The nameless Other
A postcolonial discussion of stereotyping in aid work

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Abstract

This thesis is a postcolonial discussion about stereotype imagery of the third world, as conveyed by aid organization, and the implications of such images. Stereotyping is a human rights issue because it concerns inferiority and superiority, and can in the end be boiled down to a matter of equality. It is therefore an issue that needs to be up for constant review in aid organizations, who mainly claim human rights as their value base.

The thesis is a single case study, looking intensely into the phenomenon of stereotyping as located within aid organizations. It looks through the lens of postcolonial theory, as it is a perspective that revolves mainly around concepts like identity, racism and stereotyping. It is constructed in two major parts, where the first part goes through the history of imperialism and the representations of ‘the Other’ it produced, and the second determines through empirical observations that aid organizations do convey stereotypic images, albeit more in terms of how they deal with the images than what they contain. The results of the empirical investigation matches well with the explanations of postcolonial theory, as the way the images are dealt with by aid organizations contributes to establish the aid receivers as ‘the Other’. Research also show that advertisement can function to both strengthen and alter previously established perceptions, which calls for organizations to design ads and information material with caution. It is however also a good thing, as it is possible to begin the process of reversing stereotypes.

The conclusion is that postcolonial theory can provide awareness for the origins and mechanisms of stereotyping, which is an issue any organization who claim human rights as their value base should engage in a debate about. If we truly care about equality this is an area of the work that needs review.
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References
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In many evangelical churches in Sweden in the 50s and 60s one could find a donations box\(^1\) with a small doll depicting a black child on top of it. For every coin placed in the box ‘the poor African’ would bow, much to the amusement of the Sunday school children. Today this would be considered very racist and the few of these boxes that remain serve as anecdotal material and as a monument of ‘another time’. But even though we in society today devote ourselves to erasing racial stereotypes and prejudices like these, we know that they prevail to some extent. In 2008, for instance, Oxford was shook by a scandal, as white students were seen covered in brown bodypaint and wearing only small loincloths at an African-themed party\(^2\), and as late as April this year three students at Lund University in Sweden were reported to the police for racial agitation for a similar venture\(^3\). Nationalist and Xenophobic parties are also gaining ground all over Europe today, an example being ‘the Swedish Democrats’ who received 5.7 % of the votes in the parliament elections of 2010\(^4\), proving that people still carry stereotypical images of ‘the Other’.

But no matter how concerning these recent stories are, the donation box of the 50s still bothers me more as a human rights student. Because it reveals something of the attitude and power relations that historically have been present in aid work; the rich holding the resources and the poor foreigners humbled with gratitude. It also shows the African as passive, nameless, and uniform; one image gets to represent a whole continent. An analysis like this one shows that the imagery that aid organizations convey of the third world concerns both stereotyping and differentiation, and the question is then if there are any modern ‘donation boxes’ - i. e. representations of the aid receivers as passive, nameless, uniform or of other stereotypical traits. Aid organizations most commonly express themselves in terms of defending human rights, and they are also one of the main sources of information for the public on what is going on in third world coun-

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\(^1\) Picture at URL = <http://barbro.posterous.com/gamla-minnen-fran-min-barndoms-sondagsskola-k>, viewed April 25, 2011


tries. This puts aid organizations in an important and vulnerable position. All the values we stand for as fighters for human rights fade if the factual outcome of our work stands in contrast to them. How are we portraying the people we claim to help? Do we wish for them to be on equal standing with us? And if so, does our depiction of them strengthen this or contribute negatively? These are questions that establish stereotyping as something that should be a major concern for anyone who claim human rights as their value base.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to examine whether stereotyping of the poor in the third world exists and is reproduced by aid organizations today, and if so, what implications this has for our perception aid provider vis-à-vis aid receiver. By the term ‘aid provider’ I here refer to both the organizations at work, as well as the whole populations of the countries that contribute with money and manpower.

One could criticize this aim for being too broad, but I have intentionally kept it that way, because what I am interested in getting at are the structures that produce negative phenomena. This is also why postcolonial theory is so interesting in this context.

The aim is not to point finger at any one organization, or to assign blame, but to contribute to a debate that has been too weak over the years, when it should be constant. I will mention organization names in this thesis, but it is only for the purpose of providing sources and visual examples, not to say that these are the only organizations that convey certain images, or that these are the only images that they convey.

1.3 Research questions

Delving into this issue I will pass two questions

- What is a stereotype?
- How do stereotypes about ‘the Other’ come about, and what have they looked like over the years?

To land in the core of the thesis:
• Is there a stereotypical image painted of the aid receiver by aid organizations today? How can it be defined, why is it there, and what are the consequences?

1.4 Theory, Method and Material

1.4.1 Theory

My theoretical point of departure is the postcolonial perspective. It is a theory that surfaced in the second half of the 1900s with authors like Frantz Fanon (and his famous work *Black skin, white masks*) and Edward Said (*Orientalism*). Postcolonial theory is relevant in this context because it deals extensively and specifically with stereotypes. It is centered on the concept of identity, and proceeding from there we can analyze other important issues, like stereotyping and racism for instance.

Note that this is not a thesis designed to praise postcolonial theory (or bash it for that matter), neither is it laying claims to have the only perspective on this issue. As postcolonialism has a great deal of thoughts concerning these matters I simply found it interesting to examine the subject through the lens of the theory.

