorse and raise awareness of these causes. The idea of celebrity involvement in charity is also problematic because the fame and status that celebrities enjoy is not concrete, it is uncertain and many times stars go to great lengths to get themselves connected to the currently popular cause. "Celebrities cannot afford to let the causes they represent go stale and hence frequently jump ship and migrate from burning issue to burning issue, from MS to diabetes to AIDS to breast cancer, desperately searching for the cause du jour…" (Harris 2003:294)

Natural Catastrophes: The "Use" of Hurricane Katrina

In 2005 after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast of the United States, celebrities found a way to use a catastrophe as an opportunity to be seen as caring, and real people. After the category five hurricane struck, the media focused on the suffering of the people, the physical damage, and then as soon as that lost its novelty, the celebrities who decided to be vocal about their support. Rampant through the media were pictures and video footage of celebrities crying tears that somehow did not damage their makeup, and claiming an attachment to an area of the country that many had no previous affiliation to. The Hurricane Katrina coverage was not only about watching the soul wrenching devastation and pain that the storm left in its wake; but also how far a celebrity would go to make their concern for the victims shine the brightest, what gimmick they would use to replace the current leader in the quest for the title of 'celebrity with the biggest heart'. Some of the tried and true ways that celebrities decided to use their clout to help the Hurricane Katrina victims were telethons, no less than six separate songs sung by celebrities (one was even a compilation that tried to ride on the successful coattails of the song 'We are the World'), publicized celebrity donations, concert benefits, and auctions. Some of the more interesting ways that celebrities decided to lend a hand were:

- Tonight Show host Jay Leno auctioning a Harley-Davidson motorcycle on Ebay that was covered with the autographs of celebrity guests who appeared on his show (Snow 2005)
- An auctioned New Year's Eve date with heiress Paris Hilton (Hall 2005)
- Martha Stewart selling red and blue ponchos that she designed from her website www.marthastewart.com (MSNBC 2005a)

- Morgan Freeman auctioning a chance to attend the premier of his new movie 'An Unfinished Life' before its released in theaters (MSNBC 2005a)
- Rapper, The Game, donating his customized Bentley car, that he himself received as a gift for promoting sneakers aptly titled 'Hurricanes' from which he receives a portion of the profits, and a portion of this will be donated to a charity (MSNBC 2005b)

What all of these examples of celebrity charity have in common is that they all are thinly-veiled methods of self-promotion. However the aspect of all of these acts that is the most insulting to the idea of charity is that not a single one of these acts are a sacrifice or a deviation of their normal behavior for these celebrities. How is taking two seconds to get celebrity guests, who are already appearing on his show to publicize themselves, to sign a motorcycle a hardship for Jay Leno? How is a publicized date that will surely be covered by the media and planned down to the last minute, a sacrifice for a woman whose celebrity is built entirely upon being photographed and simply being born a Hilton? How is Martha Stewart forgoing anything by designing a poncho that will be made by other people and sold on her website, where people who go to buy it will also be exposed to her other merchandise? Who stands to benefit the most from Morgan Freeman auctioning a ticket to his new movie; the Katrina victims, the winner of the auction, or the studio and actors connected to the movie that will be publicized through the winning of the auction? The last example is truly one of the more crass Hurricane Katrina inspired celebrity giving. By giving away a car that was first given to him in order to entice him to lend his name to a shoe (from which he will receive a portion of the profits) The Game truly takes the idea of charity to an all-time low. The fact that the shoe was named 'Hurricane' was a piece of irony that could just not be passed up.

Though all of these acts raised money for the victims, there were less publicized, less conspicuous routes that these celebrities could have taken in order to assist these people, however, where is the PR in that?

Just recently, within the last few decades, charity has become more institutionalized, more streamlined, more commercialized. Charitable causes need to be advertised, need to be publicized, need to have name recognition in order to collect money, and a celebrity endorser is an effective way to do this. "In the cutthroat world of nonprofit fundraising, star endorsement is critical to visibility, and nonprofits are willing to pay for it." (Chocano 2000:3) In this situation, where celebrities need a cause to promote themselves, and charities need a celebrity to promote their cause, a dually parasitic bond is formed between these two factions. Even though a celebrity's status is something that is never assured day-to-day, they still hold the upper hand in their relationship with the charity organization because, as time goes by, the organization depends on the celebrity even more. "Celebrity endorsement is currently the primary means by which the major charities market themselves." (Smith 2002:1) As their primary means of advertisement, celebrities hold an unspoken power over the charities, 'treat me right or I can walk away.' Once established, and scandal-free, a celebrity depends less and less on a charity as a reputation builder or fixer. It is unfortunate that a charity benefits the most from an established celebrity whose reputation is untarnished; because these are the celebrities most unlikely to seek charity endorsements.

Charities are in no way innocent in this quest for self-promotion; they seek out celebrity endorsement for the same reasons that celebrities seek to associate themselves

with a cause, advancement. This practice of celebrity and charity working together has become so common that there are companies whose sole purpose is to pair celebrities and charities, similar to that of a romantic matchmaking service. "I founded the Giving Back Fund seven years ago to create a vehicle by which wealth and fame could be linked together and that potent combination could be leveraged on behalf of philanthropy." (Pollick 2004:1) This formalization of giving makes sense because these two entities will be entering into a relationship that will hopefully benefit both, and will allow both to reach a desired goal. "Few words from a television executive can be as sinister as 'its all for a good cause,' yet charities seem too feeble to resist, too desperate for cash, and too celebrity obsessed to say no to anything a TV company might offer in exchange for dragging their good name through the ordure." (Cater 2002:1) Charities find themselves in the same position as celebrities, one voice in a cacophony of millions struggling to be heard, to be recognized, to gain attention. In order for their solicitations to be effective charities must first get attention, and no group is more attuned to the whims of the public than celebrities. Charitable organization and causes use celebrities just as much as celebrities use them, both hoping to gain the attention of the public and from this further their own goals.

> Fundraisers now shamelessly espouse the philosophy of philanthropic Machiavellianism, the belief that the end justifies the means, that their exploitation by celebrities as merchants of photo-ops, or by major corporations, which display their trademarks prominently at the charitable events they sponsor, is all justified in the name of a good cause. (Harris 2003:294)

Charities seeking endorsement should be aware of the pitfalls that come along with attaching its organization's reputation to that of a celebrity. Not only is fame fleeting, but also it can turn negative very quickly; it's a short hop over the line from renowned to notorious. Examples of celebrities who have embarrassed or damaged the charity or cause they are associated with are commonplace, and this is a risk that charities are willing to take. Supermodel Naomi Campbell was contracted by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to star in their anti-fur campaign; she was advertised in the media claiming that she would rather go naked than model fur. However while modeling in Milan in 1997, she appeared wearing fur, and was puzzled as to why PETA was so angry. Her defense was that fur was back in style and really it was all about fashion. (Andrew 2005) Another star whose promotion backfired was former spice girl Geri Halliwell when she was asked to be the UN ambassador on reproductive health. "Geri Halliwell admitted to a documentary maker that she did not know the difference between 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice.'" (West 2004:62) These two examples are extreme cases of when celebrities publicly negated their work in the name of a cause; more commonplace behaviors are stars not fulfilling their obligations to a charity, such as not showing up to shoot a commercial, or making unreasonable demands.

Celebrities are usually paid to endorse a charity, and if they aren't paid money they usually receive perks, that if taken advantage of, can end up costing a charity thousands. Celebrities usually expect charities to provide expensive transport, five-star lodgings, and to keep them well fed and entertained; if charities aren't careful they can end up spending more money on the celebrity then the celebrity brings in for the cause.

If it's a 'free performance' put on by a celebrity benefiting some cause or another, usually the charity is required to pay for the stage setup, the lights, the special effects, the backup dancers, and other expenses that go along with a large scale performance, so it is never really free. "These are people who are so taken with themselves, they expect red carpet treatment from a group that needs money and doesn't want to spend it on them." (Chocano 2000:4)

Though they may not always profit in material ways, stars through their performance of giving obtain benefits that are very other-directed, and because of this highly valued in our society. "[T]oo many entertainers simply have an infant-like compulsion to be the centre of attention: …too many celebrities are shallow and insecure souls who have the principle compulsion to be noticed, to be loved, and will go to all lengths to ensure this." (West 2004:55) This love from the public fulfills not only a personal need that the celebrity may have but more so a cultural need. Adoration is not the only perk that celebrities receive from endorsement of charity; there are other benefits that make it worthwhile. "Charity work can also help a rising star gain exposure, help a fading star raise a sagging profile or help a Hollywood supernova get his very own meeting with Congress, an audience with the pope or a televised interview with the president." (Chocano 2000:2) Stars are encouraged to participate in giving by the media, their peer group, and as the position of celebrity becomes more and more a production, their publicists and agents. Celebrities are encouraged to take part in charity and if sincerity is present, instead of merely the signs of sincerity, than that is an extra bonus, but unfortunately, participation in giving is no longer merely an option for an ambitious

celebrity. "There are plenty of reasons for celebrities to do charity: guilt, faith, personal

suffering, ratings, p.r. 'If you want a long-term career and you want to be taken seriously

by the public, to do nothing is a mistake,' says publicist to the stars Ken Sunshine.

'Charitable work rounds out and humanizes your image.'" (Poniewozik and Keegan

2005:2)

Not only do celebrities expect to be treated a certain way, they also do not expect

to donate their own money to the cause they are supporting. By taking the time to ask

others to contribute, appearing in advertisements or at events, or letting their name be

attached to a cause, many celebrities consider this charity; instead of actually giving

what they are asking others to give, money.

> The fact that Bono…has a fortune of more than 100 million euros but
> contributes so little to the welfare state of the country in which he lives appears
> not to trouble him. One way he could help the Third World would be to write a
> large check and send it to Oxfam, but this is not as glamorous as going on
> television to meet the Pope or sermonizing in front of thousands at concerts.
> (West 2004:63)

Examples such as these help bring specific behaviors to light that contradict the façade

that many celebrities and public personalities put on in reference to charity. They are

involved with charity, but is it truly a sacrifice if they are paid to do so, do not contribute

their own money, or give such a little percentage in comparison with their normal

conspicuous spending? For example "the Tommy Hilfiger Corporate Foundation gave

$200,000 to Choate Rosemary Hall, the exclusive Connecticut prep school. Tommy

[Hilfiger] also donated $750 to the Ethiopian Children's Foundation." (The Smoking

Gun 2006:1) Another popular culture icon, the band Aerosmith, donated $206,500 (tax-deductible) to a charitable foundation they founded, however only $6,150 was donated to charity from the foundation that year. (ibid) How is this charity?

Charitable organizations know that in order to be convincing, celebrities should be kept in their sphere of influence as much as possible. For example, in order to benefit a cause, singers will give a charitable organization free tickets to their concert or in a move that brings more attention to the actual celebrity, record a song and give the proceeds to the charity. Singers such as Michael Jackson, Elton John, and Ozzy Osbourne have used this plan to raise money for AIDS, famine in Ethiopia, or more recently, Tsunami relief for Asia. However, the concert most closely linked to charity was Live Aid in 1985. Live Aid was a large gathering of musical celebrities from all over the world, of course the most attention was paid to the American and English stars, but performing were celebrities even from Japan and Austria. "The trick was to sell famine relief like a hit record, and it worked." (Fowles 1992:178) Live Aid was also a warning to the world about what happens when celebrities step out of what they know and attempt to take on charitable giving alone. "Live Aid raised 200 million [pounds] for the 'starving of Africa.' But it did not go completely to help the needy." (West 2004:61)

Though the concert was envisioned and carried through by a well-meaning celebrity, he was a celebrity non-the-less, and once the money was raised did not have experience on how to actually use it to help. The money was used to buy food, which was then sold on the streets of Ethiopia, and because of this, did not reach the people who needed the free food the most, the truly poor. When this was realized the food was

directly distributed to the poor, and though this sounds like the best way to battle hunger, any economist will tell you that in actuality, this is the best way to depress a farming nation's economy. The rest of the money was turned over to the Ethiopian government, who then used it to build a larger oppressive army, finance warfare, and the people suffered even more.

> Speaking in 2000, Rony Brauman, the former head of *Medecins Sans Frontieres*, was still bitter: 'Bob Geldof had come to Ethiopia. This concert, this nice operation with all the big people in the world meeting to express their nice feelings for the destitute and starving and the dying children and so on, this is just bullshit. I am still angry at him 15 years later, because at the time the aid was turned against the people of Ethiopia.' (West 2004:54)

Celebrities can use charity to secure their status as a star, but just as easily charity can also be used to repair or revamp their public image. "In the eyes of the jury of peers one may be a good guy one day, a stinker the next. Toleration, let alone leadership, depends on having a highly sensitive response to swings of fashion." (Riesman [1961] 2001:73) Many celebrities who have their bad behavior or eccentricities routinely publicized in the media resort to charity to fix their reputations. An example of this is singer Michael Jackson, who to this date has been involved in two very public trials accused of pedophilia; he is also the unofficial poster child for publicized celebrity eccentricity. However, just as often as he is in the news for insisting that it is natural that forty-year-old men have eight-year-old boys sleep with them, he is also in the news for his charitable donations. "Maybe stars can draw on a reservoir of trust, but that trust can be volatile. In 1985 Michael Jackson was a beloved humanitarian. Today, hearing him

sing "We are the world/We are the children" is not so touching. Not in a good way anyway." (Poniewozik and Keegan 2005:2) Charity is an excellent way for celebrities to get the media focused on what they do in public, effectively hiding what they do in private, or have done in the past. By being excessively generous they are able to hide their predator ways underneath a facade of peacefulness.

> Celebrities' deepening involvement in charity not only keeps them in the public eye, it keeps them out of it by amending misconceptions about their conduct when they are off camera. By volunteering to host telethons and sing at benefit dinners, they seek to prove to the American audience that they are squeaky clean, not drunken child-beaters or coke-snorting reprobates whose marriages, after a romantic exchange of vows and a thorough vetting of the pre-nuptial agreement, are little more than revolving doors, but role models and civic-minded patriots… (Harris 2003:293-294)

In the past, using charity as a way to whitewash a person's image after their death was an effective tool that was used quite frequently by the Richesse Oblige. The money that the wealthy earned in life through exploitation and unchecked greed was used to help the exploited only after the benefactor's death. "Until the nineteenth century charities were largely established as the result of bequests made in the wills of rich merchants, and others, charitably minded or with perhaps half an eye on an easier passage through the pearly gates." (Fowler 2001:15) Following in the footsteps of the powerful class that came before them, the aristocracy, the Richesse Oblige used giving more as a form of self-redemption than a form of altruism. By giving of their wealth, people whose reputation was built on ruthlessness and greed were able to wipe away their shortcomings, their misdeeds, and their indiscretions. Why have an obituary that

lists you as a deviant, when you can be called a philanthropist? Learning from this, celebrities started using this practice as well; time and money can heal most, if not all wounds.

A work that can be used to make the transition clearer from Veblen's conspicuous consumption to my argument of conspicuous giving is Patrick West's *Conspicuous Compassion: Why Sometimes it Really is Cruel to be Kind*. West uses Veblen's idea of conspicuous consumption however, he extends it to public emotional displays more so than actual actions. His work centers on cultural motivation as well, and he argues that public emotional displays do not actually help anyone but instead are crass and for selfish ego-boosting reasons.

> The accusation that celebrities who back good causes only do so to advance their careers is not new. Neither is the rebuttal that, as Adam Smith said, self-interest can lead to the betterment of all. In keeping with the theory of the invisible hand, celebrities may be being self-centered, but if they do help to raise money, then that is for the good of all. But often their desire to appear compassionate, and the public doing likewise by going on television to hand over extremely large-sized cheques, does not actually help the poor at all. (West 2004:56-57)

West discusses how people have a need to be seen as caring, that this need is the motivation behind their behavior and this translates well into the idea that people, especially those in power, must be seen as giving so that they can in return reap the social benefits. West's central argument is that society does not care more just publicly emotes more for self-serving reasons.

Taking West's arguments and focusing them more on celebrities and their actions is where *conspicuous charity* and philanthropy come into play. Because contemporary culture is so focused on emulating celebrities, they are put in a position in which they must follow and expand this trend of public emotional display. "Rock stars tend to cast themselves as emotional savants, folks who feel the plight of vanishing rain forests and anguished Tibetans more acutely than the rest of humanity." (Tyrangiel and Nugent 2002:63) It is no longer acceptable for cultural leaders to remain aloof or to deal with things privately, instead public expression of feelings (especially using the media as the medium) is a must for any celebrity that wants to gain or retain their status.

A celebrity that exemplifies and built her career on this cultural need for public venting of emotions is talk show hostess Oprah Winfrey. Gaining incredible popularity since the 1980s and still continuing strong, Oprah dedicates the majority of her hour long talk show to two things: feelings and commercial advertisements. Oprah is one of the wealthiest women in the world building her empire upon the foundations of apparent empathy and sympathy. The show is built around acceptance of those who are guests on the show, of herself, but mostly acceptance of the current culture of caring, and of the conspicuous actions that result from this caring. Once her celebrity status was cemented Oprah turned her attention to charity and philanthropy, both of which she usually promotes using her talk show as the pulpit from which she preaches. One episode of the Oprah Winfrey show was centered on a health condition called Obstetric Fistulae, which is a condition in which a hole can occur during childbirth in the wall between a woman's rectum and vagina. This condition, if not treated leaves many women stigmatized by

their community and can lead to paralysis. Oprah raised awareness about this condition

that affects an estimated two million women currently; however, did she center the show

on financial support? No, instead she had herself filmed while she gave the women

suffering from this condition makeup kits. As if free mascara or lipstick will help the

incontinence, odor, sterility, and nerve damage that comes from this condition. Instead

of focusing on the tragedy that befell these women and the hardships daily that they face

she instead turned the attention of her show into an opportunity for personal growth.

> Your strength gives me strength, she told one young woman who had suffered a
> particularly brutal near-death ordeal. The idea that one of the world's wealthiest
> and most powerful women needs to draw strength, vampire-like, from a woman
> so utterly dispossessed goes right to the heart of what's wrong with this brand of
> do-gooding. (Wood 2007:24)

This flash over substance approach to giving is so permeated within our culture

that few even question the motives behind giving and our culture's place in those

motivations.

> Charity cannot be isolated from the rest of society; it must keep up with change.
> Increased commercialism carries risks, however. As the act of charity becomes
> more about the drama of the "act", than the substance of the charity, we might
> begin to wonder what philanthropy means. Is sending a text message enough? Is
> a direct debit you have forgotten to cancel really a gift? Is a concert in the park
> really a protest? (Blackburn 2005:24)

Even popular culture has noticed the emptiness and ridiculous nature of celebrity

endorsed charity by mocking it in movies such as Zoolander and television shows such

as the Colbert Report. Charity has become nothing more than a donate button online, a

twitter post asking for help, or a text to add five dollars to a cell phone bill. This way you never have to touch the money or see the actual need.

As contemporary culture becomes more other-directed there is more of a tendency to replace the personal sacrifice that used to be present in giving with tax write-offs, fun, profit, or publicized praise. (Bremner 1994) "Charity is often seen as a postmodern Papal indulgence-absolving yourself of the sin of capricious social excess while toasting this wisdom with a glass of champagne." (Byrne 2005:3) It is no longer sufficient that charity make you feel good, it must now also make you look good to the public and your peers. "Charitable causes are to modern celebrities what sack cloth and ashes were to medieval monks: a symbolic form of self-abasement, a humbling gesture of penance to their own god, the public, a deity as jealous as Jehovah was of Job." (Harris 2003:291)

Charity has taken on such an aspect of commercialism that it is problematic not only in the consequences that occur from such superficial giving, but what charity has evolved into lends support to Baudrillard's concept of simulacra.

> But behind our collective love-in, there is an artifice in which we are all complicit -- an ethical version of the emperor's new clothes. If we lose the ability to discern caring from posing, we risk devaluing charity into a public performance devoid of meaning and credibility. The conscience industry risks becoming a reactionary force. By creating an illusory culture of caring, we believe we are doing good when in fact we are doing nothing. Our conscience off the hook, we can settle back to the status quo... (Blackburn 2005:25)

This notion of charity and philanthropy that is becoming more mainstream is that of self-interest and self-promotion. The original idea of charity has not just been lost, but

imploded, it no longer even exists. There is no longer a true meaning of giving with

which to reference, and because the giving is simulacra so is the concept of sincerity that

is connected to it. The social and material benefits that are now ingrained into giving are

so dominant that the actual act and meaning if giving are secondary. The substance is

second to the bling.