1.4.2 Method

Methodologically this thesis can be filed as a single case study. The case study is usually associated with a location, such as a community or organization⁵, but here it will be slightly wider in scope, as my ‘location’ will be aid organizations as a broad category. Alan Bryman discusses the difficulty in defining what a case is, but comes to the conclusion of reserving the term ‘case study’ for those investigations where ‘the case’ in its own power is the focus of interest.⁶ A case study is further referred to as ‘an intense study of a single unit’⁷, and in this thesis I do not intensely study the example organizations per se, but stereotyping from both the theoretical and practical angle. Thus, it is not the aid organizations in themselves that should be considered the cases in this thesis, but rather the phenomenon of stereotyping that is located within aid organizations. It is for that reason possible for me to call this a *single* case study even though I will give

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⁶ Bryman, p. 66
several examples from different organizations. Bryman talks of different types of cases, and concludes that “[…] much case study takes place on what might be called the exemplifying case. Cases are often chosen not because they are extreme or unusual in some way but because they will provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be answered.” So is also the case for this thesis. Another point that Bryman brings up is that “[…] case studies can be associated with both theory generation and theory testing”, and this thesis can be said to be theory testing - almost in a double sense. I will look at stereotyping in aid organizations’ imagery of the third world and compare and discuss it vis-à-vis the postcolonial perspective, thus testing the postcolonial theory by applying it on the results of empirical observations. But I also already have a small hypothesis - that stereotyping of the third world is reproduced by aid organizations - and I want to test that theory by reading and observing. This last definition can of course not be called a theory in its rights sense, but it is also a form of theory testing.

Famous case study researcher Robert K. Yin defines the case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. This thesis uses multiple sources of evidence, but with an emphasis on documents. Documents are often defined quite narrowly, but, drawing on John Scott, Tim May widens the scope to include both electronic sources, government records, as well as “[…] the content of the mass media, novels, plays, maps, drawings, books and personal documents […]”.[11] On top of this he adds photographs, because “[…] although existing on the borderline between the ‘aesthetic’ and ‘documentary’ [they] may be records of events”.[12] In this wide array of material the concept of documentary research is in other words not too explanatory, or as it has been pinpointed: “[…] to say that one will use documents is to say nothing about how one will use them.”[13] The way I will construct my work is through having the focus on theory in the first part of the thesis; going through the postcolonial view of the historic processes from which stereotyping stems. The second part of the thesis will look at empirical material - both my own and others – to investigate if a stereotype exists, and what its possible implications are. In the last part I will join the two together to deter-

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9 Bryman, *Social research*, p. 52.
10 Quoted by Susan K. Soy, 'The case study as a research method.' URL = <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~ssoy/usesusers/l391d1b.htm>, viewed May 12, 2011
12 May, p. 160.
13 Platt quoted in May, p. 158.
mine if postcolonialism is accurate in its analysis, and to discuss the problems with stereotyping in general. In my own empirical inquiries I will have the focus on images, but also on the context the images exists in, like captions and arrangement.

1.4.3 Material

Due to the nature of this thesis – a postcolonial discussion – the material is on the one hand very biased. The largest portion of my material is of postcolonial thinkers, and one author - Maria Eriksson Baaz - has even been involved in two out of three books. But when one looks at a phenomenon from a certain angle it is natural to grab hold of the most prominent thinkers, like Stuart Hall, and the most passionate spokespersons, like Eriksson Baaz. They all have slightly different angles though. There’s an anthology providing the basic context and concepts of postcolonialism; there’s ‘The Paternalism of Partnership’ which is looking more specifically and deeper into a modern day situation, and the history that has shaped it; and there’s a textbook looking at representation of culture and identity in media.

On the other hand the ‘biased’ material is contrasted with material of a more empirical kind that is not concerned with postcolonialism at all; such as interview material and advertisement research, as well as my own empirical observations.

The main focus of this thesis is of course aid organizations, and what image of the third world they convey, and regarding that question I have only found one single study made in 199914. The authors of that study themselves state that background literature was extremely hard to find, and that what little they did find was not very extensive, and above all it was aged.15 My point of departure is also a little bit different than theirs, but the study is very useful in that it investigates what view aid organizations think they are projecting compared to the image their material is actually giving. The study is based on interviews, so it provides me with empirical material that I don’t have the possibility of retrieving myself. It is however now ten years old, and so it can be questioned in terms of accuracy, but added to it are my own observations which, as you will see, confirm that most of what the study describes is still accurate today. I also like the study because it investigates aid organizations of different shapes and origin, while my own inquiries have focused on the major, more well-known organizations.

14 S Gunnarsson, K Hatt & E Åberg, Starka och Handlingskraftiga Människor?! En studie om den u-landsbild några organisationer i biståndssektorn förmedlar, GI.IHR & Biståndsinfofakademinns kommunikationsutbildning, 1999
This thesis is in no way sufficient as ground for any huge conclusions. The empirical observations I have conducted myself consists of a minor analysis of the internet based materials of eight major aid organizations at work today, and cannot be claimed to exhaust the subject by any means. It can however indicate certain things, especially since the material I have looked at have provided quite uniform results.

1.5 Delimitations

It is easy to get side tracked in this topic, as there are many interesting angles concerning stereotyping. One can head down the racism trail, or look into whether aid organizations are in the hands of the market for instance. I have chosen to limit myself to the aid context because of the need to constantly and critically assess the work we are involved in as human rights defenders. ‘Aid’ also includes several different instances, like governmental aid, major organizations, as well as smaller contexts, which means that if there are negative consequences of this phenomenon it affects many levels of society.