> The elusive solution to world hunger lies in purchasing a gold-plated, heart-shaped locket designed exclusively for Marie Claire with the help of Drew Barrymore for only $29.95. Reading the fine print at the bottom of the page reveals that only $5 of that amount actually goes to the World Food Program. So instead of just writing a check for $30 to the WFP, readers are encouraged to acquire yet another piece of junk jewelry in the name of compassion. (Wood 2007:25)

This literal example of bling symbolizes what giving has become. Something to do and

then forget about, something that after it's done holds no lasting meaning or value,

something that can be tossed in a drawer and pulled out later to show others what a

caring individual *you* are. "A Jewish proverb says: 'If charity cost nothing, we would all

be philanthropists.' Perhaps we are getting there now." (Blackburn 2005:25)

<div align="center">Power of Celebrity</div>

"The fame stars have won lends them power. It is not power in the ancient sense,

by which a few can legitimately exert authoritarian control over others, but rather power

in a modern sense, by which few have license to influence on a vast scale. Americans

turn to stars for the guidance they can provide." (Fowles 1992:176) Celebrities are

chosen to be the spokesperson for charities, not because celebrities experience more

unfortunate circumstances that require donations, actually quite the contrary is true, their

wealth and fame insulates them from many hardships that most people experience; they are chosen because people are more willing to listen when a celebrity speaks, and follow where a celebrity leads. Many charities hope that the love and adoration that the public heap on celebrities will transfer through association to their cause, and subsequently enrich their bank accounts. Celebrities hold a similar hope that the attention that the needy draw will be placed, no matter how momentarily, onto them. They think that by helping those in need, they will be seen as a humanitarian, and this will help distinguish them from the other celebrities in their field. Charitable causes hold our hearts because pity and empathy are powerful emotions; there are few people that will admit to not wanting to help those in need. Celebrities hold our imagination because they achieve a level of popularity, wealth, and influence that very few non-celebrities will ever achieve. Through this envy and adoration, the cult of celebrity holds a power that can only be rivaled by religion in its far reaching and all engulfing influence. Together these two entities are a powerful force to be reckoned with, they have the ability to receive our love, our adoration, and from this, our money and attention. "But why are the charities so fixed on celebrity? The answer is obvious: because we are." (Smith 2002:2)

When a person achieves the status of celebrity, when strangers recognize and adore them they achieve a form of tangible power. Celebrities can convince, not only their fans, but other celebrities and people of power that they are worth listening to, not because they are knowledgeable about the subject, or an educated expert, but because of what they are, a celebrity. If they did not hold this societal position of celebrity, they would not be listened to, Bono is not an economist, but governments listen to him the

same when he speaks to them about third world conditions. It doesn't matter that he is

from Ireland, which is not considered by anyone a third world country; he is still

considered an 'expert' on the conditions that people in these countries endure. "James

Garner [actor] innocently asked, 'Why should anyone be interested in our opinions about

anything? Why do they put us on pedestals? We're just playing cowboys and Indians –

that's all we're doing. We haven't discovered the cure for cancer. None of us." (Fowles

1992:155) Bono is a millionaire rock star, his fame in our culture lends his words and

opinions credibility, but his charisma, and that of other celebrities like him, leads us.

Celebrities can use their fame as a pulpit and their popularity as a microphone in order to

get their message across, whether they are selling shoes, erectile dysfunction medication,

or charity. It doesn't matter what they are selling, it doesn't matter if they have any

experience in the field, because they and charity organizations as well know we will

listen. "On many days it is unclear if we are leading celebrities into the world of

philanthropy, or they are leading us into the world of celebritydom." (Pollick 2004:35)

They are celebrities; they present themselves as such, they are treated as such, and we

expect them to behave as such.

In 1972, the Italian sociologist Francisco Alberoni coined the term 'powerless

elite' to describe the condition of celebrity, suggesting that entertainers may have wealth

and status but feel trivial as they have no real purchase on society. I disagree with this

statement because with status comes a form of power, and today celebrities have high

status simply due to their status as celebrities. I do agree that at times it can seem as if

celebrities use charity in order to fill a void they believe exists within themselves or their

lives, however, what is power if not the ability to have a say in what people see, feel, think, want, and experience?

> So soon as a given proclivity or a given point of view has won acceptance as an authoritative standard or norm of life it will react upon the character of the members of the society which has accepted it as a norm. It will to some extent shape their habits of thought and will exercise a selective surveillance over the development of men's aptitudes and inclinations. (Veblen [1899] 1994:212)

This is the ultimate power, not something as fleeting as rules or government that change the way people behave temporarily or in certain conditions, celebrity is the power to change a person's beliefs in what society is, and their place in it. "The power granted to stars is more broadly suggested by the fact that they can get people to do things they would not do otherwise. Simply through their exhortations stars can alter the behavior of some." (Fowles 1992:177)

When it comes to recognizing the power of celebrity much of academia is behind in recognizing what the masses already know, that celebrities are our true cultural leaders, and we are merely emulating them and their consumption.

> All standards of consumption, are traced back to insensible gradations to the usages and habits of thought of the highest social and pecuniary class – the wealthy leisure class. It is for this class to determine, in general outline, what scheme of life the community shall accept as decent or honorific; and it is their office by precept and example to set forth this scheme of social salvation in its highest, ideal form. (Veblen [1899] 1994:104)

Our culture sets prestige and adoration as the goal, consumption as the means, and all members of contemporary society are engaged in a race whereas celebrities are in the

front leading the way. As our modern leisure class, celebrities set the standards of the minute gradations that give different methods of consumption its value. Their status demands that they set the bar of consumption, leisure, and waste and we try to replicate their actions. It is crucial that celebrities and their leadership is recognized because their lavish and conspicuous lifestyle is being imitated by the rest of society, and concerning those that are not members of the leisure class: "even if they rise a bit above the subsistence minimum, their energies will be again liquidated in the race to imitate leisure-class modes of life." (Riesman 1953:88) So many aspects of society are based on consumption that many times it becomes its own reward. Those that are not in the position to consume at the rate in which the leisure class does still strives to, and this race that we are all in becomes never ending.

In order to truly understand the concept of *Conspicuous Charity*, a contrast of non-conspicuous based charity must be given. While this work focuses mainly on this selfish form of charity, it by no means negates the idea of charity for altruistic reasons. There are a large number of people who in their everyday lives give charity simply to benefit a cause or those in need. A large amount of charity is done anonymously, which is one of the best ways to ensure that charitable giving is about the receivers instead of the givers. Even celebrities (though lambasted in this work) many times participate in selfless giving, an example being The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Gates Foundation is one of the largest and most affective organizations of its kind, but most importantly its motives and giving is transparent and receiver oriented. Bill Gates himself has even pledged to give away most of his fortune to charity while still living (a

new concept for the ultra wealthy) and has encouraged other wealthy individuals to do so as well. Others who have taken this "Giving Pledge" are Mark Zuckerberg founder of Facebook, and Warren Buffett the third richest man in the world.

Even though giving like this is publicized, it is not done in a constant and self-serving way. Many people are not even aware of Bill Gates' generosity because it is not imperative for his career that they do. Gates and other celebrities like him who give in a way that contradicts the current movement of *Conspicuous Charity* embody the idea of charity as it should be (but in the majority of the cases sadly is not) about the receiver, not about the attention and praise that the giver can accumulate.

CHAPTER III

HIERARCHICAL CHARITY

Saving the Children? Othering through Charity

Even without celebrity endorsements, charity is presented and preformed in a self-serving manner. An example of this is the organization Save the Children who use those in need to benefit those that are not. The Save the Children Website is a representation of the tension present between private misery and public charity and how what is private is displayed in order to benefit what is public. However, who is considered a victim and why is not usually dealt with in the public sphere, just the results. The website places the children within the realm of victim, yet makes sure not to offend the sensibilities of the readers. There are no pictures of starving or injured children, instead the website is purposefully neutral and devoid of reality. www.savethechildren.org will be analyzed in terms of its messages, purpose, products available for purchase, and its corporate sponsors. My purpose is to focus on the website and promotions of one of the largest and most publicized charities as the ideal type that typifies my argument which can be thus extrapolated to similar organizations. The website is an example of how in western culture giving is so tightly interwoven with the concept of the 'victimized other,' and an analysis of the site can give some suggestions as to why this is using the works of Jean Baudrillard, Kenneth Burke, Thorstein Veblen, and Patrick West.

The idea of Victim Society, and of New Victim Order, was first described by theorist Jean Baudrillard. Since his works are going to be the foundation for this analysis

the Save the Children website will be studied through the lens of his works, specifically those dealing with the idea of the victimized other. As a French postmodernist Baudrillard combined most of Western Europe and the United States to form what he refers to throughout his works as western culture and western society. In order to do justice to Baudrillard's works and make his arguments clear, many times this work will use the dichotomy that Baudrillard sets up as *we* (western culture) and *them* (the others who we set up as victims). For Baudrillard the United States stands alone as a country that truly personifies postmodernism with much of Europe lagging behind, yet at the same time there are many instances where Baudrillard collapses both into one ideal of westernization. So as to eliminate unnecessary confusion, in this work the United States will be the focus and will represent what Baudrillard refers to as western culture and western society. The reason for this is the website www.savethechildren.org specifically was created to target American donors, as other western countries has Save the Children websites targeted towards them and they all form an alliance.

Baudrillard argues that in order for society to function we must have a group that we label 'other' and that if we were to lose this and become homogeneous we would effectively destroy ourselves. His concept of the 'other' can be imposed on those that are in need of charity, if we do not have them and their lives to observe; we do not have a way to define ourselves. "The humanitarian seeks the other just as desperately in the form of victims to aid… The scapegoat is no longer the person you hound, but the one whose lot you lament" (Baudrillard [1996] 2008:132).

According to Baudrillard we live in a victim society however, the victims are the ones who are alive, and those that bask in their pain are the ones who are dead because they revel in the lowest common denominator - human misery. (Baudrillard [1996] 2008) In order for this parasitic relationship to continue the community must, convince the victims of *their* reality because the community has none of its own, (Baudrillard 1996) and one way it does this is by giving them charity. Victims embody reality only because we have forced them to. (Baudrillard [1996] 2008) Baudrillard argues that "[h]umanitarianism… is a system of weak values, linked to salvaging the threatened human species, and characteristic of an unraveling history" (Baudrillard 1996:89).

Baudrillard states that those that are labeled "victims" are the ones that are truly free because they feel justified contempt towards those that wallow in *their* pain. Victims are not those in need, nor are they the weak ones; the people who see them as weak are the ones who should be pitied, because they are the ones in true need, they require someone to be in pain in order to feel good about themselves. "Nothing offers greater freedom, in fact, or greater sovereignty, than justified contempt- and not even towards the enemy, but towards those basking with their good consciences in the warm sun of solidarity" (Baudrillard [1996] 2008:133).

Western society is so taken with the concept of charity because we as a culture are experiencing a loss of reality and in order to make up for it we must import other people's reality. The Save the Children website provides a good example of the medium through which we observe other's pain. While the community congratulates itself for

contributing, it fails to recognize that it is participating in an unequal exchange – it needs the victims more than the victims need it, and the community takes more than it gives. The website www.savethechildren.org represents a text ripe for rhetorical analysis concerning how these children are labeled as victims in order to fulfill our culture's need for victims.

We live in a "Victim Society" (Baudrillard 1996:82) or "New Victim Order" (Baudrillard [1996] 2008:131) and this website not only reflects that ideology, but is also complicit in continuing and conspicuously spreading this idea of the victimized other. **"**Those who do not directly exploit it [victims and their misery] do so by proxy, and there is no dearth of middlemen skimming a financial or symbolic profit along the way" (Baudrillard 1996:82). Under the guise of humanitarianism, the website (and our culture) places prominence on our desires and conspicuous actions, not the needs of the children the website proposes to help.

Another writer whose ideas help build this concept of the 'victim other' is Kenneth Burke. Burke's theories concerning identification within rhetoric are useful in showing how the website (and other rhetoric tools like it) is able to not only get people to donate, but helps perpetuate the victim society and mentality. Rhetoric, as defined by Burke is "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents" (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 1985:157). Though this is similar to how rhetoric is traditionally defined Burke goes a step further and introduces the idea of identification as important to the definition of rhetoric. By identification, Burke means

that within rhetoric there is a possibility for conscious or even unconscious persuasion

by aspects being presented that the audience can identify with. (ibid 1985) When

identification is used, the audience identifies with the rhetor and the rhetoric, and a sense

of 'we' is created. This form of rhetoric can break down what Burke refers to as

"alienation" or "dissociation" that is present between individual human beings. (ibid

1985) "[T]hen, we find a basic motive for rhetoric: People communicate in an attempt to

eliminate that division. Burke asserts that if individuals were not apart from each other,

'there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity'" (ibid 1985:159).

www.savethechildren.org uses unconscious identification to motivate charitable giving.

By positioning the children described on the website as victims, Save the Children

creates a sense of 'we' in the form of 'we can help' or 'only we can make a difference.'

When donations are made a sense of 'we' is also present because donors join an existing

network of donors, and they can identify themselves to each other by purchasing

paraphernalia from the website gift shop that conspicuously displays the Save the

Children logo.

Another of Burke's views that is relevant to Baudrillard's idea of a victim society

and also to the Save the Children website is Burke's Rhetoric of Rebirth. One of the

ways that rhetoric creates this sense of 'we' is created, according to Burke, is through the

use of a scapegoat. By creating a scapegoat, or someone who is a substitution for self, a

dichotomy of 'us' versus 'them' forms and 'us' becomes a 'we.' A scapegoat also allows

an individual or group to battle against something external instead of acknowledging

something internal, such as dealing with international children's issues instead of

acknowledging a cultural and societal loss of reality. The three stages that Burke attributes to rebirth are pollution, purification, and redemption from which rebirth results. In order to analyze www.savethechildren.org Burke's rhetoric of rebirth will be used in conjunction with Baudrillard's concept of victim society. According to Burke, a major function of rhetoric is the ability to move people through these stages ending in rebirth or a new identity, which can be a sense of 'we'. (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 1985)

The first stage of pollution is a sense of guilt or of uncleanness, the individual or group carries a burden or stigma, the original sin that cannot be avoided. (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 1985) Burke argues that guilt "arises inevitably and 'in principle' from the nature of hierarchy" (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 1985:178). As relevant to the Save the Children website Americans are trying to rid themselves of the guilt associated with not only being a First World Country, but arguably one of, if not the strongest nation in the world. Inserting Baudrillard this pollution can also be seen in as feelings coming from our loss of reality. On some level the void registers, but instead of dealing with it we choose to scapegoat. In order to relieve this sense of pollution symbolic action is used, and the two identified by Burke are victimage and mortification, this work will focus on victimage.

Purification is the second stage of Burke's Rhetoric of Rebirth. The symbolic action of victimage is selecting or creating a scapegoat. This can be a group, individual, or even inanimate object onto which all of the negative feelings of guilt or loss are transferred and they are to suffer for the sins of the polluted group. "The greater the internal inadequacies, the more evils a rhetor is likely to 'load upon the back of 'the

enemy' or scapegoat" (ibid 1985:180-181). This idea of scapegoating complements

Baudrillard's concept of selecting a group or individual to be the victimized other in

order for their reality to be used by those who have none of their own. Where Burke and

Baudrillard disagree is on how a scapegoat is chosen. Burke argues that the scapegoat

presents a paradox due to the fact that it is selected because it is so similar to the

victimizer, yet during the purification it is ritually alienated and set apart. (ibid 1985)

When the scapegoat is purified through victimage (being made into a victim),

identification is achieved and they once again become part of the 'we.' For Baudrillard

however, the scapegoats or victims are chosen solely because of one thing: that they

have reality and the victimizers do not, and this division cannot be overcome or ignored.

Other aspects they may share in common are trivial compared to this. Regardless of this

disagreement both authors are united on one aspect of victimage: that the victims are

used to create an *us* versus *them* which for Burke results in identification and for

Baudrillard signals a victim society. The victimizers define themselves only in

opposition to the group that they define as 'other.' This need for a victimage dichotomy

according to Burke is a "terrifying fact…that you can never get people together except

when they have a goat in common" (ibid 1985:181).

From purification comes redemption, which culminates in some sort of feeling of

change whether it be identity or an overall feeling of finding one's true self. Another

aspect of redemption is the feeling of moving forward towards a goal. (ibid 1985) In the

context of www.savethechildren.org redemption is achieved by donating money so that

not only is the donator able to identify as a charitable person, but can also feel like they

have (in Burke's terms) moved towards a goal such as ending the suffering of children. For Burke this last stage of redemption ends in rebirth coming from the idea of finding 'one's true self.' Where Burke would argue that rebirth is a focus on self, Baudrillard would instead argue that rebirth is a focus on the victimized other. By focusing on the victimized other and absorbing the energy of their misery the victimizers do not have to deal with their own lack of reality. This is a quick fix, or to use a metaphor – placing a band aid on a broken bone. Scapegoating and participating in victimage does not imbue reality, it just shows the victimizers reality. The Save the Children website is an example of not only the rhetoric used, but the medium through which this cycle (that solves nothing) can be perpetrated. Where Burke calls this need for a scapegoat the damnation of the human race (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 1985), Baudrillard agrees by saying that the victimizers are "appealing to that lowest common denominator that is human misery" (Baudrillard [1996] 2008:134).

Connecting to these ideas of emotional victimizers is Patrick West. West criticizes a society that mourns for celebrities but is unmoved by local tragedy, who display their "caring credentials" (West 2004:53) by wearing pretentious bracelets to represent a cause, and the unfathomable amount of online petitions that not only muddy the waters of charity but desensitize people to giving overall. "Conspicuous compassion is a symptom of a fragmented society that has exchanged reason for emotion, action for gesture, cool reserve for mawkish sentimentality…In turn, conspicuous compassion can actually harm the vulnerable" (West 2004:65). By fragmented society I argue West is referring to a people without reality, a society that is searching for a way to form a 'we'

in order to combat the alienation that is built into their culture. According to West we (westerners) have become "atomized and lonely" (West 2004:2) and he (as well as Baudrillard) argues that we exist within a culture of victimization.

"The phenomenon of conspicuous compassion is intimately bound to the culture of victimhood. Thus it is unsurprising that websites should be used not just to campaign for the 'oppressed', but to mourn and emote for victims" (West 2004:45). This concept of websites being used as mediums for mourning reflects the victim mentality that is present within western society. Whether it be called 'culture of victimhood' or 'victim society' it means the same thing, that a victimized other is chosen to be a scapegoat and that without it western society has no outlet through which to vent its pain. West's ideas are relevant concerning the numerous corporate sponsors of Save the Children that are displayed on the website. Their logos and good deeds are promoted on the website for all to see along with a marketing blurb about the company. According to West, "[o]stentatious caring allows a lonely nation to forge new social bonds. Additionally, it serves as a form of catharsis…Such displays are sheer opportunism" (West 2004:4). Not only are these companies participating in identification rhetoric in order to promote themselves, but they are also participating in Burke's rebirth cycle. Though it seems that this is a win-win for everyone involved, West is correct in arguing that conspicuous compassion is more likely to harm the victims then help them.

The website www.savethechildren.org supports the organization Save the Children online. This website represents the branch of the Save the Children that

operates in the United States and allows readers to also link up with the international

alliance of Save the Children organizations that are present in other countries. On the site

Save the Children promotes itself as an organization that helps children in the United

States and abroad, and assists children worldwide in the event of an emergency.

An esthetically pleasing website, it is also easy to navigate, and is obviously

targeting the American middle class (and above). Some markers of this is its use of

vocabulary that requires at least a high school education, the items that are available in

the gift shop cater to the middle class lifestyle (such as on-the-go coffee mugs and golf

umbrellas), but most telling is that the lowest donation amount that is posted on the

website is fifty dollars (any lower than fifty and donor has to insert the amount

manually). Other ways to donate are: to give membership reward points from credit

cards, donate stock or mutual funds, and also present on the website are instructions for

how to donate large amounts while getting the best tax break. It is no coincidence that

this website caters to the upper classes. Because these are the people who participate the

most in victim society, they are the ones that embrace and embody westernized culture

and as such are the ones who are more likely to give.

An additional indicator of the website's audience is the careful visual choices

made throughout the entire website. There are no pictures of starving or injured children,

no requisite bowls of gruel or large swarms of flies that one associates with children in

need. This website relies heavily on visual aids to get its message across, yet makes sure

not to impose too much reality on its readers. The children are portrayed as victims

through the lengths this website goes to never visually depict them as such, a type of proof by negation. The children on the website are shown smiling, well fed, and active; and to show them otherwise would be an offense to the middle and upper class sensibilities. The only negative images of children are an occasionally demure or sad child; but even then the image is softened by the child being in the arms of its mother.

The use of language and word choice on Save the Children's website follows a similar pattern as the visual messages do. For example similar to the imagery used on the website, the word victim is most noticeable by its very absence. If the website is observed critically "victim" is the white elephant in the room that no one is willing to mention. The website designers' wording carefully describes the conditions the children face, but never labels the children themselves; they only state that the children are in need and giving is the only solution. Most of the literature present on the website relies on statistics that identify the area the children are in as hazardous, or the situation surrounding the children as dire, yet the children themselves or their day to day lives get little description. For example the literature on Mali in Africa describes how large percentages of adults did not attend school and live on less than two dollars a day, children are not immunized, pregnant women fail to get prenatal checkups, and the country has the sixth highest under-five mortality rate in the world. (Save the Children 2010) This use of statistics keeps the children's situation broad and impersonal enough so that truly upsetting potential donors can be avoided, yet objectively quantifies for readers that they are necessary to help these poor people (i.e., victim). The website seeks to incite pity in its readers and it does this by presenting the children's life as so

unconceivable yet still obscuring certain elements, such as children forced or sold into the sex industry to stave off poverty and positions the reader as the only one who can help.