1.5.1 Definitions

There are many collective terms for the countries that receive our aid, and none of them are really great. ‘Developing countries’ and ‘the third world’ are perhaps the most common, and I don’t like either of them, as they both refer to passed times. ‘The third world’ is a concept that arose during the Cold War to refer to nations that were not aligned with neither capitalism nor communism, and has as such passed its expiration date. But I find the term ‘developing’ even worse, as it in a sense reflects the colonial attitude of the colonizers having achieved progress and it then being their mission to develop and civilize the colonies to reach the same level. As this is a thesis written from a postcolonial perspective it seems suitable to use ‘the third world’ instead of ‘developing’, even though it in reality is not accurate anymore.

Another concept I use a lot in this thesis is ‘aid organization’, which may seem as a quite broad term. I have chosen to use it because there are many different types of organizations and it is not so easy to fit them under one label unless it is a broad one. I have chosen to leave it broad because the thesis is not designed to single out any particular organization (even though some will be mentioned as said before). I also do not find the term too broad for the aim of this thesis, as all the organizations I have looked
at so far mention human rights as a foundation for their work, no matter if their main focus is development, health care, education, or other.

1.6 Chapter Outline

Chapter two begins with establishing stereotyping firmly as a human rights issue. It then moves on to explaining the foundations of postcolonial theory and the concepts most relevant for this thesis, followed by a historic review of stereotyping and differentiation, as well as their causes, as viewed through the postcolonial lens.

Chapter three looks at the empiric grounds for defining the stereotype of the third world. It explains what a stereotype is and goes through modern day examples of aid organizations depictions of the third world, as well as what they claim they want to convey. It also looks at stereotyping in advertising to see what possible implications a stereotyped image can have.

Chapter four is the discussion chapter where the theoretical explanations will be compared to the results of the empiric material. The stereotypical image of the third world as depicted by aid organizations today will be defined, and various problems and concerns that arise with this image will be discussed, in particular the complicated relations aid organizations have with media and the PR business, as well as what happens when we bring the stereotyped image into the encounter with other cultures.

Chapter five is a short summary and conclusion.
2 Theory

Stereotyping is one of the concepts at center of attention in postcolonial theory. In this chapter we will start to unravel the historic processes that generate the phenomenon. But first it is important to establish why this is a human rights issue, and why it is so important to investigate.

2.1 Stereotyping as a human rights issue

The phenomenon of stereotyping does not relate to human rights in a direct sense. There is no convention preventing the spread of stereotypes, no agreements or declarations between states. One would perhaps think that it would be mentioned in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), but it is not. The one time it is mentioned in the major conventions is in the Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), article 5 (a), which reads:

> States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:
> a. to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women

Though this article only treats stereotyped gender roles it nonetheless proves something of why stereotyping is, and should be, a major concern in the human rights field; it links inferiority/superiority to stereotyped roles. Although the issue of stereotyping is not a part of CERD it is treated in a general recommendation issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2004\(^{16}\) concerning discrimination against non-citizens, and in a ‘Race Policy Dialogue Conference Paper’ by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, for instance, it is dealt with extensively in connection to racial minority youth\(^ {17}\).

In these recommendations and papers stereotyping is talked of as a well-known concept, needing no further explanation as to it being a negative thing. And stereotyping

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does stand in stark contrast to the values expressed by human rights organizations, and to the human rights discourse in general. That is why it is an important issue to examine. Cambridge Dictionaries online defines ‘stereotype’ as “a fixed idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong” (my emphasis). Human rights on the other hand are talked of as belonging to each and every one “[w]ithout distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. There is a clear emphasis on equality and democracy. In Maria Eriksson Baaz’s book ‘The Paternalism of Partnership’ she examines the concept of partnership in development aid, as there has been a shift in the discourse from donor/receiver to partner/partner. This shift illustrates and recognizes that there has been some sort of imperial structure in place that one has felt a need to move away from, towards a more equal one. In my brief encounter with the fieldwork of human rights, and with the culture I lived in at the time (the Haitian), I experienced a discrepancy between my perception of the situation and the people compared to the picture painted by media, and by aid organizations in the west’s attempts to bring awareness to the situation. There was a tendency to emphasize the worst of the worst, strengthening stereotypical pictures of the poor third world. Comparing stories to others who have done similar work, it is clear that these observations can be made in other aid work situations as well. I do not, however, believe that these outcomes are intentional on behalf of aid organizations. I do not believe that there is any hidden agenda or conscious ‘recolonization’ going on. But there are clearly undesired discrepancies and one-sided images produced through aid organizations’ work and advertising today, which I find important and interesting to examine. Drawing on Ray Kiely, Eriksson Baaz writes that “in order to understand the workings and outcomes of development interventions there is a need to separate intentions from outcomes”, and though I will not examine development interventions I think this is an important thought here as well.

Besides the fact that stereotypes reveal a form of double standard in aid organizations, because of the gap between human rights values and the implications of stereotyp-
ing, they also provide the larger public with an image that will shape their perception of these countries. When these images are used in advertising it also borders on exploitation, as someone’s misery is used to generate money. I would like to be clear though on the fact that I understand the intentions behind such advertising, and to examine whether the ends justify the means in such cases is a whole study in itself and will not be dealt with here.