The slogan on the homepage of the Save the Children website is "Creating lasting change for children in need in the United States and around the world."[5] The term "lasting change" was a very decisive word choice, yet, at the same time it contradicts what Save the Children does. Save the Children does not *save* the children, regardless of what the organization calls itself, a band-aid is merely put on a broken leg. Instead of solving the problems these children face, the organization is trying to alleviate the results; this is not how you set about creating "lasting change." By doing these stop measures the organization is reflecting the western culture and society from which it came.

In order to truly help these children, the focus should not be on teaching them to read; instead it should first be on meeting their basic physical needs. Yet, Save the Children cannot choose this path because if the conflict was resolved there would be no more victims, and they are crucial to the continuance of western culture. It could be argued that focusing on education is better than doing nothing, yet according to Baudrillard these are "the most pitiful of slogans: "Something should be done. We can't just do nothing." Yet to do something simply to avoid doing nothing has never been a

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[5] www.savethechildren.org, as of 2008

valid principle for action or liberty. It is, at the most, a form of self-pity and a way of absolving one's own powerlessness" (Baudrillard 1996:80).

The United Stated promotes the view that it is a utopia and one of the ways that it "proves" this is to claim to be a humanitarian nation (Give us your tired, your hungry, your poor...). www.savethechildren.org assists in advancing this ideal as well, both nationally and internationally. One of the ways the website (and the organization) does this is by not showing the hypocrisy that is present in America's humanitarianism. While the website makes sure not to show the children as victims, it also makes sure not to blame the United States for some of the international and even local incidents that lead to the children's situations. Under the heading "Where We Work" on the website and under the sub-heading "Middle-East and Eurasia" it is very telling that Save the Children does not promote its presence in either Afghanistan or Iraq, the countries the United States are currently taking military action against. Even though these countries are obviously in turmoil, Save the Children does not post this fact on their website, because if assistance was give to these children this would send mixed messages. According to Baudrillard, "it is this culture [western] which, the world over, fascinates those very people who suffer most at its hands, and does so through the deep, insane conviction that it has made all their dreams come true" (Baudrillard 1989:77). If Save the Children were to take a stance on these military conflicts they would be negating their careful rhetoric of identification.

The very idea of America being a utopia is a paradox "because a utopia realized is a paradoxical idea… America not only believes it is a utopia but everyone else now believes it too" (Baudrillard 1989:79 and 77). The website focuses (especially visually) on the international children that the organization helps, while marginalizing the children in need within America's borders. If the American children were to receive as much attention as the international children it would be proof that America is not the utopia it purports to be.

On the Save the Children website there is an option to be a sponsor for a specific child. Regardless of the fact that it is set up like a dating service (you can pick gender, age, nationality, and search through pictures until you find a child you deem suitable), there is an obvious difference between American children and international children, there are no pictures of the American children. There is a generalized picture of a female child reading a book and the caption "photos of U.S children do not appear on the Internet to protect their privacy."[6] This can be analyzed as an American child has rights that are not extended to other children, this I believe is true, however, this is actually about the fact that you can be a victim but not both an American and a victim. If you are American and a victimized other your picture will not even be shown because that would be proof that you exist; and that existence challenges the idea of America as a utopia. Victimized others are composed of reality and as an American these children have none

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[6] (http://sponsor.savethechildren.org/CGI-BIN/lansaweb?webapp=SPNPRD+webrtn=sponsorsrch+ml=LANSA:XHTML+partition=PR2+language=ENG+sid=17146420e76db48c057631e53aa9ea2dcfa60b64)

so they are of no use, they do not fulfill the role of victim properly. There is also no symbolic (or conspicuous) value in helping your own poor.

Aside from the conspicuousness built into the very act of giving, The Save the Children website contains an online gift shop where items that have the save the children name and logo can be purchased. The gift shop, like the website itself, is also geared towards the middle and upper classes. Many of the items for sale support the lifestyle of these two groups such as lapel pins, ties, golf umbrellas, silk scarves, and stainless steel travel mugs.[7] Most of the items for sale are made to be worn or placed on the body, and when worn correctly the Save the Children logo is conspicuously apparent. "[H]umanitarianism used to involve private and anonymous donations, this is quite different from today's public display of humanitarianism for the victims in Sarajevo, of AIDS, or any other calamity. Jimmy Carter, for example, wears his humanitarianism on his sleeve for all to see." (Mestrovic 1997:63) This "public display" is not only conspicuous but insulting to the people whose reality is being used to hock cheap merchandise. (Like Jimmy Carter, on your sleeve for all to see).

The idea of giving a gift that financially supports a charity on the surface seems appropriate, yet when the concept of conspicuousness is brought in this gift becomes inappropriate. By gifting a charitable product, censure is attached to the gift. It is similar to saying "since you did not contribute yourself I did in your name, and whenever anyone asks you where the gift came from you can tell them it was from me." Even if

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[7] (http://shop.savethechildren.org/savechild/default.asp?s_id=0)

the gifts are bought for someone who wants the gifts to support charity, conspicuousness is still present because they will be wearing the logo of Save the Children and promoting that if nothing else they are charitably conscious. If the items are purchased for personal use, then this is the most conspicuous use of all because the purchaser most show their participation in Save the Children, donating is not enough.

The gift shop is not the only place that conspicuousness can be found, in order to celebrate mother's day the website offers donors three different ways to donate that will not only honor their mother and send her a gift, but it would also help children and mothers worldwide. If 10 dollars is donated a personalized card (that is uniform on the outside) will be sent, for 50 dollars a silver bracelet handcrafted by "Navajo Native Americans" will be mailed, and for 100 dollars a rose plant that is named for the founder of Save the Children will be sent.[8] Not only are these conspicuous ways to give to your mother, but this is a holiday that was created and is mainly celebrated in the United States. So the special meaning attached to these specific donations are only one way, mother's day has no meaning for the women and children these donations would help.

The home page of the website[9] provides an interesting visual mix of smiling children, large eyed under-nourished children, celebrities, corporation logos, and promotion of the organization Save the Children itself. Though one cannot fault the organization for making it obvious that children are the focus, the largest and most prominent section of the home page describes the participation of celebrities such as

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[8] (http://www.savethechildren.org/email/idm-mothers-day-giyn-2008/mdgiyn-2008.html?WT.mc_id=080508_IDM_mgiyn_hp) As of May 1, 2008

[9] As of April 6, 2008

Melinda Gates and Randy Jackson. This conspicuous placement is telling in that it benefits both the celebrity and the organization. They both use the other to promote themselves and their activities, and by placing it on the home page (where the organization entices people to donate) Save the Children convinces people that though they may not be famous celebrities they can be recognized as like-minded humanitarians. According to Patrick West "[w]hat really drives their [celebrities] behaviour is the need to be seen to care. And they want to be seen displaying compassion because they want to be loved themselves" (West 2004:5).

Corporations that support Save the Children are also conspicuously placed on the website. Not only do their logos take turns cycling on and off of the home page (place of prominence), but there is a section dedicated solely to corporate support. On the website above the list of corporate partners and their prominent logos is the statement "We work with industry leaders, many of whom intend to make the Save the Children partnership a long-term investment…" (www.savethechildren.org 2008) The discerning reader should focus on the use of the word *many* as opposed to *all*. Using an alternative reading of the text can be used to argue that this was a purposeful word choice because the website could not print that all of these corporations would in fact contribute to this charity for any meaningful length of time without engaging in publishing falsehoods. Even though these corporate sponsors make claims towards altruism Save the Children is realistic about their sponsorship. An example of this entering of businesses into the realm of charity is discussed by Joshua Blackburn.

> Once upon a time, Britain was a society of conspicuous consumption. Today, as the hangover from Live 8 fades, it is compassion that we flaunt: celebrities launching charities ... charities creating fashions ... businesses which simply love to love. Our heritage of Victorian philanthropy has given way to a new culture of caring designed for the consumer age. For celebrities, consumers and businesses alike, charity is the "hot look" that everyone wants. We have created a conscience industry that is fast transforming our notion of charity into a lifestyle concept, conveniently packaged and highly desirable (Blackburn 2005:1).

In American culture charity has become as conveniently packaged as the cheese that Kraft produces and the coffee that Starbucks sells (both of which are listed as sponsoring Save the Children on the website).

Even though these companies do donate money and resources to save the children it is not a one way relationship, they benefit financially as well. By being recognized as corporate sponsors on www.savethechildren.org they are able to advertise their business or products on the website while at the same time be associated with the positive aspects of charity. They receive more business because they are seen as companies who care. On the website not only are the companies receiving accolades for their involvement with Save the Children, but each company has their website link posted and many of them even have promotional blurbs that have nothing to do with their charitable involvement. This type of "ostentatious 'caring' is but egotistical indulgence" (West 2004:65).

The Save the Children website is a prime example of a product of a victim society. It not only engages in victimizing tactics but it is a medium for others to participate as well. By victimizing or scapegoating the loss of reality that plagues western culture and society can be ignored in favor of focusing instead on those that are

labeled victims. This process is necessary because the "victim's" reality takes the place of the reality that western society and culture is lacking. Save the Children's website should not be seen as an isolated rhetorical tool; instead its place in victim society needs to acknowledged.

It could be argued that by engaging in more aggressive tactics, such as showing starving and injured children that the organization would be using guilt or manipulation to further its own ends. So the fact that Save the Children does not use these ploys shows that it does not victimize these children. This is false. Charity historically is built on guilt, pity, self-aggrandizement, and manipulation (altruism as well, however the incentives behind altruism many times come back to these negative motivations). Save the Children, just like any other charitable organization feeds into victimage, however by pretending otherwise they are being untrue to what their organization is built on: charity. Save the Children can not acknowledge the ideology surrounding the organization, or charity itself, because to do so would be to destroy the system it exists in. Save the Children, regardless of tactics, delivers the same results as other charities; the medium through which to create the victimized other.

Race Relations Within Charity

Another aspect of giving that is rarely explored is the race and power relations inherent within charity. When discussing giving little consideration is given to the question of who has the power, and who does not? Also, how is that power marked and signified?

One very visible and widespread way in which power is played out is within the racial hierarchy. The racial order is so encompassing and prevalent within Western society (especially America) that it can be used to predict everything from educational attainment to mortality rates. Race is, according to Dr. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, more than a simple "social construction" it is a social reality which produces real effects onto real people who are racialized as "white" and "non-white". (Bonilla-Silva 2003) Herein I will focus on how race relations intersect with the action of charitable donations and the conscious and unconscious use of tactics in order to perpetuate the racial status quo with Whites on top and people of color on the bottom.

The racial hierarchy produces tangible material, social, cultural, and even psychological benefits that are important to recognize in order to understand how giving is used as a form of dominance by Whites as a group. I argue that Whites participate in charity that "benefits" people of color, not to help them, but to keep them in a subordinate position and to support the stereotypes and prejudices already present in Western culture that are also used as tools of subjugation against people of color. The racial aspects of charitable giving will be discussed using works from the fields of Critical Race Theory and Postmodern Theory and where I argue they intersect.

Critical Race Theory and Postemotionalism have some overall ideas in common, as both of these schools of thought are critical by nature and work towards stripping away the ideologies and fictions that obscure the true framework that society is built on. Both factions work to expose the "truths" that are taken for granted by all, yet do not by

any means benefit all and because of this attempt to revoke or expose privilege these branches of sociology are accused of being nihilistic. Except this is not nihilism, just an unflinching look at what is real, what is disguised as real, and who is hiding the truth and what benefits come from this deceit.

One of the critical tenets of Critical Race Theory is that people of color have a unique perspective from the lower end of a racial hierarchy. Since they are not in power, and are many times adversely affected or neglected by those with the power they are able to see through and critique what is blindly accepted by others. Minorities are in a position to see the lies, the hypocrisy, and the subjugation that is central to not only race relations, but to the United States as a whole. Postmodernity also seeks to revoke "privilege" and to engage in discourse that is not centered on one particular group, and to instead bring in varying points of views and ideas because if there is a "truth" it cannot be the truth of only one group of people. Postmodernity supports "naming one's own reality" as Critical Race Theory does in its own way as well. Recognizing the privilege inherent in charity is important as well because at the core of charity, if you are even *able* to give you are in some way privileged and you are not just giving aid, you are interacting from a position of privilege (such as White privilege) that is many times cloaked in generosity.

Another tenet that Critical Race Theory and Postmodernity have in common is that the organization of society is not biological or predestined, but socially and historically created. For CRT this means that racism (though a fundamental part of the

United States' history, present, and probably sadly its future) is created by people and groups (especially those in power – Whites) not as it is argued naturally. Racism is fluid because race is not fixed, not absolute, and not objective, so when studying racism subjectivity is key. "One of the important characteristics of postmodern thought has been its emphasis on the contingent, indeterminate, and socially constructed nature of the categories with which we perceive and converse about the world." (Crenshaw and Gontanda et al. 1995: 440) Postmodernity also studies the social constructions which informs decisions and behaviors of people. The use, presentation, and rhetoric of race and racism is an excellent example for a postmodern analysis because of anything is "contingent" it is race.

In order to better show the role that race plays in charitable giving two different types of charities will be analyzed and contrasted. This work will apply Critical Race and Postmodern Theory to a total of four charities, two that are geared towards White donors and two that focus more on soliciting African American donors. Both of these charities focus on improving or relieving the situations of people of color in physical need (such as starvation, drought, or eminent physical danger) and other situations such as poverty and lack of educational resources. In order to make the analysis as relevant as possible, of the charities picked one of each group use the idea of Christianity in order to promote their charity, and all four charities donate funds and aid domestically (United States) and overseas.

By comparing and contrasting these racially different (in terms of administration staff and displayed donors) organizations I seek to support the argument that when there is less racial differences between the giver and the receiver that the charitable gift lacks the unseen dominance that I argue is present in charity that is given from Whites to people of color. When the "gift" of charity is given within the racial hierarchy I argue it results in perpetuating the hierarchy and benefits the givers (Whites) in the long run more than it benefits the receivers (people of color). I seek to discuss the dominant narratives present in both types of charities and how they differ in approach, audience, visuals, rhetoric, and their place within the racial "social reality". These narratives and presentations of their (the charities and the donors) perceived reality are important to dissect because only then can the power and racial structures be exposed and critically examined.

It is important to recognize where the information is coming from, who the intended audience is, what gains are received by the donors (I argue they are substantial), and who these gains are at the expense of. I posit that there is more prestige and tangible benefits to be had from White to Minority giving than there is to Minority to Minority giving. More importantly, I argue that when the giving is out-group as opposed to in-group that these benefits do not just fall like manna from the sky, that Minorities pay the costs of these gains for Whites and this form of charity is just another tool used to keep people of color dominated. Where the Minority charities focuses on building and giving back to the Minority community, I argue that the White charities'

main focus is on the donors, not those in need of charity. In essence, the receivers of charity are paying to receive the gift of charity.

It is rare that giving of any form is discussed outside of social psychology, cultural anthropology, and economic sociology, even more so using Postmodernity and Critical Race Theory (postmodernism many times shies away from connections with race) to discuss charitable giving. I am breaking new ground; connecting race with postmodernity and charitable participation is original to my work. Supporting this new concept is the work of theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, Thorstein Veblen, and Stjepan Mestrovic and multiple authors and concepts within Critical Race Theory such as Joe Feagin, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Wendy Leo Moore, and Derrick Bell. I am asking new questions and making new connections. I am bringing to the forefront power structures that work within racism to perpetuate the white racial frame and hides the racism (even if it is unconscious) beneath the veneer of generosity. Both Postmodernity and Critical Race Theory support the idea that symbols are highly important (because they are so powerful and easy to dismiss or deny) and the fact that regardless of purpose the results are what is most relevant. They both also deal with the manipulation of emotions (especially false ones), or the exploitation of symbols for personal and group gain and the recognition of inherent power structures.

I will explore the material reality of charity and bring to the forefront the systemic nature of racism present in giving. Charity gives Whites a moral foundation upon which to build their belief in white supremacy. So, while they are patting

themselves on the backs and congratulating each other on being a good person they are in actuality oppressing Blacks and other people of color and reifying the stereotypes of the poor and helpless minorities that always expect and need a handout. These are the same stereotypes that they then turn and use as a justification of the oppression of people of color, and (for the uses of this work) Blacks especially. The charities that will be analyzed as White centered charities are The National Christian Foundation (www.nationalchristian.com) and Save the Children (www.savethechildren.org), and The African American Self-Help foundation (www.AASHF.org) and The National Black United Fund (www.nbuf.org) will be analyzed as Minority (specifically African American) charities.

From Critical Race Theory Dr. Joe Feagin's work *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, & Future Reparations* is critical in understanding the racial and racist underpinnings of America. (America will be the example of western culture throughout the rest of the work as all four example charities are based in America and around American ideology and racism, America can easily be thought of as being at the forefront of racism within Western society. America may not have done racism first, but America does it better.) According to Feagin: "In the United States racism is structured into the rhythms of everyday life. It is lived, concrete, advantageous for whites, and painful for those who are not white… Every part of the life cycle, and most aspects of one's life, are shaped by the racism that is integral to the foundation of the United States." (Feagin 2001:2) Feagin argues that racism was present at the very beginning of the United States and is still present today at the very core of America (or Amerikkka as

Dr. Bonilla-Silva sometimes refers to it in his writings) and all of its institutions. What

he labels as "systemic racism" is highly relevant to analyzing charitable organizations

and the symbols present within the interaction of charity.

> Charities and the people that participate in them are entrenched in systemic racism, as are all organizations within the United States. Systemic racism includes the complex array of antiblack practices, the unjustly gained political-economic power of whites, the continuing economic and other resource inequalities along racial lines, and the white racist ideologies and attitudes created to maintain and rationalize white privilege and power… the economy, politics, education, religion, the family – reflects the fundamental reality of systemic racism. (Feagin 2001:6)

Feagin argues that attitudes, institutions, and white ideology is created, preserved, and

spread solely in order to continue white dominance. Charities are not exempt from this; I

argue they are a way for Whites to psychologically offset what Feagin calls "unjust

enrichment." (Feagin 2001:18) Unjust enrichment is when one party benefits at the

expense of another party and is obligated to provide restitution. Feagin subsumes this

under systemic racism by focusing on the Black experience and instead focuses on what

he refers to as "unjust impoverishment" (Feagin 2001:18) He is referring to the fourteen

generations of exploitation of African Americans and their labor, the benefits of which

were taken by Whites. When participating in charitable giving Whites can be seen as

seeking to repay a debt that they owe African Americans, but the problem is they are

giving a few dollars and a bit of food to make up for fourteen generations of racism and

disenfranchisement. Aid after the fact does not erase White responsibility, and the

largest problem with this form of *scrap reparations* is that Whites are still benefiting

from unjust enrichment and systemic racism is still in effect and continuing unjust impoverishment. Slapping a band-aid on a broken leg does no good unless the break is not only recognized, but healed.

Another aspect of Feagin's work that is highly relevant to charity is his concept of "alienated racist relations". Feagin argues that Whites have a large stake in systemic racism, regardless if they acknowledge it or not, and when Whites align themselves to a "White" identity they are also binding themselves to the "white racial class." (Feagin 2001:19) Since by its very nature systemic racism is built around and perpetuates unequal relationships, Blacks and other people of color are effectively "othered" or labeled as non-white. By labeling African Americans and other minorities as receivers, White charities are creating alienated relationships, removing any possibility of equality or respect within the relationship of giver and receiver. Within charities that perpetuate systemic racism there is no commonality expressed between the giver and receiver, only the receiver's need and situation foiled against your *generosity*. "These socially imbedded racist relations distort what could be engaging and egalitarian relationships into alienated relationships. The system of racism categorized and divides human beings from each other and thus severely impedes the development of common consciousness and solidarity." (Feagin 2001:20)

According to many proponents of Critical Race Theory (Feagin included) the most problematic aspect of contemporary racism is the fact that it can be so subtle. In the past, racism was blatant. There was no effort to pretend otherwise because it was so commonplace. Now, racism has become "color-blind" meaning that White privilege and

the racism that keeps it in place has become much more covert and harder to pin down.

This concept is discussed in length by Dr. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. According to Dr.