2.2 Postcolonial theory and concepts

Postcolonial theory has gained interest because of its comprehensive approach to the array of problem areas that have surfaced in the 20th Century, like globalization and multicultural societies. The postcolonial field of research concerns questions like how cultural identities are created in the globalized society, how racist stereotypes are created and sustained, how we can fight these stereotypes, and if there’s a possibility to develop alternative identities and strategies beyond those established by the western modernization - which makes it an interesting theory to use in dealing with the issue we are looking at here. But postcolonialism has also been a widely debated and criticized theory, not least concerning the meaning of ‘post’ in Postcolonial. Some critics, like Anne McClintock and Ella Shohat, mean that the concept is used to signify the end of an historic era, but whether the periodicity is chronological or epistemological is unclear. The ‘post’ by their interpretation then means ‘after’, and colonialism is in other words something “definitely and finally finished”. But, like Maria Eriksson Baaz explains,

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

[The term ‘postcolonialism’ or ‘postcoloniality’ does not refer to an achieved state beyond colonialism. As Stuart Hall argues, ‘what post-colonial certainly is not is one of those periodisations based on epochal “stages”, when everything is reversed at the same moment’](#).

Rather postcolonialism views identities as dynamic; shifting with changed social configurations and power relations, and therefore the gradual dissolution of the direct rule of

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23 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, pp. 15-16.


25 Hall, p. 82.

26 Eriksson Baaz, p. 33.
colonialism has affected cultural identities quite dramatic. The postcolonial label is in fact a bit misleading, as it does not signal the definite and final end of colonialism, and its replacing by something completely different, but more of a social shift. This means that imperial traces remain in societies today, but at the same time it is not as easy as to say that we live in a simple continuance of colonialism. Eriksson Baaz quotes Simon Gikandi who put it like this: “[postcolonial theory is] one way of recognizing how decolonized situations are marked by the trace of the imperial pasts they try to disavow”27.

There is a thought of the domination of the colonial era continuing today, but taking on a different form. During colonial times it was through direct and occupational rule, and in the post-colonial times it is through independent states organized through trade negotiation, aid conditionalities, debt management etc.28 Thus “in this sense ‘post-’, signifying at once ‘after’ and ‘continuance’, is an appropriate label”29. Colonialism should also be seen as something touching not only the former colonies and colonizers, but as a global process that has marked most societies, even those situated outside the history of colonialism.

2.2.1 Discourse

The postcolonial theory is strongly influenced by poststructuralism.30 As a result of this, the postcolonial research field is not only attacking colonialism with differently angled questions (the relation between culture and imperialism) than earlier analyses, but it is also different in how it deals with these questions. The poststructuralist perspective is emphasizing the importance of language in the creation of identities, institutions, and politics. Language takes a different meaning here than in other disciplines though, as poststructuralism is seeking to show how the world is structured through the practice of language.31 Concepts can never be separated from the meanings that language prescribes them, and the world is produced and reproduced through language as it is socially practiced. Language is also structured in binary oppositions, like man/woman, white/black, normal/abnormal etc, and concepts are given meaning through their contrast. It is in other words in the difference that meaning is produced, and concepts that are presented as on opposite ends are in reality dependent on each other. But they are asymmetric, and

27 Eriksson Baaz, p. 33.
28 Eriksson Baaz, p. 33.
29 Eriksson Baaz, p. 34.
30 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 17.
31 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 18.
one of the opposites is always stronger than the other. In this sense our language is contributing to the creation and sustenance of social hierarchies.\textsuperscript{32} This system contains hidden power relations, and is a system where no grey zones are allowed – you are either black or white, either man or woman. To destabilize these binary oppositions poststructuralism is keeping its focus on the relation between knowledge and power, concepts which are closely connected to one of this perspective’s main concepts: discourse.\textsuperscript{33}

Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn defines discourse as referring to a socially and historically specific structure of representations that refers to the same object, shares the same style and supports one and the same structure.\textsuperscript{34} Eriksson Baaz also points out that within developmental studies discourse is a contested concept, and is often seen as loosing the material aspect of poverty.\textsuperscript{35} However, to her, discourse is not limited to speech and writing, but is “[…] about the production of meaning and as such it involves signifying practices other than those expressed in speech and writing”\textsuperscript{36}.

2.2.2 Identity

Since postcolonial theory concerns questions of globalization, multiculturalism, and racism, identity is a fundamental concept within it. Globalization is seen as having created a paradox identity wise, because it has on the one hand brought homogenization in that it has created common cultural references, but on the other hand fragmentation in that local identities are strengthened, created, and reactivated.\textsuperscript{37} The prominent postcolonial thinker Stuart Hall defines identity as a double process where discourses and practices attempt to ‘hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses’\textsuperscript{38}, at the same time as we invest in a certain position. Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn explains that identity is a central concept to many postcolonial analyses, and though the concept can be used in many different ways, a common starting point is the critique of essentialism.\textsuperscript{39} Instead of claiming that there exists a firm, unchangeable essence of human beings, postcolonialism claims that identity must be understood relationally.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 18.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 19.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 19.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Eriksson Baaz, p. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Eriksson Baaz, p. 12.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 40.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Eriksson Baaz, p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 33
\end{itemize}
Identity is constantly created through interaction, and the construction of boundaries towards others. Eriksson Baaz says that “[…] identities and experiences are constituted within discourse – that is, within partial, temporary closures of meaning, closures that are never fully successful and that imply an exclusion of other possible meanings.”\textsuperscript{40}, meaning that every identity at the same time presupposes and excludes something else.

2.2.3 Stereotyping

Identity and stereotyping are tightly knit together, as we can understand from the notion of identities being relational and excluding. In this context there are two important concepts; namely security and simplification. One of the postcolonial perspectives on stereotyping analyses the ways in which insecurity and conflicting feelings shape the stereotyping process.\textsuperscript{41} According to Stuart Hall we can understand stereotyping as a ‘representational practice’ where we reduce people to a few, simple, essential characteristics.\textsuperscript{42} We exaggerate and simplify widely recognizable traits and fix them, without change or development. This is part of the maintenance of social order, and Hall sees it as often manifest where there are ‘gross inequalities of power’.\textsuperscript{43} I will expand on definitions and theories on stereotyping much more further on in the thesis, as this concept is my main focus.

2.3 Evolutionism and differentiation

With these postcolonial concepts in mind, let us take a look at the historic process that has shaped both our discourse and identities, as well as produced stereotypes.

The donations box in the introduction portrays a passive, thankful receiver of aid, and it reflects the attitudes that were established during the colonial era; attitudes of differentiation. In the seventeenth century the rationalist idea of progress was that human knowledge grows constantly, and halts to it are only temporary.\textsuperscript{44} During the eighteenth century this came to expand even further in scope, so that it was not only knowledge that was constantly growing, but all of humankind: governments, moralities, institutions, economies, they were all seen as moving towards higher levels of development.

\textsuperscript{40} Eriksson Baaz, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{41} Eriksson Baaz, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{42} Eriksson Baaz, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{43} Eriksson Baaz, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{44} Eriksson Baaz, p. 36.
This idea of progress was firmly established during the enlightenment, but it grew in influence in the middle of the nineteenth century, after the publication of Darwin’s ‘the Origin of species and the Social Darwinism that came in its wake. Evolutionism as applied to society was built on the idea that all societies are moving from the primitive to the modern and complex, just like the simple organism developed into complex animals. But all countries were not developing at the same pace, on the contrary; different societies were seen as being at different eras or stages in the evolutionary process, with the colonizer at the top of the ladder. The Enlightenment even ranked societies on a scale from ‘barbarism’ to ‘civilization’. The colonized were seen as ‘backward’, and it was ‘the white man’s burden’ to help them get civilized and develop what was underdeveloped.

Is it then fair to say that racism as a phenomenon emerges during the modern era, in close connection to enlightenment? It’s been pointed out that there were icons with black saints in the medieval days, but that these gradually disappeared as Europe entered modernity. Ashis Nandy also says that in the early colonization of India it was more about feudalism than race; Englishmen could even show respect and reverence for the Indian culture, and many married Indian women. In other words it was not until the new middle class took over the colonial rule in the nineteenth century that it started to show traits of the ‘civilizing mission’.

But we can also find condescending descriptions of other ethnic groups in the Bible and in writings from classical antiquity, and the Greek even invented a special word – namely ‘barbarian’ - to use on strangers. Both the Ethiopians in the south and the Scythian in the north were seen as inferior to the Greek, who singled out other ethnicities according to both biology and exterior factors.

Despite these early examples of racism, there is still a difference between them and what happened with enlightenment and colonialism. The ethnic differences were in ancient Greece explained through environment, as oppose to enlightenments concept of progress which ties character traits to unchangeable biological or spiritual origins.
Thus essentialism is a fundamental element in modern day racism, and it surfaced at a specific time in history.

The view on this from the postcolonial perspective is that the modern identity of the west has its base in a fundamental distinction between the civilized Europeans and ‘the Others’; with the Europeans as carriers of a ‘universal historic development process’, and the Others as standing outside of this process.\textsuperscript{53} According to postcolonial theory this distinction is also the common starting point for the modern social sciences and humanities that were shaped in the nineteenth century. Defining ‘the human’ is now in these disciplines done in terms of movement and development, and early definitions of the modern universalism are forever tied to colonialism.\textsuperscript{54}

2.4 Racializing ‘the Other’

The ‘West’ encountered black people at three major moments in history: the contact between European traders and West African kingdoms in the sixteenth century that started the slave trade; the colonization of Africa during the high imperialism, and the following struggle between European powers for control over territory, markets and resources; and the migration from the third world to Europe and North America after World War II.\textsuperscript{55} These encounters strongly shaped western ideas about ‘race’ and difference.

The term ‘racialism’ was coined by K.A. Appiah\textsuperscript{56}, and draws on evolutionism. Before Darwin was active, the Swedish biologist Carl von Linnaeus organized plants and flowers into families according to certain classifications in his \textit{Systema Naturae}. And he also proceeded to with scientific claims classify groups of people according to supposed intrinsic traits. Now Linnaeus is by most not considered a scientist of race\textsuperscript{57}, but he is a predecessor of the racial science of the nineteenth century, and it is the essence of the theory of race that Appiah refers to when he talks about racialism. This essence stipulates that there are heritable characteristics of humans that allow us to divide humanity into groups with certain traits and tendencies not shared with other groups. These characteristics of ‘the races of man’ are about more than just the visible.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{53} Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{54} Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{55} Hall, \textit{The Spectacle}, p. 239.
\textsuperscript{56} Eriksson Baaz, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{57} Eriksson Baaz, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{58} Eriksson Baaz, pp. 44-45.
2.4.1 Imperial imagery