Bonilla-Silva:

> Compared to Jim Crow racism, the ideology of color blindness seems like "racism lite." Instead of relying on name calling (niggers, spics, chinks), color-blind racism otherizes softly ("these people are human, too") instead of proclaiming God placed minorities in the world in a servile position, it suggests they are behind because they do not work hard enough…Yet this new ideology has become a formidable political tool for the maintenance of the racial order. Much as Jim Crow racism served as the glue for defending a brutal and overt system of racial oppression in the pre-Civil Rights era, color-blind racism serves today as the ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system in the post-Civil Rights era. (Bonilla-Silva 2003:3)

Bonilla-Silva, like Feagin and other CRT theorists, attributes much of the continuation

of racism to its institutionalized and historical nature. Racism is not easily nailed down

because it is fluid and able to adapt to whatever political and social norms are present at

the time. Color-blind racism is just the current adaptation spouted by Whites in order to

distance them from the "unfortunate" racism of the past yet, still reap the benefits of

White privilege.

According to EBS color-blind racism "otherizes" minorities and places them in a

position where they know racism is being used against them, but the racism is so

cleverly hidden that to call attention to it is to be labeled "hostile" or a "troublemaker" or

to be accused of "playing the race card." This otherization is just as damaging as the old

in-your-face racism of the past, but the salt to the wound is that now Whites won't even

acknowledge it is being done. "Yet, color-blind racism is a curious racial ideology.

Although it engages, as all ideologies do, in "blaming the victim," it does so in a very indirect, "now you see it, now you don't" style that matches the character of the new racism." (Bonilla-Silva 2003:25) This "otherization" is one of the most blatant tools of racism present in charities (this is similar to Feagin's concept of alienated racist relations). By categorizing Blacks and other peoples of color as the other such as "the victim" or "the needy" Whites are instantly able to distance themselves away from Minorities *and* the results placed on them by racism. EBS argues that multiple racial ideologies (abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism) are used in order to keep the racial structure intact and to justify the racial status quo. (Bonilla-Silva 2003)

Derrick Bell is another CRT theorist whose work is helpful in critiquing charities, specifically his theory of interest convergence which can be broken up into two rules.

Rule 1:
The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when the interest converges with the interests of whites in policy-making positions. This convergence is far more important for gaining relief than he degree of harm suffered by blacks or the character of proof offered to prove that harm.

Rule 2:
Even when interest-convergence results in an effective racial remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at the point that policymakers fear the remedy policy is threatening the superior societal status of whites, particularly those in the middle and upper classes. (Bell 2004:69)

Basically what Bell is arguing is that there is only change when it benefits Whites to make those changes. An example Bell gives in his book is that of the desegregation of the schools in the 1950's. This was done, he argues not because Whites all of a sudden realized that racism and segregation was wrong, but because the United States was receiving too much bad press abroad concerning the hypocrisy of saying it was a free nation fighting for freedom against Russia when it subjected African Americans to constant racism and segregation. (Bell 2004) When segregation and racism was used against America as a PR weapon by those they considered enemies, Whites were quick to implement *very* public changes to its race policy and quickly broadcast this information abroad. "Looking back to that time, it is likely that not since the Civil War had the need to remedy racial injustice been so firmly aligned with the country's vital interests at home and abroad." (Bell 2004:67)

Bell's interest convergence concept is relevant to charitable giving in that charities are created by Whites to disseminate funds and aid to Minorities when it benefits them to do so. Whether it is a way to conspicuously show their generosity and to gain praise for it, or to unconsciously buy into the othering of Minorities and keep systemic racism intact, or even to gain the wage of whiteness (an idea originally conceived by W.E.B. DuBois and included into CRT by theorists such as Feagin and Bonilla-Silva).

According to W.E.B. Dubois' work the "wage of whiteness" refers to the phenomenon that "[T]he white group of laborers, while they receive a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public

deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. (DuBois 1965) The resulting racism drove such a wedge (alienated race relations) between Whites and Blacks that the animosity and distrust that this practice generated is still very much in play today. The minor differences between the races were exaggerated in order to create and "us" versus "them" mentality (similar to Freud's idea of narcissism of minor differences)(Freud 1961) to keep lower class Blacks and Whites from coming together and being able to make demands on White elites that were exploiting both groups for their own material gain.

All whites were given a sense of superiority over Blacks regardless of other factors such as class, gender, or income. This psychological benefit should not be downplayed because it allowed whites to buy into the ideology of racism and still today impacts not only race relations, but Blacks' psyche as well.

> In several recent studies many black respondents have indicated in one way or another that they feel like "outsiders" in the United States. The omnipresent reality of modern racism generates this feeling. "Race" is constructed not just in white minds, but in the ways whites still regularly and routinely interact with blacks across this society. When a black person enters an organization where whites are present in large numbers or walks down a street where whites are commonplace, race is seen and created in those specific places by recurring white animosities, images, proclivities, and actions. Whites, in an ongoing, lifelong series of interactions, determine who is "black" and how that blackness is treated. This, in turn, affects how black women and men see themselves. In interactions with whites, blacks are often excluded from full human recognition, from important social positions, and from significant societal rewards. Recurring discrimination can bring a significant psychological toll. (Feagin 2001:191-192)

The rejection of something as basic as humanity is not something that Whites feel, but something that overtime is actually imposed upon and then internalized by Blacks themselves, which is unendingly harmful. Especially if it these messages are delivered in something disguised as charitable aid.

This idea that Blacks feel like "outsiders" in a country that many of them were not only born in, but have ties as far back as fourteen generations is described more in-depth by Dr. Wendy Leo Moore in her work *Reproducing Racism: White Space, Elite Law Schools, and Racial Inequality*. According to Moore, "racialized space is one mechanism of institutional racism through which white power and privilege are reproduced in often tacit and relatively invisible ways." (Moore 2008:25) As Moore discusses it racialized space, or specifically white space, has its foundation in the history and legacy of racist exclusion of people of color which resulted in Whites gaining economic, political, and more importantly having the sole ability to create and disseminate ideals, norms, and values which assisted in the creation of the White racial frame. (Moore 2008:27)

From these racist spaces (such as government, corporations, elite colleges and universities) come the policies, practices and everyday ideologies that shape the everyday experiences of all Americans including African Americans, even though these institutions are extremely over-representative of Whites and their racist ideologies. Other race scholars that have picked up on this idea also discuss what they refer to as the "hidden curriculum" (Eric Margolis 2001) or message present in these racist spaces. An example of this are large conspicuous portraits of Whites where there are no (or if

present, very few or small) portraits of minorities, and if people of color are visually

present it is in a subordinate position to Whites. "They are an immediate visual signifier

that one has entered a historically white space" (Moore 2008:37) ….and if you are not

White, the message sent is you are not welcome. This idea of imagery signifying racial

exclusion also carries over into the realm of giving where many of the websites of the

larger and more popular charities contain pictures of Whites as the shareholders, donors,

and those lending a helping hand, while people of color are displayed solely as the

destitute and as "victims."

Another theorist who discuses emotions being used in a solely conspicuous and

disconnected manner is Dr. Stjepan Mestrovic in his work *Postemotional Society*.

According to Mestrovic emotion is a "luxury item" that is disconnected from action and

is conspicuously performed. (Mestrovic 1997) Influenced by Veblen, postemotionalism

refers to the current state of society where emotions are disconnected from action which

makes emotions useless, and because they are useless people must demonstrate that they

do in fact have emotions to conspicuously show that they can afford the luxury of having

something so useless. In order to better explain this concept, Mestrovic refers to one of

the characters in the work of Tolstoy whose behavior perfectly clarifies this complicated

idea.

This postemotional state that society currently inhabits highlights the "synthetic,

quasi-emotions" which are the basis for "widespread manipulation by self, others, and

the culture industry as a whole." (Mestrovic 1997:xi) People have sympathy, but no

empathy because empathy contains an obligation to make a connection with those in need, or even more problematic, to actually act in a meaningful way, and postemotionalism curbs any such behaviors. Due to postemotionalism when faced with human suffering people donate to a charity (which creates a disconnect between the giver and the receiver, a middle man so that the taint of need is not smeared upon the giver) and once the check clears their obligations is done, their conscience cleared, and the suffering all but forgotten, until they drink out of their coffee mug with the conspicuous charity logo on it for all to see and to praise. Even then the receiver of the charity is not the focus; instead it is the giver who has skillfully manipulated an act of generosity into a way to gain admiration.

The two websites that will be used to demonstrate what this work refers to as *White centered charitable websites*[10] are www.nationalchristian.com and www.savethechildren.org. The website www.nationalchristian.com will be used to discuss charities as 'white spaces' and www.savethechildren.org will be discussed more in terms of conspicuousness. Both of these websites will be discussed in terms of use of symbols and rhetoric in order to transmit the cultural racism that is systemic in the United States and Western (white) culture. If the racism is perpetuated consciously or unconsciously does not matter, the results are what is relevant because these results are what affect Blacks and other people of color.

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[10] Term coined in this dissertation

The National Christian Foundation is the 29th largest charity in the United States and is responsible for raising over $464 million in 2006 alone.[11] Needless to say this makes it an influential and large charity that attracts a great deal of donors and funds, so how they present themselves as an organization, charitable donors and receivers, and the concept and act of charity overall reaches a great deal of people. Just by browsing quickly through the website it becomes evident quite quickly that this website is a White space. The pictures of the donors, staff, and aid workers are overwhelmingly of White individuals with not one donor as a person of color.[12]

By not having adequate or well positioned visuals of people of color in positions of power such as donors or administrative staff this charity becomes a White space where Blacks and other people of color are not comfortable donating, and are unable to see themselves and their needs represented in a positive manner by this charity. By setting up a visual racist dichotomy (givers as White, receivers as people of color) this charity is not only reifying systemic racism but advertising it as well. "The perpetuation of systemic racism requires an intertemporal reproducing not only of racist institutions and structures but also of the ideological apparatus, which includes the racist ideology and its accompanying racist attitudes and images." (Feagin 2001:106) Racist images are crucial to recognize because unlike words they are not as easily discernable, images are more subtle and influence on a more sub-conscious level. Culture is another more covert influence through which racism is effectively transmitted.

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[11] (http://www.nationalchristian.com/web/1/media_newsroom.asp?a=157&b=219)
[12] (http://www.nationalchristian.com/web/1/stories_of_generosity.asp?c=715&p=220)

> [C]ulture - including, for example, the media and an individual's parents, peers, and authority figures-transmits certain beliefs and preferences. Because these beliefs are so much a part of the culture, they are not experienced as explicit lessons. Instead, they seem part of the individual's rational ordering of her perceptions of the world. The individual is unaware, for example, that the ubiquitous presence of a cultural stereotype has influenced her perception that blacks are lazy or unintelligent. Because racism is so deeply ingrained in our culture, it is likely to be transmitted by tacit understandings. (Crenshaw and Gotanda et al. 1995:238)

Adjective use is another of these "transmitted tacit understandings". On

www.nationalchristian.com there is a prominent scrolling banner showing different

messages matched with images in order to encourage people to donate. Out of the ten

revolving messages only three show images of Whites and the rest are people of color.

The difference between the messages present for the images of Whites versus the images

of people of color is remarkable. When there is an image of a person of color directly

underneath in larger sized font and printed in a different color in order to stand out are

terms such as "hope to the hopeless", "street children", and "the disabled" all referring to

people of color. When the three images of Whites are shown words such as

"opportunity", "privacy", and "efficiency" are given visual prominence. So right away

the connection is made that people of color are disabled in some way, in poverty and

living on the street and hopeless while Whites are efficient, have opportunities, and their

privacy is important. This begs the question if they are so hopeless why are you trying to

convince people to help them? Hopeless means "incapable of redemption or

improvement"[13] Why use such a negative word and connotation to describe a person of

color? According to Feagin:

> For many whites terms like *gangs, ghetto, slum, the poor, the economically disadvantaged, welfare recipients, violent criminals, and drug pushers* symbolize black Americans (and sometimes other people of color). A white person, including a media commentator, can use these terms to target or denigrate black Americans but still appear unprejudiced, at least to other whites. Even in cases where certain color words and phrases were not crafted as intentionally racist, they can reinforce antiblack thinking. (Feagin 2001:120)

Another interesting fact to note is that in the revolving banner only two out of the

seven people of color are smiling instead of looking hungry or dejected, and of the two

smiles one is because the donors liquidated their assets in order to "send smiles to street

children" and the other smiling person of color is amputated from the waist down.

Whereas the three images of Whites are of a smiling child, a volunteer, and two young

me sharing knowledge from the bible. The contrast to how Whites are portrayed and

how people of color are portrayed is striking. If a person of color is the central image

they are either unsmiling, "hopeless," or extremely handicapped, there is no doubt that

they are being portrayed as victims for the consumption of White donors. Even when the

people of color are smiling it is because White people "helped" them, they are not even

allowed to own their happiness. Baudrillard is right; givers need their ("victims") reality

in order to define their own. Whites get to not only interpret people of color experiences

as Feagin argues, but it goes further that that they seek to manage their very emotions as

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[13] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hopeless

well. This response is a perfect example of what Mestrovic refers to as a "postemotional society" which according to him "introduces a new form of bondage, this time to carefully crafted emotions." (Mestrovic 1997:xi) Whites get to not only construe people of color's emotions and use these constructed emotions for their own psychological gain, but they do this without conferring with the very people whose emotions these allegedly are.

This White centricity makes it clear that the receivers (people of color) are not the focus of the website or of the charity. Most of the website is dedicated to either praising the present and past donors, or seeking to convince people that they should join this exclusive and noble organization, and the website ensures that givers needs will always be met (it seems that their needs trump those of the receivers). "Simplicity. Creativity. Efficiency. These are just a few of the many benefits for donors that choose to give through The National Christian Foundation (NCF). We work with professional advisors – financial planners, CPAs, attorneys, and others – to enable your clients to give in tax-smart ways and make an eternal difference with their giving." [14] This spotlight on the ease and the financial and tax aspects of giving is echoed throughout the charity. One White donor, Eric Swartz, is quoted as saying "I think most Christian donors today are very busy and would love a 'one stop shop' to give through." [15] This statement sounds more like a bank commercial than a charity. What happened to the sacrifice and effort in charity? The focus is more on "Innovative and tax-smart ways

[14] http://www.nationalchristian.com/web/Professional_Advisors/home_page.asp?b=3
[15] http://www.nationalchristian.com/web/1/stories_of_generosity.asp?c=715&p=220

to give"[16] and less on those who don't have the convenience of clean water, let alone a

"one stop shop." The website is even generous enough to provide a list of different

assets and items of wealth that they accept as donation payments (like a store that tells

you which credit cards they accept). Some of the more interesting forms are royalties,

copyrights, artwork, precious metals, 401Ks, IRAs, pension plans, Limited Partnerships,

Limited Liability Companies, or Sub-chapter S corporations, and publicly traded

securities that may have sale restrictions.[17] These assets are only held by those with

accumulated wealth or position, and most of these people are White, so again donors are

tacitly understood as being upper-class White. Honestly, who else has precious metals

and royalties to donate and how conspicuous is this list?

The contrast to how whites are portrayed and how people of color are portrayed

is striking. If a person of color is the central image they are either unsmiling, "hopeless,"

or extremely handicapped, there is no doubt that they are being portrayed as victims for

the predatory consumption of white donors. Even when the people of color are smiling it

is because white people "helped" them, they are not even allowed to own their

happiness. Whites get to not only interpret people of color experiences (as Feagin

argues) but it goes even further in that they seek to manage their very emotions as well.

This is a perfect example of the emotions that Mestrovic refers to as "postemotional"

which according to him "introduces a new form of bondage, this time to carefully crafted

emotions" (Mestrovic; 1997:xi).

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[16]http://www.nationalchristian.com/web/Individuals_and_Families/innovative_gifts.asp?a=312&b=1
[17]http://www.nationalchristian.com/web/Individuals_and_Families/innovative_gifts.asp?a=312&b=1

I connect Mestrovic's *Postemotional Society* with Veblen's more well-known concept of conspicuousness. Though Mestrovic's work is also influenced by David Riesman, George Ritzer, and Jean Baudrillard; Veblen is significant as well. "Harking back to Thorstein Veblen's notion of the useless and wasteful as prestigious… postemotionalism assumes that almost all aspects of contemporary social life revel in the useless, in luxury… such that a great deal of social life operates on the modernist model of art for art's sake" (Mestrovic 1997:27). According to Mestrovic emotion is a "luxury item" that is disconnected from action and is conspicuously performed. ((Mestrovic 1997:55)

Postemotionalism refers to the current state of society where emotions are disconnected from action which makes emotions useless, and because they are useless people must demonstrate that they do in fact have emotions in order to conspicuously show that they can afford the luxury of having something so useless. In order to better explain this concept, Mestrovic refers to one of the characters in the work of Tolstoy whose behavior perfectly clarifies this complicated idea. "Tolstoy made the often-cited depiction in one of his novels of an upper-class lady who wept for the wretched during a play while she continued to treat with contempt her wretched servant who was shivering in the cold outside the theater. She could afford to feel useless pity." (Mestrovic 1997:55)

This idea of "useless pity" is central to critiquing charities. It can be used to support the argument that givers react for themselves, not for those in need. So, the sympathy is not for the receivers but from the givers through the receivers back to

themselves, and when they do give the charity is so conspicuous that it is as empty as if no action had been taken at all. This postemotional state that society currently inhabits highlights the "synthetic, quasi-emotions" which are the basis for "widespread manipulation by self, others, and the culture industry as a whole." (Mestrovic 1997:xi) People have sympathy, but are to predatory to engage in actual empathy because empathy contains an obligation to make a connection with those in need, or even more problematic, to actually act in a meaningful way, and postemotionalism curbs any such behaviors.

> If humanitarianism used to involve private and anonymous donations, this is quite different from today's public displays of humanitarianism for the victims in Sarajevo, of AIDS, or any other calamity. Jimmy Carter, for example, wears his humanitarianism on his sleeve for all to see…each and every post-emotion holds the potential for such public display. (Mestrovic 1997:63-34)

Due to postemotionalism when faced with human suffering people donate to a charity (which creates a disconnect between the giver and the receiver, a middle man so that the taint of actual need is not smeared upon the giver) and once the check clears their obligations is done, their conscience cleared, and the suffering all but forgotten, until they drink out of their coffee mug with the conspicuous charity logo on it for all to see and to praise. Even then the receiver of the charity is not the focus; instead it is the barbaric giver who has skillfully manipulated an act of generosity into a way to gain not only admiration (conspicuous), but fulfill their need to obtain without performing anything as "irksome" as labor. (Veblen [1899] 1994)

Similar to the situation in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, the island of Haiti was devastated by a 7.0 earthquake on January 12th and following this devastation, actors, musicians, and even former presidents of the United States flocked to Haiti as the new "hot" cause. Along with the rampant damage, death, and injuries; another similarity between Haiti and New Orleans is that the majority of those affected were in fact Black. Once again charity shines a light on the racial hierarchy at work as the island was flooded with White reporters filming and interviewing Blacks, and White politicians being filmed walking through the devastation; while planes filled with aid such as food and medical supplies were diverted from the island due to lack of landing space. "[S]hocking and crazy that planes with lifesaving equipment were diverted while, for instance, Edward G. Rendell, the governor of Pennsylvania, was able to land in a private plane in Port-au-Prince…" (Carvajal 2010: 2) Flights such as the World Food Program, United Nations, and Medecins Sans Frontieres were not allowed to land (ibid), yet former president Bill Clinton was not only allowed to land, but given a guided tour so that he could voice his disappointment in front of journalists with the lack of progress so far, not realizing that visits like his were one of the main deterrent for progress.

Even evacuations of Haitians listed as in critical care to hospitals in the US have been stopped because "some states are unwilling to allow entry for Haitian nationals for critical care." (Candiotti and Streitfeld 2010:1) Reasons for rejecting the critically wounded vary from financial, to states being "at a current peak from winter tourism and seasonal residence migration." (ibid) So, in other words, those that are about to die cannot receiver life saving treatment because States such as Florida are filled with

tourists who might potentially require medical care. However Florida officials claim that they are still "committed to assisting Haitian earthquake victims." (ibid) Just not if it costs too much, interferes with tourism, or as I argue, brings an influx of poor Blacks within their borders.

Politicians and journalists are not the only ones cashing in on Haitian's suffering, celebrities are quickly making up for lost time. Celebrities such as Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, Lance Armstrong, Alyssa Milano, supermodel Gisele Bundchen, Madonna, and Taylor Swift all have very publically donated money to the Haitian cause. However, the celebrities that are true reflections of our postemotional culture are those such as Oprah, Usher, P. Diddy, Larry King, Ben Stiller and others whose main format of support is urging their fans to donate money to Haiti instead of donating their own. Even though these celebrities are some of the wealthiest in their industries they would rather publically be seen as pleading for assistance than reach into their own pockets.

The most recent celebrities to donate are Sandra Bullock and Tiger Woods both of whom are in the middle of adultery ridden and very public divorces and could use some positive news coverage. Some celebrities such as Lindsay Lohan, Russell Simmons, and Paris Hilton are simply "tweeting" their sorrow online encouraging others to assist those in need. Other celebrities are auctioning off used clothes, writing songs (U2), and hosting MTV telethons (George Clooney). Though all of these celebrities and their actions listed above may seem helpful, when compared to the actions of Haitian native and singer Wyclef Jean who used his connections to raise over $3 million dollars

and then physically went to Haiti and helped pulled dead bodies out of the rubble without photographers documenting his every move (Goddard 2010), these other celebrities' actions are revealed as self aggrandizing. Wyclef Jean was helping Haiti before the earthquake and he has pledged to continue, whereas many of these other celebrities will drift to the next disaster and forget Haiti altogether once the cameras turn off.

"Modern charities have inadvertently helped minimize our participation in our communities and created an apathetic, uninvolved society, one that engages in activism by autograph and forfeits the responsibility for improvements to a special class of bureaucrats and movie stars." (Harris 2003:295) The type of *conspicuous charity* (and the actions associated with it) that has been described in this work not only damages the idea of giving as a whole, but also giving as action. Within our culture the concept of charity has been relegated to a public relations move, we no longer have a connection with the beneficiaries or the results of our charity. When charity becomes a commodity to be consumed it creates a cultural idea that charity and philanthropy is the responsibility of the wealthy and socially powerful. Due to this giving loses not only its meaning, but its purpose and integrity. "[T]he problem with today's feel-good philanthropy is not that celebs are using their frame to draw attention to important issues. The real issue is that the solutions they're promoting are small and likely to be ineffectual, ephemeral, or both." (Wood 2007:26)

Participation in charitable giving can be traced throughout history by all groups and classes. Yet this work focuses on the giving of the socially powerful in order to make the argument that their participation can influence the giving of the rest of society. Using Riesman's concept of social character types this work focused on two separate groups of leaders; the Robber Barons that were defined as inner-directed whose wealth made them socially powerful and contemporary celebrities, defined as other-directed, whose media popularity makes them the current socially powerful group. Continuing to use Riesman's theories to show a linear progression of conspicuous charitable giving by the socially powerful within our culture, I argue that if our culture continues to participate in this simulacra charity, this self-serving giving, then the final social character the 'Indifferent' will emerge as the dominant personality. Indifferents view as spectators, they are defined by their apathy, they are not emotionally involved nor have any enthusiasm, no genuine involvement. To be an indifferent social character you believe that no action you could perform would make a difference so you choose to not even participate.

Even though Riesman in 1961 argued that indifferents were present in society, I argue that as of right now they are not our cultural leaders, and this is a significant distinction, especially in terms of charity. If, as I posit, our society emulates the actions and behaviors of our cultural leaders (currently celebrities) for our leaders to continue to spiral deeper and deeper into the other-directed performance of charity apathy would result. Our culture is on the cusp of this transition now, but we have not yet reached this point of cultural lethargy concerning giving. If the cultural leaders become indifferents,

especially in great numbers, this characteristic of indifference will become the norm. Currently our society emulates our cultural leaders' simulacra giving, yet giving, motives notwithstanding, still occurs. Once indifference is reached even this giving will cease, and giving of any type will not replace it.

CHAPTER IV

GIVING

According to the arguments made by Arjun Appadurai, there is a trend whether consciously or unconsciously, "to romanticize small-scale societies… [and] marginalize and underplay the calculative, impersonal and self-aggrandizing features of non-capitalist societies." (Appadurai 1986:11) From these tendencies arise an unnecessary and many times inaccurate dichotomy between gifts and commodities. Many times a gift is linked to altruism or self-sacrifice and a commodity, or 'object of economic value' is described as being self-serving and utilitarian. However a gift can, (and many times does) have multiple purposes, and utility does factor into gift giving. By separating these two concepts and labeling them as opposing, understanding is lost, and the relationship between them can never truly be explored. Instead of trying to definitively claim where the boundary is between a gift and a commodity, instead academically it is much more useful to talk about where a gift and a commodity intersect, overlap, and combine. Giving, whether it be gifts or commodities, cannot be approached as one or the other, instead it needs to be recognized that giving overall is fluid and situational.

When discussing the commodity like aspects of gifts many times this topic is relegated to economics or economical anthropology, and the subject suffers by not being put into a cultural sociological context. By putting the idea of self-serving gifting in less economical terms and instead turning the topic towards multiple examples within sociology, anthropology, and even archeology, the true nature of the gift can be seen because in these fields, unlike economics, the gift is placed in context and the results and

multi-faceted motivations can be seen. By acknowledging and highlighting the concept of commodity present in gifting in this work I take this economic idea and instead of denying or subverting it, I see it as a way to bring out the ideas of self-interest and self-benefit that is many times glossed-over in anthropological works, but is very present in actual giving.

I argue that a gift can be used to 'purchase' status or power of some sort, to solidify a claim to social status, or to give access to social networks that otherwise might not have been had. A gift can even buy honor, a clear conscience, or quiet worries about the afterlife. Regardless of the self-serving benefits that can be had from gifting this is not to deny the emotional, cohesive, and cultural aspects of gifts, but instead to bring a different conceptual framework to the notion of the gift and to the idea of giving overall. In this work I use examples of gifting to connect how a gift can be interpreted as culturally and socially cohesive (as Mauss [1950] 1990 argues) yet at the same time be self-serving and many times conspicuous.

Current discussions of gifts within academia usually attribute either non-utilitarian or utilitarian aspects to giving, but only a few scholars recognize the presence of both aspects. The Non-utilitarian approach usually taken by cultural anthropologists emphasizes the importance of human relationships and emotions that are associated and linked with gifts and giving. The concept of a 'genuine gift' which is motivated only by altruism is usually present, and reciprocity is seen as destroying the true nature of a gift. The Utilitarian approach, usually held by economists and many times economic

anthropologists, uses the view of actors making rational and purposeful decisions concerning reciprocity, equity, and material payoff. In this view context must be addressed when discussing a gift or gift practice. The focus of this work is on the utilitarian aspects within cultural anthropological examples because I feel that not only do the varied cultural aspects of reciprocity need to be examined, but many times the reciprocity aspect of a gift is what enables the actual social cohesion.

In order to discuss some of the different social relationships (instances) that gifts and gift giving behavior can be found in, Alan Page Fiske's four elementary forms of human relations will be used. Gifts are not universal, nor are the situations in which they are given and exchanged. Alan Page Fiske created these four models in order to categorize social relationships, how people respond to and act within social situations. The models he created are psychological foundations of social relations and society (Fiske 1991) and in order they are Communal Sharing, Authority Ranking, Equality Matching, and Market Pricing. In order, these four categories are a continuum, categorizing behaviors within relationships starting from the most communal to the most individualistic. Or, to go off of the work of Aafke Komter, who first combined Fiske's categories with gift giving and the work of Marcel Mauss, most non-utilitarian to most utilitarian. Using Fiske's four models this work will continue off of the work of Komter, but take it further by fleshing out the examples he presents, and discussing others that he did not consider.

Any work that deals with gifts in any context should start with the ideas of Marcel Mauss and his well known work *The Gift*. Mauss, the nephew and disciple of Durkheim, focuses *The Gift* on the idea that gifts even though they are imbedded with on obligation of reciprocity serve the purpose of social integration and cohesion. From Mauss' work comes the idea that gifts are not simply an exchange between people but instead a much more complicated and multi-layered process with many different motives, many of them self-serving; the role of obligation and its uses is also central to Mauss' work. Mauss discusses how in theory the exchanging of gifts is voluntary, but in reality gifts are given and reciprocated obligatorily, and this obligation leads to power. Coming from Mauss and this idea is another theorist whose work is used in this work as well, Pierre Bourdieu. I link the concepts within Fiske's four categories to Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic, social, economic capital, and symbolic violence.

Symbolic capital is resources used in order to attempt to control the way things are seen to be. (Bourdieu 1985) This form of capital can include prestige, honor, and the right to be listened to. This prestige and honor can be attached to not just an individual but also a family, group, or lineage. This capital is most valuable where there is a demand for collective labor according to Bourdieu. Another form symbolic capital can take are symbolic investments, these investments can be seen acted out in ritual, aid to those in need, and so on in order to provide claims on the labor and resources of others in the future. This access to labor and resources can be used for economic gain and takes the form of credit to be used in the future. Many times, depending on the society, this is the only way to legitimately accumulate resources or have power and status legitimized.

Social capital can be used in a more rational manner to produce or reproduce inequality.

This form of capital includes obligation, trust, and the advantages that come from the use

of social connections and networks resulting in benefits such as favors or a rise in status.

By cultivating and investing in relationships a person can consciously or unconsciously

establish or continue social relationships that are productive in the short or long term.

(Bourdieu 1986) Economic capital is actual material capital such as money,

commodities, assets, and means of material production. With economic capital you

'invest' in the hopes of a higher return, or profit. This capital is not about receiving

equal, it is about earning more than what was put into it. The last idea of Bourdieu that

will be discussed within the context of gift giving is symbolic violence which is

connected with the idea of obligation. By symbolic violence Bourdieu means types of

coercion which are enacted without physical force or threat of violence, hence the

symbolic nature. Instead this form of pressure is a gentle and invisible which uses trust,

loyalty, hospitality, gifts, debts, and piety in order to enact the violence. (Bourdieu and

Wacquant 1992)

According to Alan Smart, capital as used by Bourdieu, involves power, but a

distinctive type of power, the kind of power that involves claims on people and their

actions. (Smart 1993) In discussing Bourdieu's theories concerning gifts, and how they

were influenced by Mauss, Smart goes on to state that "gifts create obligations that must

be reciprocated, and failure to do so places the recipient in a subordinate position."

(Bourdieu 1977; Smart 1993:394) I posit that as Fiske's categories get more utilitarian

and calculated that the main form of capital involved goes from symbolic to social, and

the further along in the continuum the more these are connected with obligations that can be cashed in for economic capital. I argue that community sharing reflects behavior that seeks to obtain symbolic capital (there is very little connection to economic capital in this first category) and authority ranking also contains this behavior, however lends itself more towards the use of economic capital. Equality matching and market pricing both, I argue, contains aspects of social capital which has a closer relationship to economic capital. These relationships between the multiple forms of capital, power, status, obligation, reciprocity, and gifts are convoluted, and I am not attempting to explain them, I am more concerned with highlighting the different aspects of giving, such as what the giver can receive and what the receiver of the gift is obligated to give. I agree with Bourdieu's argument that it is impossible "to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory." (Bourdieu 1984:242) I want to bring the commodity aspects, or idea of 'purchasing' back to anthropological definitions of gifting by using Fiske's four aspects while using Bourdieu's ideas of capital and symbolic violence to keep the social interaction and cultural aspects of gifting present as well.

"[T]he whole idea of a free gift is based on a misunderstanding… What is wrong with this so-called free gift is the donor's intention to be exempt from return gifts coming from the recipient." (Douglas 1990:vii) I argue there is no free gift because giving has too many layers, (not even counting the infinite characteristics specific to individual cultures and societies) gifts have purposes, meanings, stated motives, actual

motives, sometimes ulterior motives, and once gifts are given and received the further layers of obligation and reciprocity are added. By ignoring these layers or only studying one aspect of a gift at the expense of the others a gift becomes simulacra, a copy of a copy without any connection to the original.[18]

Gifts permeate our lives "[i]n addition to being the expression of love, friendship or respect, gifts can be used for less noble purposes such as to manipulate, flatter, bribe, deceive, humiliate, dominate, offend, hurt and even kill, as in the case of the poisoned cup." (Komter 2007:94) Komter goes one to discuss how the word 'gift' in German and Dutch has a double meaning; interestingly it is also the word for poison. How gifts are interpreted and the etiquette that surrounds them is dependent on group understanding. Individuals don't set the rules for gifts; it is the larger social structure that imposes the norms of gifting. It is individuals who use these norms for their personal benefit and gain. Why Bourdieu's forms of capital are essential to explaining this idea is that gifts can't be understood in only one context, the obligation that comes with a gift is subjective and can't be measured, but most importantly obligation is socially negotiated (Smart 1993) and it is in the collective interest of the group that obligation and reciprocity, and the benefits that incur from these, continue.

The first of Fiske's four categories to be discussed is community sharing. Continuing from Komter's connection between Mauss' concept of the gift and Fiske's forms of human relations community sharing is an exchange based on feelings of

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[18] Simulacra is used according to Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1994)

connectedness to others and identification with others. This social relationship is the

most communal of those that Fiske identifies and gifts are a marker of this sense of

community. These gifts express "friendship, love, gratitude, respect, loyalty, or

solidarity." (Komter 2007:99) Gifts that fall under this social category are more

connected to emotions and memories such as heirlooms and keepsakes, those that have

sentimental value. (Komter 2007) Another type of gift giving that falls within this group

are altruistic gifts such as charity and philanthropy. With these gifts it's not about what

has been received but about what you perceive as another person's needs. Another form

of giving that Komter attributed to this communal category is religious offerings, to

deities, those that represent them, of the institutions that facilitate their worship. I

connect this category of human relationships with Bourdieu's symbolic capital; specifics

will be discussed later in the work.

Komter does an excellent job of acknowledging that altruism is not the only

aspect of charitable giving, he also recognizes that charity can be used in a utilitarian

manner.

> However, such gifts may (consciously or unconsciously) have a strategic aim. For instance, gifts may express our desire to forgive, to repair for something done wrong in the past, to ease our conscience, to flatter, to attract attention or to prevent our being forgotten. Giving to charity is another example of benefiting another person while at the same time relieving our own conscience. (Komter 2007:99)

If one were to be restrained by the dichotomy set up concerning giving it could be easily

argued that if these feelings and motivations are present than it is not true giving. This is

not so. A gift can posses both love and need, gratitude and self-benefit and still be charity, there should not be a black or white standard invoked when a gift can so easily fall into the gray. The traditional definition of charity holds giving to this impossible standard, there should be no utility for the giver; instead the use should be reserved for the receiver. "Charity is meant to be a free gift, a voluntary, unrequited surrender of resources." (Douglas 1990:vii) However this ideal simply isn't possible or realistic. This is not meant to cast out all charitable giving as self-serving, but to argue that even giving that is meant to be selfless benefits the giver whether publicly or personally.

When discussing alms, (charity given to the poor or needy) Mauss takes up this idea of self-benefit within giving as well. Describing the customs of the Hausa in Sudan Mauss tells of how when their corn fields ripen fever can spread, and in order to appease the gods and dead so as to avoid catching the fever gifts of grain are given to the poor and to children. These alms are for the benefit of the poor and young, however the giver receives benefits as well, the gains are not for the receiver alone. Mauss also describes an idea held by the Brahmin caste that to not share, be it wealth or food is to 'kill the essence' of the item and self. (Mauss [1950]1990) This idea, that it is the duty of those that possess fortune to give it away is held by many cultures in both the east and the west. It is not difficult to speculate why this idea is so widespread. By urging the wealthy to be generous those that are in need receive, yet by adhering to the cultural or social norm the wealthy givers also benefit because they gain a reputation as a good person, as someone who helps all. "Generosity is an obligation, because Nemesis avenges the poor and the gods for the superabundance of happiness and wealth of certain

people who should rid themselves of it. This is the ancient morality of the gift, which has become the principle of justice." (Mauss [1950]1990:18) Within the Hindu beliefs that the Brahmins live by, to not share wealth is to break the cycle, what you have you share so that you may receive more in the future. To discontinue giving is to metaphorically kill yourself. It is interesting that once again the interlaced connection between gift and death appears.

This argument of psychological, social, and utilitarian benefits combines the arguments of psychology, anthropology, and economics respectively. I argue that in charitable giving these three combine in different ways, but they are all usually present. William T. Harbaugh quotes George Bernard Shaw argument that "a millionaire does not really care whether his money does good or not, provided he finds his conscience eased and his social status improved by giving it away…" (Harbaugh 1998:271) The psychological and social benefits are explicit in this quote, but what is not implicitly stated is the utility of this generosity. The utility is not, as many would guess, the use of the money by the poor, instead it comes from the giver being able to gain access to the psychological and social benefits that otherwise might not have been open to him.

By giving a person is in fact 'investing' in order to gain symbolic capital. This symbolic investment that comes from aiding others gains the giver prestige and honor, which can be 'cashed in' for economic capital. Even though this category has the loosest connection to economic capital and benefits it is still present. The giver of charity can control the way they are seen within their community and in the future benefit from their

own munificence. An example of how charity leads to symbolic capital which can later turn into economic capital is "[f]or example, donations by a lawyer to his alma mater presumably buy prestige (and referrals) from fellow alumni that donations to no other charity could earn." (Harbaugh 1998:281) By choosing to place his giving in that realm as opposed, to say, sick children, the lawyer made a rational choice; practically a cost-benefit analysis was used to decide where to place his help to get the greatest economic return on his investment.

Another form of giving that can be categorized as community sharing is religious offerings. "[R]eligious offerings may be regarded as attempts to reduce insecurity. By means of offerings, humans express their gratitude towards the deity, thereby reducing their insecurity about the hereafter and increasing their hopes to obtain grace… based on motives such as love, respect, gratitude…" (Komter 2007:99) Instead of relieving the conscience this form of giving is more to relieve worries and insecurities about the future, or mans place in the hierarchy of life. Both charity and religious offerings have a unifying effect; both of these forms of gifts can be used to show solidarity or membership in a certain group.

An example of religious offerings that have multiple purposes is the case of the pre-colonial Sulawesi as described by Lorraine V. Aragon. Before the arrival of European missionaries there was complicated system of gifting present in the Sulawesi culture, "highlanders in western Central Sulawesi routinely presented religious offerings or gifts to localized deities, highland aristocrats, and lowland kingdom rulers." (Aragon

1996:47) According the author, Mauss' claim that these religious gifts were made in order to create or preserve an agreement with the gods, rulers, or dead ancestors was supported by her fieldwork. (Aragon 1996) This idea of keeping a positive relationship with deities, the dead, and those that were the intermediaries (rulers) goes with the idea of community sharing. These offerings were given in thanks, out of respect and loyalty, but also important to note – in order to keep the giver in the favor of the deities or rulers so that they could receive benefits either then or later on.

> In Central Sulawesi, good rice harvests, strong houses, easily caught game, or healthy relatives were requested (as Muss put it, "purchased") with religious offerings…Without promises to the gods no returns could be expected; without proper supplication and retribution the gods would no longer give their favors but rather would seek revenge… To take a person or spirit as a "lord" was realized through the act of making an offering for which one hoped to receive a beneficial return. (Aragon 1996:47)

Religious offerings are also a way for an individual to gain symbolic capital. Symbolic investment is made by participating in rituals to gain prestige and honor, this participation creates symbolic capital and can create a relationship of debt with the higher status receivers. The giver who is, many times, at the mercy of the receiver (deity or ruler) now has the receiver in his or her debt, and has the security (rather real or imagined) of knowing that they can call in that debt at a later date or knowing that the receivers' end of the bargain will be kept. By giving a religious offering a person can feel more secure in a situation that they may in actuality have very little control, such as the future of crops or the health of a family member. Though, similar to charity there is a weak connection between the symbolic capital and the economic capital it is there.

When the offering is made to a leader who holds a religious position, or is a liaison between mortals and gods, the symbolic capital can be changed into economic capital such as a reward in money, or labor of slaves as a reward for piety. Either way, religious offerings give more benefit in the psychological and social realms and this is collected through symbolic capital.

Going from the connections that Komter's made in his work, giving within the structure of authority ranking is motivated by a conscious or unconscious desire to emphasize one's status, power, or position. This type of giving is about hierarchical status, fame, reputation, and merit; and the gift given matches the receiver's position in the hierarchy. What differentiates this type of giving from the community sharing approach is it is more conspicuous, the publicly showing of valuable objects and gifts are markers of superior status in power relations. Gifts can be used purposefully in order to dominate, humiliate, or make the receiver dependent on the giver's generosity. (Komter 2007) Another aspect that I argue belongs in this category is the act of returning gifts. This is a hostility based action that is done to purposefully give offense; it is an act of aggression to show the original giver (now the receiver) that they are beneath you and so is their gift. I connect this type of human relationship with Bourdieu's symbolic capital as well, there are also aspects of economic capital present, but this form is secondary to symbolic capital.

Feasting

The second type of social relationship recognized by Fiske is authority ranking. An example of authority ranking giving can be found in the context of feasting. When discussing feasts there are two forms of gifts involved in this interaction: the gift of food to guests from the host(s), and the gifts that are given to, and received by the host(s) from guests. Concerning the giving of food, I argue the goal is to be as conspicuous as possible. By conspicuous I am referring to the usage and definition made popular by Thorstein Veblen in his work *Theory of the Leisure Class* first published in 1899. Participation in a feast is about celebrating and sharing but is also very much about being *seen* doing so which is predatory. In feasts where authoritative ranking giving of food is being practiced the host(s) must conspicuously show off expensive, rare, imported, or time consuming (in their preparation) foods. "What may appear lavish "give-aways" of food and drink are actually, in large part, carefully calculated expenditures through which practical socio-political strategies are pursued." (Adams 2004:56) The guests of such feasts must also participate conspicuously by consuming large portions of food so as to not offend the host and his hospitality. Mauss also addresses this idea of conspicuous consumption by guests as feasts: "one is committed to gulping down large quantities of food, in order to 'do honour', in a somewhat grotesque way, to one's host." (Mauss [1950] 1990:41)

When discussing feasting practices that took place in the past, archeology is usually the way through which this is approached. Archeology uses remains found in

midden piles, ceramic data, food remains, and faunal, botanical, and isotopic analyses in order to discuss and explore practices that occurred in the past. (Rosenswig 2006) Another important source that archeology uses is ethnography and oral history, when these two are introduced the connection is made with cultural anthropology, these two fields are also connected by their use of material culture. Archeology is relevant to my argument in this work because "[archeologists have long interpreted the prehistoric material record of complex, pre-state societies employing trait-based indicators of elites." (Rosenswig 2006:2) From studying the markers of elites within the archeological record the assumption is usually made that because of their status, social connections, and the wealth that accompanied these, elites had access to better quality of food and higher quantities; they also probably had a greater range of choice of foods than did non-elites. (Turkon 2004) This past study of elites can be linked to current feasting practices and show how past reasons to host feasts are still very much in evidence and used in the present.