At the end of the nineteenth century, British popular culture was flooded with images of racial difference, flowing out of the imperial encounter. As stated above, the middle ages had a quite different picture of Africa, with black saints in its iconography and the Coptic Church as one of the oldest oversea Christian communities. However this picture changed gradually and Africa started to be identified with nature, symbolizing ‘the primitive’ in contrast to ‘the civilized’ west. During the Enlightenment thoughts of Africa emerged like it was ‘the parent of everything that is monstrous in Nature’. Philosopher Hegel declared it without development, Curvier said the Negro race was a monkey tribe, and when the colonization started to get serious by the nineteenth century the common picture of Africa was as a land of cannibals and witch doctors, even ‘historically abandoned’.

2.4.2 Commodity production and advertising

These stereotypes that grew strong during colonialism were boosted by the fact that what we call media started to take form. The Victorian middle class got their imagery from maps, drawings, photography (the newest technique of the time), newspapers, illustrations, adventure novels etc. One way the ‘imperial project’ was given visual form was through advertising, and the commodity advertising was very racialized. According to Anne McClintock, through these ads “the Victorian middle-class home became a spectacle for the display of imperial spectacle and the reinvention of race […]”, and at the end of the nineteenth century, with the rise of the popular press, advertising became the way these images entered the working classes as well.

At this time the production of commodities was linked to empire; the most important reason for imperial expansion had now become the search for markets and raw materials. This produced a two-way traffic between imperialism and the domestic, as commodities (and the British way of life) flowed out into the colonies, while raw materials as well as images of ‘the civilizing mission’ returned. The imperial heroes also got de-

59 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 239.
60 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 239.
61 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 239.
62 Edward Long quoted in Hall, The Spectacle, p. 239.
63 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 239.
64 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 240.
65 Quoted in Hall, The Spectacle, p. 240.
66 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 240.
picted on all sorts of various goods, and this was a type of organized racism that now was able to reach a larger and more differentiated population than ever.67

2.4.3 Pear’s soap

One such imperial hero was Henry Stanley, who famously tracked down Dr Livingstone in Central Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. He was also a founder of the infamous Congo Free State.68 He was a firm believer in commodities and what they could do in terms of civilizing - he even named his native bearers after product brands.69 One of the brands he got associated with was ‘Pear’s soap’ which was a company that really managed to utilize this new medium of advertising, and who also drew a lot in their campaigns from ‘the civilizing mission’. One ad even says “The first step towards lightening The White Man’s Burden is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness”70 Anne McClintock points out that clothes and bedding washing was before the end of the nineteenth century done only once or twice a year in most households, but by the end of the 1890s Victorians were consuming 260,000 tons of soap a year.71 Cleanliness had become a class and race issue, as McClintock puts it:

[...] Pear’s made and sold the powders, creams and dentifrices used by the rich to ensure the fashionable alabaster purity of their complexions. For the elite, a sun-darkened skin stained by outdoor manual work was the visible stigma not only of a class obliged to work under the elements for a living but also of far-off, benighted races marked by God’s disfavor.72

Racial stereotypes continued to be a part of advertising, but Pear’s soap is an early example, and quite a crude one. Another ad by Pear’s depicts a black child sitting in a bathtub being handed a bar of soap by a white boy. In the next picture the boy is holding up a mirror to the black child whose body is now white, while the face remains dark.73 This is a perfect illustration of the McClintock quote above, as ‘white’ is obviously the equivalent of ‘clean’ in this ad.

67 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 240.
68 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 240.
69 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 240.
70 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 240.
71 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 280.
72 Hall, The Spectacle, p. 281.
2.5 What is a stereotype?

As stated above, the dictionary definition of a stereotype frames it as “a fixed idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong”, indicating the negative implications of the phenomenon. Richard Dyer distinguishes between ‘typing’ and ‘stereotyping’. His idea is that without types it is very hard to make sense of the world. The way we understand the world is by taking objects, people or events and comparing them to classification schemes in which they will fit - according to our culture. This is a form of decoding that enables us to understand that a chair is a chair, for instance, even if the design of it is slightly different from other chairs we have seen in our days. We understand ‘the particular’ in terms of its ‘type’, and “typing is essential to the production of meaning”. According to Dyer a type is “[…] any simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognizable characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded and change or ‘development’ is kept to a minimum.” Drawing on this, Stuart Hall defines stereotypes in this way:

“Stereotypes get hold of the few ‘simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized’ characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them, and fix them without change or development to eternity.” [Author’s emphasis]

Stereotyping is also a strategy of ‘splitting’; dividing normal/acceptable from abnormal/unacceptable, and leading to the exclusion of what does not fit. Hall explains Dyers thoughts on this as “[t]ypes are instances which indicate those who live by the rules of society (social types) and those who the rules are designed to exclude (stereotypes)” . This is done through clear-cut boundaries that are unalterable, and stereotypes are therefore more rigid than social types. Stereotypes are part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It helps set up a frontier between what is normal and what is deviant. It furthers the binding together of ‘Us’ – we who are normal – into an (imagined) community, expelling ‘Them’ – the Others.