By using the work of archeologists and anthropologists, the reasons why elites sponsored feasts can be discussed. Anthropologist Robert M. Rosenswig discusses the Enga tribe of Papua New Guinea and how when their society had no shortage of resources it was egalitarian and prestige came from giving away wealth, but status was not signified. However, when competitive immigrants came, feasting cycles were implemented, called the Tee cycle, in order to keep social networks active and to secure trade. When in later generations there was a population boom, which meant a further shortage of resources, the festivals which were centered around feasting and "elaborate

peacemaking war reparation rituals" (referred to as the "Great Wars") became more pronounced and brought prestige to those who organized them. (Rosenswig 2006:3-4) These feasts were used as way to network, marriages were arranged, alliances were formed, and debts were settled and new debts created. The families who were gaining prestige by organizing these feasts and festivals began to intermarry, and formed a true elite class, who through their status created prestige items (pearl shells) that they used as sign of their rank.

> Most archeological studies of social differentiation assume that the elite display their status by symbols of wealth and power, objectified in luxury or prestige goods, elaborate burial treatment, and architectural elaboration. These studies assume that due to their relatively greater power and access to wealth, the elite can restrict access to high value goods as a way to visually express their domination. These high value goods commonly take the form of prestige goods that have little utilitarian function, but require great amounts of specialized labor to produce, are made of scarce materials, use specialized technology, are imported from distant places, or any combination of these factors. (Turkon 2004:226)

Once European colonialism entered into this system with capitalism (and cheap pearl shell) this cycle of feasting, debt, and reciprocity collapsed. (Rosenswig 2006)

In order to look at a present day culture that practices feasting, I refer to Cynthia Ann Werner's work on the Kazakstan[19] nation and its people's practices. During the pre-Soviet period Kazakstan was a "society without formal political offices, tribal leaders gained the respect of their followers and hence maintained their political authority by

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[19] Spelling of Kazaktan as opposed to Kazakhstan is the author, Cynthia Ann Werner's choice. Any quotations from her work containing words such as emphasized and idealized are also spelled according to her wording as they are direct quotes.

regularly demonstrating their generosity and hospitality." (Werner 1999:48) Similar to the example of the Enga leaders, their authority was built on feasting and hospitality. Feasts are a way for an individual or family to gain prestige, respect, and renown and an integral part of these feasts is gift giving and receiving. Some of the reasons that Werner gives for feast participation is a fear of public shame (by either not publicly celebrating, failing to bring an appropriate gift, or not receiving a reciprocal gift), reciprocity, actual affection between the giver and receiver, and the gifts lead to prestige and status. Werner tells of a host of a feast who received new cars as gifts from high ranking guests, they did this for two reasons; the host had, as a guest given them new cars (reciprocity), but also because they knew their status would rise because they were able to afford to give away new cars. (Werner 1999) They gave such an extravagant gift because by accepting the car first, they put themselves in a relationship where if they were to give a lesser gift it would be the same as publicly admitting they were inferior to the person who gifted them with a car. Though this may seem like generosity it was a highly calculated exchange. "Although acts of generosity are highly idealised, economic and political motives often lie beneath a thin veneer of pure altruism." (Werner 1999:49)

These feasts are to celebrate, but they are also to conspicuously show what the hosts are able to provide for guests. Feasts feature not only large amounts of domesticated meat (which is a great expense to families), but in some cases imported sweets, drinks, and linens. (Werner 1999) This is a societal standard that has little to do with actual family wealth. Werner makes the argument that consumption cannot be divided into the 'haves' and 'have-nots' because the behavior of the wealthy is emulated

as closely as possible by those with less economic means, this is one of the central arguments behind Veblen's argument of conspicuous consumption: that the wealthy set the standard or are "tastemakers" and everyone else tries to copy them. (Veblen [1899] 1994) "These households, for example, might purchase the same package of powdered drink mix, but in order to save money they will add much more water than specified on the label. The final product appears to be the same as the sweet drinks consumed by the wealthy, but the taste is the same as water." (Werner 1999:68)

It is interesting when discussing the status that the hosts acquire by providing gifts and having feasts to notice that women are not represented well as hosts. As one reads Werner's work and other sources available it becomes evident that women are in secondary positions. What does this mean for women if hosting a feast is the way to socially network, gain political and social power, and fulfill cultural expectations and they are excluded in large numbers from hosting? They surely benefit from gifts and invitations as members of a household that participates in this reciprocal cycle of feasting but their status is secondary and will remain so as long as they are excluded from this avenue of advancement. This point is especially important to note as according to Werner when it comes to feast preparation women have just as many (if not more) labor intensive responsibilities as the men. "In addition to preparing meals for the evening feast, the women were obliged to prepare and serve meals for the volunteer workers, as well as a large number of elderly guests who chose not to attend the late evening's activities. When the feast was over, the women did the bulk of the cleaning

up." (Werner 1999:54) Women are also the ones to present the gift at the feast as well, especially if the gift is something like jewelry or clothing. (Werner 1999)

The study of the benefits of feasting are usually done within anthropology and archeology, however Bourdieu and his idea of economic and symbolic capital also applies to this. Symbolic capital is applicable to the concept of feasting because prestige, renown, even status can be attached to a family or an individual through feasting. This symbolic capital affords them a place in the hierarchy of their society that they otherwise may not have achieved if not for hosting feasts. They are, through their generosity and hospitality, purchasing status and buying claims to labor, gifts, and favors in the future. These claims can be made into economic claims (especially where reciprocal gifts are concerned) and hosting can be seen as an investment in order to receive material wealth as guests in the future. Though economic capital is present, similar to community sharing, the symbolic form of capital is the capital that is most present. As one progresses further through the four stages economic capital becomes much more important.

<div align="center">Potlatch</div>

The second example of authority ranking I will present is that of potlatch conducted by the American Indians of the northwest coast. Some scholars combine potlatch and feasting together, but there is a marked difference. Cynthia Werner puts this distinction best when discussing the difference between potlatch and the feasting ceremonies of the Kazaks discussed above. "Descriptions of the potlatch feasts

consistently emphasise that the feasts serve to redistribute goods from the wealthier members of the community to the poorer members of the community. Rather than redistributing wealth, the feasts in Kazakstan promote the accumulation of wealth." (Werner 1999:65) This redistribution is taken seriously and because of this, invitations to those who possess material wealth cannot be denied. According to Mauss, a person does not have the right to turn down an invitation to a potlatch, if he does he is admitting one of two things, that he is afraid to reciprocate (which is the main aspects of potlatch) because he cannot afford it and as such will lose face, or because he has been so successful at past potlatches (because they are very competitive) he is wealthy enough to ceremoniously refuse and by doing so committing himself to hosting a potlatch in the future. To be unable to reciprocate can lead to being enslaved in order to pay off your debt. [1950] 1990) Cooper defines potlatch the best:

> [Potlatch refers] to social systems in which the gift and countergift constitute the basis of social and economic relations among individuals and groups in society… It is not merely "goods and wealth, real and personal property, and things of economic value" which are exchanged, but also "courtesies, entertainments, rituals, military assistance, women, children, dance and feasts. (Cooper 1982:104)

From this definition it is interesting to see how women rank in this culture - with children and exchangeable property, the mere fact that they can be exchanged shows that they are not the ones hosting the potlatches culturally they are participants and gifts themselves. However, as will be discussed later they do have specific modes of participation in society, and gained more power in later generations.

The type of gifting and participation that occurs in potlatches has a bit more emphasis on economical capital than does ordinary feasting. Feasting is more about showing your generosity and proving your status, potlatch contains these aspects as well, but where it differentiates is it possesses a sense of interest. That a gift, or hosting of a potlatch, is reciprocated but instead of meeting it equally (such as the example of the gift of the new car as discussed previously) the host must go further, the gift must be more grand or the potlatch more extravagant. This interest, or continuing one-upmanship, finally reaches a point where a host or gift giver can go no further and this is when conspicuous destruction comes into potlatch. In rare cases of potlatch instead of only giving away to show status there is also a public conspicuous show of destroying prized things. This is not to be spiteful; instead this is done by those with the highest status at the potlatch to show that because they are able to do this, they are at the top of the hierarchy. This type of presentation is usually done by chiefs (but not restrained to this category). "For example, the Tsimshian, Tlingit, and Haida chiefs throw these copper objects and money into the water. The Kwakiutl chiefs smash them, as do those of the tribes allied to them." (Mauss [1950] 1990:74) Even Veblen mentions potlatches in his description of conspicuous behavior. This idea of conspicuous destruction, which is destruction of objects, (valuable, expensive, or rare) that is publicly carried out in order for status to be re-affirmed or gained.

The other important aspect of potlatch, besides reciprocity is to establish and legitimize rank. In societies that practice potlatch rank is usually inherited, but birth is not the only requisite, you must also prove yourself worthy through hoisting a successful

potlatch. "[S]uccession to positions of rank must be validated by a ceremony at which a

large-scale distribution of goods (a potlatch) is made to the guests by their host, and in

which acceptance of gifts and witnessing of the ceremony constitute an

acknowledgement of succession." (Cooper 1982:106) A potlatch with this goal,

(legitimization) is usually very formal: invitations are hand delivered by people trusted

with this task, guests are seated according to their rank with their crest somewhere near

to show who they are, dances and songs belonging to the attending nobles are

performed, and then the one seeking validation is presented and he gifts those assembled

according to their rank. (Cooper 1982)

> The claimant recites the genealogical links through which the rank position has
> been passed down to him, and the scope of his distribution of gifts proves the
> potency of his genealogical claim. The ability of an individual to distribute
> widely represents his ability to mobilize resources and social and political
> support from a wide range of his relations, and directly reflects the relative status
> of his group vis-à-vis the guest groups, as well as serving to validate his own
> status within his group. (Cooper 1982:107)

The fact that birth right alone isn't enough to cement claims to status is where

Bourdieu's symbolic status comes in. Because gifting, and the resulting obligation, is

used in order to exert the 'gentle pressure' that Bourdieu discusses in order to convince

people into accepting the claimants status, and not violence, the coercion is symbolic

instead of outright such as through violence. The use of symbolic violence places a

society into mutually dependent units and places individuals into a political economy.

(Masco 1995) "A chief is dependent on the labor of all the non-ranking members of the

numaym[20] to produce the furs and other objects to be distributed during a potlatch, just as commoners are dependent on the nobility's symbolic labor to persuade the animal world to support human existence." (Masco 1995:48)

Within this culture there is a strict division of labor and rights based on rank, but also based on gender. For example memberships in dance societies are only transferable through women, whereas many rights of participation and rank are transferable only through the male line. (Masco 1995) "Similarly, all duties of food gathering and preparation are divided by sex and enforced by ritual protocol, so that individuals are dependent on one another for daily sustenance. (Masco 1995:46) Women were integral participants in this culture and potlatches, but they were not allowed to take a leading role until 1865 (when a first born woman was allowed to hold a ranking seat until her son reached age) when noble families had to find a new way to carry down inherited ranks due to a loss of around 70% of the population to an 1862 smallpox epidemic. "This change brought new social power to a group of women and foretold inheritance struggles between first-born daughters and their younger brothers for possession of the ranking seat." (Masco 1995:61) Because of this change in gender norms, ranks could be inherited from either mother or father and so the ranking system gained even more complexity. (Masco 1995) In order to deal with this potlatches were held more frequently in order to legitimize these claims. After 1849, due to the infusion of capitalism those who were normally not of the noble ranks were able to participate more frequently in potlatches because they were now able to match nobles' financial status. "Economically, the

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[20] numaym - those who share seasonal residences and ritual obligations (Masco 1995:47)

commoner was now on equal footing with the nobility and perhaps even at an advantage, as chiefs might be unwilling to support their claims by working in mines as day laborers or pushing their wives and daughters into prostitution." (Masco 1995:62) Due to small pox, death, and capitalism (like the Enga tribe discussed earlier), commoners and women were able to host potlatch and challenge and change the existing hierarchy and this made potlatches much more competitive.

What Joseph Masco labels as 'symbolic property' (Masco 1995:44) within potlatches, I argue is actually symbolic capital. By 'symbolic property' the author is referring to rank that is celebrated and confirmed by exchanging gifts within potlatch. Instead of being property, rank should be instead seen as symbolic capital because the potlatch is a way of exhibiting this capital, and power is accorded legitimacy through the rituals within potlatches. By giving gifts, and spreading material wealth, symbolic capital is accumulated. The gift giving and reciprocity that accompanies it can be seen as a symbolic investment which in turn has very tangible results. By having power legitimized access is gained to material wealth and higher amounts of resources. The gains are much more symbolic than economic, but the access to material wealth is present.

Obligation to Invite

The third human relationship distinguished by A.P. Fiske is equality matching. When combined with Mauss' idea of the gift (by Komter) this category focuses more on reciprocity than any of the other three. There is a strong emphasis on a quid-pro-quo

mentality with obligation, and the expectation of obligation, factoring in very strongly. Unlike authority ranking there is not that much consideration concerning power, status, or the need of the receiver, instead gifting is about giving equal to what was received. Gifts and giving must be comparable otherwise there are social and cultural repercussions. This form of gifting is more calculated that those mentioned previously, there is more of an idea of a balance of debt, and altruism plays practically no part in this form of giving. Equality matching is the most popular form of gifting and it is hard to distinguish gifts from commodities due to the emphasis on equality.

When discussing equality matching and gifting, there is an aspect of the process of gift giving that focuses on equality and obligation, and that is the obligation to invite. Mauss discusses in various places throughout his work the idea that there is an obligation to invite anyone who can or wishes to attend, regardless of status. This applies to celebrations, feasts, potlatches, and other ceremonies that mark occasions in life. Mauss referring to potlatches: "It is essential to invite anyone who can, or wishes to come, or actually turns up at the festival at the potlatch. Failure to do so has fatal consequences." (Mauss [1950] 1990:39-40) Excluding anyone who wants to from the gifting and networking ceremonies is the same as declaring war; it is a slight that can have negative costs for the individual and his family.

Many myths, folklore, and in Western society fairytales, has this failure to invite as a central theme describing in detail what happens to those that give slight. An example of such a tale is Sleeping beauty where an important and powerful fairy was

shunned by not being invited to Sleeping Beauty's christening, and responded with a curse on the child that ended up negatively impacting not only the child, but her family and her kingdom for one hundred years. What is even more interesting about these types of fairy tales is the reciprocity that can occur at the end that comes in the form of revenge. For example, in the story of Snow White when she was released from the spell cast by the evil stepmother she made sure to invite her to the wedding. Once at the wedding, to pay her back for the spell and attempted assassinations, she was placed in hot metal shoes and forced to dance at the wedding until she died from the pain.

Even though he does not address folklore in the context of equality matching, Mauss does present a fable that falls in line with Sleeping Beauty and the consequences of failing to invite. "An important Tsimshian myth reveals the mentality in which this essential theme of European folklore also originated: that of the wicked fairy who was forgotten at a baptism or a marriage." (Mauss [1950] 1990:40) The tale is of a Tsimshian princess who gives birth to a child that can shape shift into an otter. His grandfather, the chief of the tribe, presents his grandson to an assembled group of chiefs and tells them not to harm him in either form. However, the grandfather had forgotten to invite one chief, who in his ignorance killed the child, and his mother, the princess, died of grief. In order to make up for his mistake the uninvited chief gave multiple gifts to the grandfather, but the damage was already done. (Mauss [1950] 1990) "This is why people mounted a great festival when the son of a chief was born and was given a name, so that no one should not know who he was." (Mauss [1950] 1990:40)

Connected to the obligation to invite by Mauss is the obligation to receive and reciprocate as well. Continuing with the idea of christening and invitation myths is the fairytale of Cinderella. This story is an example of what can occur when you do not fail to invite and the benefits that come with keeping to protocol. At her christening, Cinderella's godmother was actually a fairy who was a valuable ally in her struggles that led to her happy ending. Because the fairy received the honor of being named godmother (and gained access to social networks), she was obligated to not only attend the ceremony but to reciprocate with a gift, in this case magic assistance.

> [T]he various gifts godfathers and godmothers make at different times in life to assist and help *(Helfete)* their grandchildren, are equally important. We recognize this theme, which is still well known in all our own customs, folk tales, and legends concerning the invitation, the curse of those not invited, and the blessing and generosity of those invited, particularly when they are fairies. (Mauss [1950] 1990:61)

Both parents and godparents benefit from arrangement. They all gain access to social networks that were not available before, they join together in a reciprocal ceremonial relationships that involves the exchanging of gifts, and the godparents receive cultural honor while the parents benefit by knowing that if something happens to them they are assured that their child will be cared for. This relationship works because the invitation and honor first given is reciprocated with gifts and responsibilities. On the other hand, to not reciprocate an accepted invitation (or gift) is to set yourself as inferior to those that invited you, so you are obligated to return with equality.

I consider obligation to invite, and the giving attached to it (not to ignore obligation to reciprocate and receive), to be enacted in the quest for social capital. In this realm social capital is the employment of social connections, and the advantages that come from these connections. Obligation to invite is observed in order to establish social relationships that are useful, and to gain and benefit from social positions. This capital is sought in order to achieve access to economic capital. This human relationship is much more economic seeking then the previous two. By inviting, you are investing in your own invitations, and the gifts that accompany them. You are using material wealth in order to finance a party or ceremony that will earn you invitations and economic benefits to such year round. By setting your guests up in a cycle of obligation you are not only inviting everyone as equals to your home, but you are fulfilling your cultural and social obligations as well and keeping access to the resources and materials that come from being a member in good standing.

Christmas Gift Giving

A type of gifting that exemplifies equality matching the greatest however is the western (especially U.S.) interpretation of Christmas. "Christmas shopping and the cultural responses to it are important for understanding American Christmas. After all, people do not just casually go and buy the odd item. Instead they shop for Christmas presents intensely." (Carrier 1993:61) As western society gets more other-directed, and more conspicuous, the trend becomes to only to give to those that you know will give to you, or already has given to you. There is a much higher weight put on reciprocity and

the quid-pro-quo mentality mentioned above, and a cultural emphasis on calculation.

There is a "growing concern for reciprocation with the realm of collaterals and their

spouses. Not only were gifts to those relatives less frequent, but it is in gifts to them that

there appears 'active concern that the gifts exchanged be of approximately equal value.'"

(Carrier 1993:57)

Many times the sentiment is expressed of not wanting to receive gifts because of

not wanting to go through with the obligation to reciprocate. Many treat gifts as a burden

because of all of the cultural requirements that go into giving and reciprocating a gift. In

order to be an 'appropriate' gift, gifts are required to have sentimental value, or at least

the signs[21] of sentiment, while at the same time possessing qualities that will make the

receiver think that you 'know them'. "'It's the thought that counts.' This reasserts the

importance of the sentiment and relationship that the gift embodies, relative to the

material embodiment itself." (Carrier 1993:60)

However, the most challenging aspects in western Christmas gifting is trying to

calculate how much they have spent on your gift, or how much you intend to spend on

them, and keeping within those ranges while simultaneously trying to meet the cultural

requirements described above. With this form of gifting there a fine line to walk so the

reciprocal gift won't cost a great deal more than the received gift –which is an insult, and

also won't cost much less than the received gift (which is also an insult and violates

reciprocity). Or, if the gift you are giving will start the cycle of reciprocity and

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[21] sign as used by Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1998 [1970])

obligation, you need to attempt to accurately guess how much they will spend on your gift so that you won't end up spending more to receive a lesser gift. Another consideration is that you don't want your gift to seem hostile or to shame the receiver by spending so much on their gift that you know they do not have the financial resources to reciprocate the level of gifting that you have started. Due to these requirements that have been culturally added to gifts, unique forms of gifting have emerged (many would say they destroy the idea of a gift). Examples exist such as:

- Secret Santa: there is a ceiling set on the cost of the gift and the assurance of reciprocity because the giver of your gift has the same restraints as you do
- White Elephant gifts: where there is also a monetary cap, but the gift is required to be tacky and silly so sentimental value is not necessary
- Gift Cards: where there is no element of surprise, the amount is printed on the gift so there is no guesswork involved in order to reciprocate
- Wedding (and other occasion) Registry: where the couple has a list at the store of their choice that tells givers what to get, and once they receive the gift they know what the cost was so they will be able to reciprocate when necessary

Since Western Christmas gifts have become so centered around balance and equality, it is necessary to differentiate between gift and commodity when participating in this type of gift exchange. "[P]ractices of the presentation and treatment of gifts help to overlay their commodity identity with sentiment and festivity." (Carrier 1993:60) An interesting aspect of gift wrapping that Carrier discusses is that numerically it is women who are charged with wrapping the Christmas gifts in U.S. culture (in contrast in countries such as Mexico it is usually men who wrap Christmas gifts), yet if the gift is food then it is usually not wrapped because it already posses 'identity.' (Carrier 1993) However, if the gift is homemade or edible they are usually created and given by

women. "They [foodstuffs such as homemade jams and sweat breads] also are the province of women, further pointing out the cultural links among women, familial relations, and gift transactions." (Carrier 1993:61)

Participation in the type of gifting that is present in American Christmas is, I argue, done in order to acquire social capital. Similar to the reasons given for obligation to invite, this type of gifting focuses on obligation and reproducing (keeping) social relationships that are useful. With this form of giving there is a much higher standard put to reciprocity than any of the other of Fiskes' categories discussed, and due to this a higher recognition of the economic capital that is inherent. The economic capital that comes from the accumulation of social capital through Christmas gifting is much more rational with thoughts towards capital risk, investment, of course reciprocity, but in this type of giving there is also an aspect of almost profit that occurs.

Bridewealth

The fourth and final category devised by Fiske (and linked with giving by Komter) is market pricing. This relationship and form of giving is centered the most on utility and economic capital. Gifts are judged by economic value, and the personal benefit that comes from the gift exchange. There is no attempt to hide the self-interest or aim of the gift, and the cost-benefit analysis aspects of giving is more prominent here. Gifts can be used to manipulate, bribe, corrupt, win a competition, or blackmail and can be used for societal or political gain. There is social capital to be gained through this type of giving; however, economic capital is the true goal in this form of gifting.

Bridewealth or bride price is money, property, or wealth given to the bride's family from the potential groom. Even though in many cultures it is required in order to marry it can still be considered a gift because it is a payment of good faith, to show that the wife will be well cared for, and to compensate the family for her labor and fertility that is now going to the groom's family instead of the bride's. This is comparable to the engagement ring in Western Culture they are both gifts, both a gesture of sincerity. Bridewealth can be considered market pricing because when the groom-to-be presents the bride's family with the gifts there is no attempt to hide what he wants in turn for his generosity, he is seeking to benefit from his munificence by gaining a wife and family alliance.

Bridewealth in parts of Africa involves transferring material goods and wealth from the groom's family to the bride's family in order to establish a marriage. Though it sounds like a straightforward gift, bride prices are actually used "to reinforce the authority of the father and emphasize the tie with the sister." (Goody and Tambiah 1973:5) The gift, or payment, is actually a way to redistribute wealth within the society. A bride wealth gift is not used in the celebration or given to the new couple, instead it is given to the bride's male relatives (usually her brothers) so that they afford to give bridewealth and secure brides for themselves. There is no increase of wealth by one person, instead the material wealth is utilized to keep the family functioning and growing. Bridewealth serves as a leveler in societies that practice it in Africa such as the Lobedu (an extreme case), societies tend to be more egalitarian and there is little or no concentration of wealth by one group. (Goody and Tambiah 1973) The gifts are more to

keep the economic status quo going; to not participate is to take your family out of the beneficial cycle.

The more matrilineal a culture is the higher bride prices tend to be. The requirement of the bridewealth payment is to discourage taking a bride from her natal home; in essence a woman is used as bait in order to entice a man to do service for and give gifts to a lineage. Bridewealth also has other rational reasons such as securing rights for women within a marriage, securing a child to his or her father's kin group, and keeping the divorce rates down (in many instances a divorced woman's family would be required to pay back bridewealth, but this is expensive to do especially if it has been used by brothers). Children who are born from unions that did not include bridewealth suffer because they have no claims to inherit from their father and can only inherit from their maternal uncles if he has no 'legitimate' children himself. (Goody and Tambiah1973) This gift not only secures a marriage and the lineage, but property and economic rights as well. When a man presents a bridewealth gift he is not only paying to secure a wife but to ensure his children's economic success as well.

When given, bridewealth and bride price earns social capital for the giver. By giving bridewealth, access is gained to powerful social networks through the marriage. Marriage can lead to larger, wealthier, or more powerful networks and positions of power can be acquired through the direct and indirect employment of these social connections and networks that result from gifts of this kind. Economic capital can be earned through this acquisition of social capital, yet in this case, economic capital is

earned independently. By giving bridewealth a groom is investing in not only a wife and her fertility, but her labor as well which yields economic benefits. He is by acting within the bridewealth norms securing the transfer of his possessions and wealth to the next generation, which has economic benefits for his lineage.

Bribes and Guanxi

The second example to be presented to represent market pricing is the most obvious and best example, the giving of bribes. According to Cynthia Ann Werner, "the boundaries between "corrupt" behavior and "cultural" behavior are not always clear, especially when it comes to the distinction between "bribes" and "gifts." (Werner 2000:12) Bribes are the most obvious gifts to be placed within the category market pricing; they also contain the most utility. When the gift (usually of money) is given it is payment for a favor or for consideration in a matter that the giver wants resolved in his or her favor. Trying to draw a boundary or differentiate between what is gift and what is a bribe is very difficult to do, and I argue detrimental to understanding both. What is a bribe as opposed to what is a gift is not culturally defined or defined by society; I argue it is instead defined by the situation. Bribes are seen as shady, underhanded dealings with greed and influence playing large factors in the exchange. Rarely are bribes discussed as gifts without irony or subterfuge, but they are in fact gifts as long as the context of the giving is recognized. Just like giving of 'gifts,' bribes also have reciprocity, obligation, ceremony, and an etiquette attached. Bribes are so common place

that in many countries count bribes outside of their borders as tax-deductible expenses.

(Werner 2000)

A cultural example of why bribes shouldn't be separated from gifts is Guanxi in

China. Guanxi, or social connections, is a form of giving where market exchange and

gift exchange is not seen as opposing; instead the combination is complimentary and

traditional. Guanxi are relationships built on pre-existing social connections, and is

carried out through the exchange of favors, gifts, and feasts (these are reestablished,

reinforced, and strengthened through the process of bribe gifts). (Smart 1993) Guanxi is

then used in order to facilitate bribery, however since it is among friends and family

members it is seen as gifting. Since China is a socialist nation with capitalistic

businesses within it, Guanxi is necessary in order to overcome the problems that this

conflict would cause. Guanxi can be utilized in order to help certain investors get ahead

in multiple ways such as cutting through the red tape.

> In a situation where there is a pervasive distrust of the system and great gaps
> exist in the legal and societal infrastructure necessary for capitalism, the
> consolidation of social relationships built on gift exchange provides a substitute
> form of trust that can improve the profitability of investment and reduce the risk
> of arbitrary bureaucratic interference that is not in the interests of the investors.
> (Smart 1993:398)

Bribes exchanged using Guanxi embodies market pricing because these gifts are

obvious, they are very thinly veiled through their presence in social networks, however

their goals are blatant. Gifts of bribes within Guanxi are calculated and their purpose is

to manipulate and coerce. There is reciprocity, this is not a one way payment, in return

for the gift or favor, a gift or favor is given in return whether it is influence or preference. Guanxi is referred to as an art form, because like gifts there is an ascribed a followed etiquette. "The style and manner of gift exchange is not optional; rather it is fundamental to its operation. Although a relationship may be cultivated with instrumental goals foremost in mind, the forms must be followed if the goals are to be achieved. This attention to etiquette is why gifts given through Guanxi cannot be considered flat out bribes because as Mauss argues, if a gift is given for immediate and blatant gain it is seen with scorn. (Mauss [1950] 1990) There must be a pretense, a wink and nudge, a way to see the bribe as a gift, and the relationships within Guanxi make this easy. Within this type of gift exchange if material interest is foremost and the social aspects are ignored the gift is categorized as a bribe and given less status because bribes are seen as corrupt. This is the difference between a bribe within a market exchange, and a gift within a gift exchange that requires specific obligations and reciprocity.

Bribe gifts within Guanxi can be categorized as seeking to gain social capital. There is an obvious attempt with bribe gifts within this context to take advantage of connections and social networks. These gifts are a strategic investment in order to consciously establish and continue social relationships that are useful and profitable. Once this social capital is established it can be directly translated into economic capital. The gifts given and received are judged by their economic value and risk, investment, and reward is inherent in this form of gifting.

By combining the capital concepts of Pierre Bourdieu with the ideas of Marcel Mauss and applying them both to the structure created by Alan Page Fiske the concept of

the gift can be explored in a new way. By giving more structure to the concept of the gift (while at the same time not limiting a gift in its definition and attached motivations) a clearer picture of how giving is used within interactions with people can be discerned. By connecting theoretical concepts to societal and cultural examples the gift is not taken out of context, but immersed back into it, so understanding can be gained. As giving is highly contextual, taking the commodity and cultural aspects out of giving collapses the gift itself not only hindering study, but destroying the purpose of the gift. As gifting becomes more functional (further down Fiske's scale) it becomes less attached to symbolic capital and more intertwined with social capital. Though I argue all aspects of gifting possess economic undertones, the more the gift is used to advance the giver's interests the more economic capital is present in the exchange. Self-serving motives can be attached to most, if not all gifts, and I believe that in order to truly understand giving and the exchange that occurs within it, it is crucial to understand all layers of a gift and not just the ones on the surface.

CHAPTER V

CONSUMPTION

Gift giving and consumption are comparable in that they both are many times performed in a conspicuous manner. However, they are different in that the gift focuses on the creation or continuation of a relationship, whereas consumption is used to not create relationships, but instead to fit in or show the signs of conformity. Both giving and consumption are performed in order to adhere to cultural and social expectations. They also both can be used to create exploitative and negative relationships, even to the extent that one of the parties is unknowingly entering into a relationship. Gift giving even has a great deal to do with consumption (seemingly contrary to the actual idea of "giving"). However, to keep these two concepts separate and to avoid confusion, this chapter will focus on two examples of giving which highlights two different types of gift relationships, and a form of consumption that is not connected to giving. The examples of gift giving used in this chapter will be feasting and the American tradition of Christmas gift giving. For consumption, the cultural twisting of the protestant work ethic will be discussed using the examples of consumption of dieting and fitness.

According to Veblen historically the emergence of a leisure class began with ownership, and "the earliest form of ownership is an ownership of the women by the able-bodied men of the community" (Veblen [1899] 1994:22-23). Veblen attributes the ownership and subjugation of women to both the earlier and modern day barbarians. Veblen is well known (censured even) for his stance concerning housewives and how because they are not economically useful (according to Veblen they are not laboring,

instead they are used as a barbaric trophy of sorts) they are simply a "vicarious leisure" (Veblen [1899] 1994:146) In other words, wives who are not working in the fields or providing income for the family are window dressing (for a popular culture reference think of the housewife drinking a highball while vacuuming in high heels and pearls), their job is to be shown off by a predatory male. "She is useless and expensive, and she is consequently valuable as evidence of pecuniary strength… is incapable of useful effort and must therefore be supported in idleness by her owner" (Veblen [1899] 1994:148-149).

The housewife's very existence is a statement to the man's ability to provide economically in a way that says they can afford to have an adult member in the home that does not provide economically, only drains. So the housewife's job was to play the part of the trophy. This means conforming to the cultural ideal of beauty at all times. "The resulting chivalric or romantic ideal of beauty takes cognizance chiefly of the face, and dwells on its delicacy, and on the delicacy of the hands and feet, the slender figure…men find the resulting artificially induced pathological features attractive" (Veblen [1899] 1994:147 and149). In essence and according to Veblen, the woman's (especially the wife) position is to be consumed for the honor of men. "[T]he patriarchal household or, in other words, the household with a male head is an outgrowth of emulation between the members of a warlike community. It is, therefore, in point of derivation, a predatory institution. The ownership and control of women is a gratifying evidence of prowess and high standing". (Mestrovic 2003:115)

When Veblen was writing *The Theory of the Leisure Class* in 1899, he wrote that we had gone from the original ideal woman being a "robust, large-limbed woman" (Veblen [1899] 1994:146) to a delicate "lady" and were transitioning back to the original ideal of beauty. However, one only has to turn on the television, pick up a magazine, or look at a billboard to know that this is not accurate. As a culture we have managed to surpass even his pessimistic predictions, we are not only still valuing the slim delicate woman, but we are actually (decade to decade) forcing our ideal to be even more and more svelte. Many scholars have discussed the increasing barbaric status of women through such examples as restrictive clothing, high heeled (painful, un-practical, and disfiguring) shoe wear, and even mutilation for the sake of beauty in the form of plastic surgery, genital mutilation, and Chinese foot binding. Yet not enough scholars look to dieting and fitness as another form of barbarity forced onto women. As we shift from modernity to postmodernity women are becoming more enveloped in conspicuous thinness and because of this they become more susceptible to barbaric tactics.

<div align="center">Conspicuous Thinness: Fitness</div>

Leisure time and excess wealth is publicized by being able to be fit. Instead of working and staying fit through labor you can now stay fit through hiring a personal trainer and chef to even monitor your caloric and carb intake. There is a natural way to stay fit through labor, but there is no prestige in it. Diet and exercise are used to combat (the war metaphor was not only purposeful, but is *highly* accurate) physical consumption of food, genetics, and the results of Western culture's fixation on gluttony of any form. A woman is no longer allowed to be merely useless, she must also be thin and health

conscious. Celebrities are berated in the media if they are seen in public eating a donut! The media and celebrity-mad judgmental public keep track of celebrities' weight better than they themselves do, and since celebrities are our cultural icons, you better believe we follow in their footsteps.

We are now in an age of the consumption of your physical appearance by not only yourself, but by society as well. It is by staying fit that you are consuming prestige; by not staying fit you are not conforming or dutifully consuming the cultural mandate of thinness. You are consuming honor by not consuming calories, being conspicuously wasteful while wasting away. People used to be consumed by religious fervor, now fitness has taken its place as the largest cultural consumption. The body has become the new conspicuous proof of morality. As in religion, individualism and consumption are present in both diet and exercise and have over the generations intertwined with concepts of morality to form what can now be considered the *worship of appearance*.

Historically Protestantism practiced within the United States has promoted the mantra 'fitter bodies mean fitter souls.' (Griffith 2004) This is a concept that comes from the precursor to American Protestantism: Calvinism, which states that people are pre-destined to be either damned or saved and there is no changing this. However, human nature being what it is people are constantly looking for clues to which group they belong, and success is seen as a marker of salvation. Markers of success are usually wealth, achievement, and power; another is achieving a desirable or "good" body. From these Calvinistic roots also comes the concept of "total depravity," which means that all

humans are born pre-programmed to sin and not love God, so those that are true to God must constantly fight against their nature in order to be good Christians. Since most religious sins are seen as misuses of the body, food and dieting fits well into these Calvinistic concepts. These beliefs motivated people to keep a watchful eye out for anything that could be considered greed or gluttony, and keeping slim was one way to physically prove that you did not succumb.

The belief was that the appearance of the body gave insight into the status of one's soul, later this morphed into the more individualistic idea that the body was the vehicle for "spiritual progress and perfection." (ibid) No longer was the body a source of information, now it was a direct link to salvation, your actions influenced your path to Heaven, and thinness was a "source of health as well as a means of salvation." (ibid) In the early 20th century fasting became even more promoted and connected with ensuring the survival of the Anglo Saxon race, the white body was seen as perfection and it needed to be healthy (see thin) and fasting was the best way to accomplish this. This concept can be seen as a precursor to the "body is a temple" ideal. In postwar years American affluence and consumerism became a *threat* to morality and salvation, and in order to offset this, religious dieting became wide spread. The notion that fat resulted from gluttony and other sinful consumption took hold and losing weight was no longer a health issue, or race issue, but a spiritual one. Due to the rise in consumerism and affluence Americans also became more other-directed, which means they were less concerned with pleasing themselves as they were with pleasing others. The best way to improve relationships with others and gain approval was to conform to cultural ideals,

and this meant staying slim. It was (and still is) believed that staying slim would lead to better opportunities, romantic relationships, and even bring you closer to God.

The modern relationship between dieting and morality is still very connected with its roots. Appearance and control are the catchwords for conspicuous thinness. As we continue hurtling towards other-directedness we lose even more control over a great deal of our lives, however, our bodies and appearance are still under our control. Whether it is done naturally or not (makeup, plastic surgery, weight loss surgery), in a healthy manner or not (bulimia, anorexia), we as a culture still hold thinness above all else. Our true religious allegiance can be shown by the dropping religious service attendance rates, and the sharply rising numbers of cosmetic surgeries, diet group attendance, and eating disorders. We no longer are struggling for salvation, we now diet in order to gain control in a postmodern world gone mad.

Though this goal of thinness may seem like it is an individual decision, in reality these behaviors are influenced by our barbaric and predatory culture. Because individuals want to fit in they strive to be thin because this is what is portrayed in the media as sexy and desirable. Healthy is no longer pleasingly plump or curvaceous like Marilyn Monroe; it is now pubescent thin like Keira Knightly. Skinny celebrities are the new saints (and when they die as a result of their adherence to their "beliefs", martyrs) of this conspicuous thinness, they are the prophets and preachers of the "good word," and millions not only listen, but believe. In place of bible studies there are websites that teach individuals the best ways to practice Bulimia and Anorexia. Instead of crosses

hung about the neck to show religiosity, people now wear red bracelets around their wrists to show that they participate in eating disorders (as time goes on there is less and less stigma attached to this. Think about how often a celebrity "comes out" about their past eating disorder). They take pride in flaunting their unhealthy commitment to staying thin. Gone are the days we consume byproducts of religion (bibles, rosaries) instead we consume diet pills, diet food, diet plans, diet cookbooks, and diet memberships. Marx once stated that "religion is the opium of the masses," dieting is our new opium.

Similar to dieting, exercise has also has roots in religion and morality that are still visible today. For many, exercise, also (like dieting) has the consumption of cultural mandates as the end goal. It is also about taking control over your body in a world where individual control is felt to be very low. During the time of the Puritans, exercise was not encouraged as it took time away from labor. Exercise and participation in sports were only approved as a means to an end; it kept you fit and healthy so that moral and religious obligations and duties could be met. As Puritans started to shed the predestination aspects that they inherited from Calvinism they started to believe that humans through purposeful improvement could in fact change their fate concerning salvation. "This shift in perspective- from a predetermined fate to a perfectible self- placed the responsibility for physical and mental improvement, health, and ultimately, salvation on the shoulders of individuals, thereby providing a powerful justification for intentional exercise and physical activity." (Smith Maguire 2008:26)

Exercise, like dieting was also connected to racial competition. Healthy bodies were necessary to break the trend of shrinking birth rates among Anglo Saxons. A new trend came in to being called Muscular Christianity. "Muscular Christianity endorsed athletics as a substitute for the rugged rural life, a means for instilling the same values- manliness, individualism, sexual restraint [yet more births were "needed" = irony]- while providing fresh air and an alternative to the vile corrupting amusements of urban life." (Smith Maguire 2008:28) From this religious concept came the YMCA which a precursor to the numerous gym systems that are flourishing today. Another reason that exercise was promoted was economic, laborers were needed to be in shape and healthy to perform their tasks and too often individuals that worked desk jobs became lethargic.

As time went on, exercise became less about health and religious devotion and more about consuming the lifestyle associated with gyms and sports equipment. Exercise, (like dieting during this time) became more other-directed in motivation; people would exercise more to fit in than to be fit. Exercise also became more conspicuous with the rise of body building in order to show physical proof of manhood. Actors such as Arnold Schwarzenegger started out as bodybuilders and from the fame they achieved from their hyper-fit bodies, became highly popular in the 80's and early 90's. Schwarzenegger even translated his muscularity into being elected as the Governor of California. American society not only imposes fitness, we also reward it.

Fitness has now gone from a health concern to more concerned with the consumption of appearances. Fitness and all of its components are in reality

commodities to be bought, sold, and consumed. From commercial health clubs, lifestyle media (fitness magazines, exercise videos), personal trainers (so that your individual needs are met), to exercise gear such as clothing and shoes, fitness is a business that brings in billions of dollars and will continue to do so as long as Americans continue to connect the consumption of fitness with morality and cultural adherence.

This consumption within fitness comes from multiple angles. Exercise shoes are conspicuous ways for those that are not into fitness to show that they are "exercise conscious." Hundreds of dollars can be spent on one single pair of name brand running shoes that are used not for running, but for everyday wear. Even those that do participate in fitness also spend more than necessary on shoes that are more for show than function. Exercise clothing is used in the same way. Shirts, pants, socks, and wrist and head bands are fashionable (a result of our obsession with fitness) and are worn to be seen. Many people will then change into non-name brand clothing in order to actually exercise so as not to mess up their name brand fitness clothing. This conspicuousness connected with exercise is as much a desired byproduct of the fitness industry as actual health is.