If the first two characteristics of stereotyping are that it reduces, exaggerates, simplifies, and fixes differences while also splitting and creating a clear boundary between

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74 Hall, *The Spectacle*, p. 257.
75 Hall, *The Spectacle*, p. 257.
77 Hall, *The Spectacle*, p. 258.
78 Hall, *The Spectacle*, p. 258.
79 Hall, *The Spectacle*, p. 258.
80 Hall, *The Spectacle*, p. 258.
‘Us’ and ‘Them’, the third is according to Hall that it tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power.\(^81\) This is because power is mostly directed against subordinate or excluded groups. When there are binary oppositions like ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ there is rarely any peaceful coexistence, as one of the two governs or has the upper hand. Dyer says that one aspect of this power is ethnocentrism, which means that one applies the norms of one’s own culture to that of others.\(^82\)

2.6 How do stereotypes emerge?

2.6.1 Ambiguity

The Pear’s ad with the two children described above points to another aspect of stereotyping that postcolonial theory brings up, namely the ambivalence of the imperial view of ‘the Other’.

The discourses of ‘otherness’ were very important for the legitimizing of imperial expansion\(^83\). But there was a contradiction to the colonial project – a contradiction between the discourses of otherness on the one hand, and the civilizing mission on the other. In the end the logic of colonization meant that the colonized should become like the colonizer, but at the same time remain different to some extent. ‘The white man’s burden’ called for a civilizing of the backward and primitive, and the colonized should copy and reproduce the western culture, which was seen as the top of the evolutionary chain. But at the same time depended the continued colonial domination on the very opposite; that the colonized stayed different.\(^84\) This ambiguity can be clearly seen in the ad for Pear’s soap, as the black child’s body is washed white – as the norm – while his face remains black to make sure that the ‘otherness’ is still visible.

There was another form of inconsistency in the thoughts behind imperialism, as the social evolutionism that was used to justify imperial expansion cannot be defined as a coherent or univocal cultural phenomenon.\(^85\) There is an important tension in how the colonized were depicted as ‘backward’. Because this meant that the colonizers could choose to see them as eternally outside of development and modern civilization, and in

\(^{81}\) Hall, *The Spectacle*, p. 258.
\(^{82}\) Hall, *The Spectacle*, p. 258.
\(^{83}\) Eriksson Baaz, p. 45.
\(^{84}\) Eriksson Baaz, p. 45.
\(^{85}\) Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 30.
so doing legitimize extinction. At the same time the colonized could be seen as developable, which would justify colonial disciplinary and civilizing projects.86

2.6.2 Ambivalence

Another central concept in the postcolonial discussion concerning stereotyping is the ambivalence within persons, and let us enter this subject through a famous psychological study that was carried out in the US in the 40s. It was called ‘Studies in Prejudice’, and political psychologist Ashis Nandy, among others, has shown special interest in it.87 The study was published as a book in 1950 with the title ‘The Authoritarian Personality’ and was a study that sought to investigate the psychological disposition among those who carried prejudices against Jews and black people. Out of the interview material crystallized a psychological ideal type of the authoritarian personality, which showed a connection between unreserved respect for authorities and contempt for weakness. The authoritarian personality also had a thinking closely connected to stereotypes, with sharp distinctions and hierarchical relations between the self and the surrounding world, as well as between ‘Us’ and ‘the Others’. It was also concluded that this personality type tended to have difficulties dealing with cultural ambivalence. That is, a difficulty to relate to abstract or open symbolic representations – things that don’t fit the classification categories – leading also to intolerance against persons or groups that are not a part of the ‘normal’. One made a connection to psychoanalysis, as ambivalence was an important concept for Freud, who used it to signify mixed emotions (positive/negative) before an object.88 Within psychoanalytical tradition it has also been concluded that there are different ways to deal with this ambivalence. Either you compile your mixed emotions into a complex image, or you suppress negative emotions and idealize.89 Usually the emotions that get suppressed have something to do with social taboos like aggressiveness or sexuality. In the study it was noticed that the authoritarian personality tended to deal with ambivalence through suppression, leading to the suppressed emotions being projected unto the ‘deviant’ groups. Both Jews and black people were accordingly in the study characterized as aggressive and overly sexual. The conclusion from this view on stereotyping is that the splitting and creating clear boundaries that

86 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 31.
87 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 36.
88 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 37.
89 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 37.
signifies the phenomenon has its ground in the inability to deal with psychological ambivalence.90

This study has been widely criticized however, mainly because of its implication that racism can be tied to a certain personality type.91 And even though psychoanalysis has been an important influence for many postcolonial theorists it has at the same time been under much criticism.92 Above all due to the fact that when psychoanalysis developed in the early 20th century it was very much shaped by eurocentrism and evolutionism, which means that it carries racism implicitly. Freud himself for instance claimed that the civilized person, as oppose to the primitive, was characterized by the super-ego’s ability to control its urges.93 And with postcolonialism’s connections to poststructuralism it is not strange that criticizers also question the very existence of firm psychological characters at all. After all poststructuralists focus on language, and when we fix racism to a specific personality type we make invisible racism as discourse. Postcolonialism claims that racism instead is rooted in the historic processes that have shaped western cultures understanding of themselves, resulting in racism being an unconscious dimension of our imaginary world, embedded in the categories by which we understand our surroundings.94