Exercise also (similar to dieting) mimics religion in that there are also saints such as Babe Ruth, Michel Jordan, and Muhammad Ali, and martyrs to its cause. Individuals purchase Air Jordan shoes and other athlete associated fitness gear in order to connect themselves with that person's greatness, similar to the religious practice of carrying relics and bones of saints. Masses of people also travel to places that are associated with their athletic idols, comparable to a holy pilgrimage. Exercise equipment can be found

on display in practically every American's home similar to crucifixes hanging on the

wall. The display of such items shows that the people who live in this home are

constantly on the offensive, whether it be against sin or fat. Fitness magazines and

workout videos are the conspicuous thinness bible (concerning exercise…think new

testament), and its preachers and pastors are personal trainers who will not only give you

individualized care, but also ensure your entry into the promised land of attractiveness.

Personal trainers are also the people who you make your confessions to such as "I didn't

exercise yesterday" and convince you to be more devout. We no longer culturally

worship Jesus; we now focus our adoration on Nike, ironically not the Greek goddess,

but the brand of athletic gear.

We focus our desire on being "Just like Mike" and we follow the trials and

tribulations of Nike's now most publicized *prophet*, golfer Tiger Woods. His fall from

grace in the media however did not remove him from the fold of Nike. The company,

unlike those such as AT&T and Accenture kept him despite his sex scandal that surfaced

in November of 2009. "We saw Nike drop Kobe Bryant for being unfaithful and Michael

Vick for going Cujo on some dogs [however] Tiger has exponentially expanded the

brand power of Nike, something that even Kobe and Vick couldn't do." (Gunn 2009:2)

Nike saw redemption in Tiger Woods when very few sponsors did, and even though he

has lost over $35 million worth of endorsements, Nike countered the scandal with a

commercial of Woods being scolded by a recording of his dead father while holding

back tears. Nike ensured that their prophet publically showed all the signs of remorse

while conspicuously wearing both a Nike brand cap and vest. "It's pretty simple logic: if

Tiger represents golf, and Nike sponsors Tiger, than Nike is golf." (ibid) Which makes Woods the patron saint of golf.

Both diet and exercise are practiced in America practically in the form of a religion. Much like Christianity there is a constant push to spread the idea of conspicuous thinness and it's doctrines upon non-believers and converts them for their own good (I wonder if they have considered burning heretics (fatties) at the cross?). Obesity will send you to hell quicker than sin. By injecting the consumption of morality into diet and exercise these trends were kept from becoming fads with an expiration date, and instead made into an undeniable aspect of American culture. Consumption, consumerism, conspicuousness, morality, and modernity all amalgamate to create a postmodern obsession that is as American as Mom's apple pie.

Joy of Cooking

Food, like sex and child-centered mass media changed with the emergence of the other-directed person. For the inner-directed person food was standardized, etiquette laden, nutritiously conscious, and the realm of women. "Having the proper food was something one owed to one's status, one's claim to respectability, and more recently to one's knowledge of hygiene with its calories and vitamins" (Riesman [1961] 2001:142). Cookbooks were standardized and informative; they had titles like the Boston Cooking School Cookbook and were highly conservative. Food choices were narrowed by seasonal limitations (they didn't have fruit growing year round in tropical countries ready to be exported like we do now) and the ability for food to stay fresh.

With the rise of the other-directed person every lay person considers themselves a gourmet with a highly evolved palate. Their tastes are conspicuously put on display more than their wealth, and they are constantly searching for that marginal difference concerning food that will set them apart and bring them acclaim. Along with their décor, the other-directed person is displaying their tastes and cuisine knowledge at dinner parties. "The most popular cookbook today is *The Joy of Cooking*, and the number of specialized cookbooks- ethnic, chatty, and atmospheric – constantly increases to meet the demand for marginal differentiation" (Riesman [1961] 2001:143). According to Riesman men are involved in cooking as much as the women (though I disagree with this, cooking in most homes is still considered a female gender norm) in both the kitchen and the outdoors grilling. No longer are mothers teaching their daughters to cook, they learn from cooking shows, cook books, and celebrity chefs. The other-directed person is always on the offensive when it comes to food because otherwise "he may be haunted by a feeling that he misses the joy in food or drink which he is supposed to feel. Mealtime must now be 'pleasurable'" (Riesman [1961] 2001:144).

Food is seen as fashionable, and just like clothes you must follow the trends, admire the trend setters (in this case celebrity chefs), and purchase the expensive or name brands in order to conspicuously prove that you are in the 'know.' Other-directed people are more likely to buy food products based on brand because the advertisement promises a certain lifestyle as opposed to the actual quality of the product. During the time of the inner-directed person a food product was purchased because it was a good price, good quality, and had a good taste, or it saved valuable time in meal making. Now

the emphasis is on purchasing the fad food product of the week, trying all of the new flavors of a new product that is produced. The emphasis is on consuming in order to keep up with your peers, and you have to be prepared to discuss the new mango flavored coffee that everyone is trying, or risk being socially ostracized! Other directed food has to be "fun" (think McDonald's Happy Meal), even to the point that there are frozen chicken nuggets marketed towards children that are shaped into smiley faces. Why would we teach children to eat faces? Because not only must the children have fun but the food must enjoy the process of ingestion as well.

No longer can a company just make for example a pancake mix that creates tasty easy pancakes. Now they must also produce a low-fat version, a fat-free version, an all-wheat version, an organic version, and a sugar-free version. They must provide multiple choices in order to meet the demands of consumers that have been taught that they must consume variety, consume constantly, and consume now! Other-directed consumers are "capable of a rapid if sometimes superficial intimacy" (Riesman [1961] 2001:25). So, producers of food products constantly have to produce new marketing campaigns in order to keep consumers purchasing their product instead of the competitors. This cycle of advertisement and consumption is never ending and only grows every time a new "niche market" is discovered. Every business is trying to be the next Coca-Cola.

Even though the book is called *The Joy of Cooking*, the joy is gone. It is now a chore, not a way to show love and effort. The joy is no longer relevant; it is now the prestige and impressing the peer group that is vital. We no longer cook we leave that up

to celebrity chefs such as Rachel Ray and Emeril Lagasse. (They have their own merchandising empires so they must knowledgeable, right?) Celebrity chefs write multiple cookbooks, have multiple cooking shows, have their own line of cook wear (pots, utensils linen, etc), cook Rachel Ray even has her own line of dog food called "Nutrish." It has gone so far that there is even a kitchen designed by Porsche and made with materials that the Porsche cars are made out of and according to their advertisements: "designed especially for men."[22] It is not enough that they have syndicated shows, and endorse merchandise, but we must also watch the made for TV movies about their lives. In 2003 Martha Inc.: The Story of Martha Stewart aired, and coming out in 2009 is a *comedy* about the life of Julia Childs. Cooking alone is no longer good enough; the other-directed personality always demands more of its idols. We must humanize them, expose their flaws and dissect their lives, their actual cooking skills is a minor concern. The Food channel and Cooking channel are themselves no more than a form of mass produced vicarious eating.

Continuing this there are even reality shows that follow contestants and put them through grueling competitions in order to decide who will be the next star of their own cooking show. Their personality and ability to act on screen is practically as important as their ability to cook. There is now an entire network dedicated to food that runs food themed shows[23] 24 hours a day 7 days a week that have titles to appeal to the other-directed person such as: 30 Minute Meals, 5 Ingredient Fix, Chic & Easy, Cooking for

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[22] http://www.poggenpohl-porsche-design-kitchen.com/en/
[23] http://www.foodnetwork.com/shows/index.html

Real (cause you can cook for fake?), Glutton for Punishment, Have Fork, Will Travel,

How To Boil Water, and my personal favorite: Semi-Homemade Cooking with Sandra

Lee. By the way, what is semi- homemade? Food needs to be good, quick, easy to make,

and the ingredients inexpensive to purchase; but most importantly the food has to

impress your peers with your skills, even if it is only 'semi-homemade.'

Food is considered elegant and high-class if the portions are small and artistically

designed on the plate. This is a completely other-directed idea because the food is not

there to satisfy hunger (as it would be for the inner-directed person), it is there to look

elegant and make the person eating it look elegant as well. The best example of this is a

Citi Bank credit card commercial where a couple got reservations at an amazing upscale

restaurant with "fantastic" service and with a "phenomenal" wine list, and the food was

(music stops playing when the food is placed on the table) *shared facial grimace*

"…tiny!... It's like health food." The couple ate the food, then left the restaurant and ran

to a convenience store and shoved chips quickly in their mouths.[24]

Certain foods are given prestige because they can actually kill you such as puffer

fish (Fugu in Japanese) and there is even a fad of eating live insects and animals that if

not prepared properly can kill you (an example of this is eating live squid. If the squid

becomes unwrapped from the eating utensil the tentacles can clog your throat and

suffocate you). Food also goes in and out of style like clothing. For example lobster used

to be a working class food now it is prestigious simply because a tastemaker declared it

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[24] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiVRLgD8ZS0

so. Certain animals' tongues, eggs, organs, and entrails are now considered high-status, when a generation ago only the poor ate them because they were the unwanted portions of the animals, and because of this cheap to purchase.

When it comes to prestigious foods, coffee is royalty. Every restaurant, convenience store, corner vendor, and fast food chain sells coffee. They are competing not with each other, but with Starbucks, the undisputed leader in prestigious coffee. In order to compete McDonald's has "reinvented" their coffee and is trying to upscale their coffee's image by releasing a comedic campaign geared towards incorporating "European" or accented language (which is considered 'high class' or prestigious). The advertisement's premise is that without McDonald's coffee you are putting up with a commute, but with the coffee you are *enjoying* a commute´ (sounds like commute-ay).[25] This play on words is a ploy to attach prestige to their coffee that was not present before in order to entice the other-directed consumer to consider buying McDonald's coffee, not because it tastes better but because it will make you enjoy the drudgery that is normally your day. "With a McDonald's McCafe´ a better day is possible`'" (sounds like possib-lay)….McCafe´ your day." It is noteworthy that nowhere in the entire commercial is it said that the coffee is improved from the previous coffee offerings of McDonalds; and instead of commenting on the actual taste of the coffee it is described with the adjectives "fresh, real, and decadent."

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[25] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1cXI1CXpS8

Regardless of this, McDonald's approach to selling their coffee is better than Dunkin Donuts, who is also trying to sell their new line of coffees. Dunkin Donuts made the ill-advised mistake of marketing their coffee as easier, cheaper, and for "hardworking Americans"[26] (read working-class). By advertising that their coffee was cheap they shot themselves in the foot. People may *say* they seek affordability, yet people gravitate towards ostentatious. The working class doesn't want to buy "working class" coffee they want to buy "upper class" coffee, and most importantly be seen drinking it. It is important to recognize who your audience is, other-directed consumers. Regardless of the economic recession, if they are going to buy a "luxury good" like coffee they will want the 'biggest bang for their buck' and that is not the cheapest coffee, it is the coffee that will bring them the most attention and approval. In the same commercial Dunkin Donuts did a blind taste test with their coffee versus Starbucks coffee (they "won" the blind taste test they ran without Starbuck's assistance or a neutral third party, so is this truly winning?). Even though Dunkin Donuts may offer the same coffee, even offering better tasting coffee, they will not be as popular because it has not accumulated the prestige that Starbucks has. There is shame in carrying around a Dunkin Donut cup and honor associated with carrying a Starbucks cup, and that is what is important.

Dunkin Donuts even tried to counter McDonald's coffee advertisement (commute´) in the same commercial that they were mocking the upscale coffee

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[26] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ND9FQCNiP2M

industry's tendency to use non-English (or made up words) to describe their coffee. The commercial had a long line of people at a coffee shop singing "My mouth can't form these words, my mind can't find these words, is it French *sneer* or is it Italian? Perhaps Fritalian! Delicious Lattes from Dunkin Donuts, your order them in English, not Fritalian."[27] By mocking anything that even hints at a 'European' background Dunkin Donuts attempts to disconnect both Starbucks (who practices the intricate made-up names) and McDonald's new campaign from prestige, but again I argue they failed. They were relying on stereotypes and prejudices instead of realizing that luxury foods are not about taste but about the opinions of the tastemakers, and they are not impressed with Dunkin Donut's use of the English language. "Toleration, let alone leadership [or in this case, a customer base], depends on having a highly sensitive response to swings of fashion" (Riesman [1961] 2001:73).

All of these companies practice McDonaldization described by sociologist George Ritzer. We as a society demand quick conforming service in many aspects of our lives and ignore the fact that we are perpetuating our own dehumanization. Foods, like clothing or expensive jewelry, are aspects of culture that can be conspicuously shown and acquired, and as such raise standing. Status (both social and material) is communicated through food choices. For example, only the wealthy can afford to eat caviar and drink champagne, these tastes are said to be acquired, instead it should be said

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[27] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2y_GwKzxck

that these tastes are purchased. Our culture is built upon a manipulation for personal gain and individuals play this out daily.

In order to put this into the context of food it is useful to discuss the rise of buffets in America. No other country has a higher concentration of all-day every-day buffets than the United States. It is a wide spread homage to not only consumption, but to excess. If the conspicuousness of food is a way to show your dominance, then America is at the top. While there are people starving in countries around the world, and even in the US itself, people who can afford to do so flock to buffets in order to gorge on 'unlimited' food for a set price. By having buffets Americans are participating in an activity that shows the world their elite status, they have raised the bar from "I can afford to eat meat on a daily basis" to "I can afford to eat until I am physically sick." For Baudrillard the waste of buffet food is not a *product* of conspicuous consumption, but instead entirely the point of the consumption. It is not about the cost or quality (these do not on many levels even exist in our postmodern world) it is about the sending and receiving of signs.

Buffets are extremely wasteful because not only do people leave a lot of food on their plate that is immediately thrown away, but at closing time, the food remaining in the buffet line is discarded as well. According to Veblen, "In order to be reputable it must be wasteful." (Veblen [1899] 1994:96) Veblen argues these wasteful habits should be considered predatory in nature because they are used to gain prestige through conspicuousness. Working off of Veblen and his theories, also discusses the concepts of

status striving and working for the pursuit of attention. Eating at a restaurant is conspicuously public enough, but America has made a cultural norm out of gorging in public. No wonder obesity is on the rise in the United States.

This form of conspicuousness can be further explained by the metaphor that Baudrillard refers to in multiple works, that of the smile.

> This smile signifies only the need to smile. It is a bit like the Cheshire Cat's grin: it continues to float on faces long after all emotion has disappeared… No ulterior motive lurks behind it, but it keeps you at a distance. It is part of the general cyrogenization of emotions… Smile and others will smile back. Smile to show how transparent, how candid you are. Smile if you have nothing to say. Most of all, do not hide the fact you have nothing to say nor your total indifference to others. Let this emptiness, this profound indifference shine out spontaneously in your smile (Baudrillard 1989:33-34).

The smile is one of the many 'fake gestures' as described by Baudrillard, vacant of meaning, having no purpose but to convey an emptiness, a break within the link between action and result. The result is no longer to convey emotions such as empathy or happiness, instead there are now only the signs of happiness, the signs of empathy but the signs signify nothing. It can be argued that there are no empty gestures because using the example of the smile; when someone smiles, in return a smile is usually given. This argument misses Baudrillard's point entirely; there is more to gestures than a stimulus leading to a response, a deeper meaning must be recognized and attributed importance. Baudrillard's argument can simply be summarized as gestures are empty when the meaning that is necessary is absent, regardless of reaction to the empty gestures.

Baudrillard asks "how far can we go in the extermination of meaning" and his answer is to "aim for the point of no return." (Baudrillard 1989:10)

The smile is one of the first lessons learned by anyone in the service industry; its importance is only second to the inauthentic motto: "the customer is always right." There is no warmth behind fast food worker's smiles, there is no welcome behind a bartender's grin; however, customers become angry if the fake smiles are not given. The smile is such an innate part of our culture that there is an actual restaurant chain called Dick's Last Resort that uses what I call the *anti-smile* to draw in customers. They not only offer "Smart-ass Funny Staff" but also "Controlled chaos"[28] (which in itself is a blatant fallacy, something Baudrillard would have loved). The very lack of a smile in the food industry is so foreign that people will actually pay to observe its absence.

Reality (in the form of sincerity) has also been replaced with a simulacrum in the food industry. Instead of true sincerity there are merely *signs* of sincerity, such as commercials (which Baudrillard refers to as an obscenity) telling you how healthy a food product is, or a hostess telling you welcome at a restaurant. According to Baudrillard, we are encircled by fake emotions and false relationships with others, and not only does that not bother us, but we perpetuate the cycle ourselves. Customers keep returning to a restaurant because it 'feels like home' but this is a lie, because at home you cannot conspicuously eat in public and there is no service staff (well, in most homes). The smile is another one of the many 'fake gestures' as described by Baudrillard, vacant of

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[28] http://www.dickslastresort.com/

meaning, having no purpose but to convey an emptiness, a break within the link between action and result. The result is no longer to convey emotions such as empathy or happiness, instead there are now only the signs of happiness, the signs of empathy but the signs signify nothing. It is, to quote Baudrillard "but another spiral in artificiality." (1994:11)

Instead of purchasing or selling food we are instead purchasing and selling signs. Of course food is still needed to sustain life, but we no longer look at food as a necessity we look at it as an accessory, something that gives that little extra bling to our lives. We all believe and perpetrate a vast fiction concerning food and its function. We are more intent on buying the images of food, not the actual product itself. Packaging is more important than content, and is disconnected from the actual commodity of food. Our culture perpetuates and reproduces a simulacrum when it comes to food, and now we export that concept to the world.

To use Baudrillard's language, in order to win one must of course 'play the game'. However, Veblen argues that the game is thrown before it even starts. The use of culturally encouraged chicanery makes the game inauthentic at its core. Both theorists point to the lies that are fed to people concerning culture, and both also discuss how these lies (and the actions that come from them) injure both individuals and entire societies. Though Veblen is a structuralist, his work is dark and more pessimistic than most in his field, however, he does not take that final step into oblivion (postmodernity). So by connecting Baudrillard's work to his, I gave him that final shove he needed.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

I regard Veblen as a *dark structuralist,* which means his work is not completely

postmodern (no implosion of meaning) but it does have relevant commonalities with

both postmodernism and structuralism. Thorstein Veblen is one of the most neglected of

all social theorists even though he was once hailed as America's foremost social critic.

His central concept "conspicuous consumption" has been applied to a host of

phenomena, but not to the consumption of food, fitness, gifts, charity and the esteem,

prestige, and the resulting intangibles that accompany these. Therefore, Veblen is highly

relevant because he is a structuralist who writes about the barbaric temperament that is

bleeding into modernity and pushing us further into postmodernity.

With the notable exceptions of C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, and a handful of

other sociologists, Veblen's work has been neglected (or in some cases not used to its

full potential) even though he was considered to be the foremost American social critic

of his time. His work is still relevant well over 100 years later and I sought to not only

prove this, but to connect his work to the present work being done within postmodernity.

Mainly regarded as an economist, Veblen is also considered a structuralist, and

his work is even relevant to conflict and Marxist theory. However, the important

distinction is that Veblen would not see giving as primarily promoting integration, but

instead promoting snobbery, prestige, and elitism which does not encourage bonding (as

structural functionalists would believe) but instead encourages conflict and barbarism.

Even though there are a full range of theorists from symbolic interactionists to

postmodernists whose work can be applied to giving; Veblen's work is a good candidate to incorporate into the discussion concerning giving. His work combines attributes from multiple factions within the social sciences (such as economics, anthropology, sociobiology, etc.) and offers ideas of how societies are held together by habits, yet at the same time he is critical of society and deconstructs aspects of it.

Structural Functionalists and Durkheimians see giving as serving the social function of social integration (following the work of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss). They argue that society is a self-correcting organism; therefore gift giving binds the giver and recipient of the giving into a relationship where reciprocity is an obligation. This view is accurate, yet incomplete because by focusing only on the positive aspects of giving the negative or predatory aspects are ignored, and these are just as important. Postmodernists focus more on these exploitative aspects, yet their work is not suitable for studying giving either because they deconstruct everything, so therefore there is no meaning, which according to Pauline Rosenau makes social science impossible. Postmodernists say that we are at "the end of society" (chaos without structure) and that structural functionalists are irrelevant. I do agree that it seems we are now in a postmodern era, and due to that the rules (structures) that were once thought to govern and explain modernity no longer apply as rigidly. Yet, on many levels they still do apply and that is where Veblen comes in.

The act of giving is a world-wide social and cultural phenomenon. Though performed in an infinite amount of ways, giving can be found virtually in all cultures and

societies and at all levels of attained material wealth. Even though this universality is important to so many people for so many various reasons there is a notable lack of theoretical cohesion concerning giving. Without this theoretical unification, giving has been left in an atheoretical vacuum.

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