2.6.3 Insecurity

Stereotyping then emerges when we are trying to secure our surrounding. We want clear-cut categories to identify persons and objects by. We want the Other to be ‘completely known’, as Eriksson Baaz expresses it.95 To further add to this analysis she mentions American cultural and literary historian Sander Gilman who describes the stereotype “[…] as a ‘momentary coping mechanism’, which is triggered by situations of stress and insecurities, thus reflecting a general insecurity rather than its opposite”96. Postcolonial thinker Homi Bhabha makes a similar interpretation of the phenomenon, but situates it in the colonial context. He challenges the thought that colonizers/colonized identities existed in a stable and unitary way. Stereotypes should not be seen as a secure point of identification, but is rather ‘a complex, ambivalent, contradic-

90 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 38.
91 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 38.
92 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 36.
93 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 36.
94 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 38.
95 Eriksson Baaz, p. 17.
96 Eriksson Baaz, pp. 17-18.
tory mode of representation. Bhabha claims that the identity of the colonizer was destabilized and fractured, and that stereotypes are characterized by the hesitation between that which is already known and that which must be ‘anxiously repeated’. If stereotypes must be repeated to be kept alive, it indicates that stereotyping is not as securely established as the rhetoric of the phenomenon might imply.

97 Eriksson Baaz, p. 18.
98 Eriksson Baaz, p. 18.
3 Stereotyping in the aid context

With this historic and theoretic background in mind, let us examine the specifics of stereotyping in the aid context; unraveling the media’s and different organizations’ image of the third world, as well as the role of advertising in the generation of stereotyped imagery.

3.1 Pictures of the third world

When professor of journalism and mass communication Jo Ellen Fair over the years have asked her students to describe Africa she’s received answers like it’s “a basket-case”, “impoverished”, “falling apart”, “undeveloped”, “savage”, “backward”, and so on.\(^\text{99}\) These are images that her students have picked up from textbooks, TV, newspapers, and movies, and she concludes that “[…] the mass media, as modern-day storytellers, are central to the framing of events that may not be personally experienced”\(^\text{100}\). If the media played a prominent part in the establishment of the colonized ‘Other’ at the end of the nineteenth century, it is even more important today \((\text{explain WHY!!})\). And it seems as if it is still flooded with imagery to uphold the categorization of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. Fair describes news as not merely facts but

\[\text{[it] plays an important cultural role by providing audiences with ways of handling new and recurring issues and problems. In telling a “story”, the news media retell and interpret versions of that particular story as told by other powerful social and political institutions}^{101}\]

Media is retelling and interpreting a ‘story’, and they are doing this through ‘typing’, as described in chapter 3.3, meaning that the western media will categorize and interpret according to what has been culturally determined. Fair says that this is how the media-based imagining of Africa is in large portion formed; interwoven with the historical processes that have constructed the African ‘Other’.\(^\text{102}\)

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\(^{100}\) Fair, p. 5.

\(^{101}\) Fair, p. 7.

\(^{102}\) Fair, p. 6.
Fair is concerned with the fact that media seems to convey such a biased picture of Africa that the common description of it are in terms of ‘savage’ and ‘backward’ – which by the way strikes very close to the imperial language concerning the ‘civilizing mission’. The problem that she sees with such a narrow depiction is that most of what Americans learn about the African continent, its countries, and peoples is originated in media-produced content. The news also plays a key role in providing information to government officials and policy makers.¹⁰³ When David Wiley analyzed U.S. policy making on Africa he noted that it is problematic that media plays such a key role, because when it only describes Africa’s problems it deepens policy makers’, as well as the public’s, weariness with Africa.¹⁰⁴ He says that “The general gloomy tone of the U.S. media coverage of Africa reinforces powerful stereotypes about Africa within government and in the broader society and creates a negative context for all consideration of African policy”¹⁰⁵. When research indicates that events taking place outside of the country only become news in the U.S. when the stories focus on corruption or crisis¹⁰⁶, it is not so strange that a certain type of image emerges in the mind of the public.

3.2 ‘The misery image’

How do the aid organizations’ depictions then stand in contrast to that of the media? It seems to be generally perceived that there exists a stereotyped image of the third world that aid organizations use when promoting themselves. When Sigrid Gunnarsson, Kikki Hatt and Eva Åberg interviewed Swedish aid organizations, representatives from these organizations were also unanimous in the existence of these stereotypes.¹⁰⁷

But to define the stereotype of the poor third world could be a both difficult and unfair task. Yet it seems we all have some picture in mind when we think of the typical advertisement designed by organizations to attract donors. Just explaining to people what I write about brings out reactions with clear imagery. Mostly of children; usually they are dirty, maybe starving, more often than not in an African country. The responses that Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg received when asking the organizations to describe their view of the third world were comments like “we have a different view”; meaning that

¹⁰³ Fair, p. 7.
¹⁰⁴ Fair, p. 7.
¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Fair, p. 7.
¹⁰⁶ Fair, p. 8.
¹⁰⁷ Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg, p. 11.
they give a positive and nuanced image, while at the same time indicating the existence of another, worse view. No one really defined this bad and unbalanced depiction, that the authors named ‘the misery image’ (‘eländesbilden’), and no one wanted to identify any organization that conveyed it. But there was no doubt as to its existence, and a few suggestions are given in guessing the origin of it, saying that it could be an image that other organizations convey, it could be an image that the own organization used to convey, it could be the media’s depiction, or an historic image that has stayed in the consciousness of the public. The authors themselves mention a few ways to describe this ‘misery image’, one way being in terms of Biafra, which has been another picture that people in my surrounding have brought up in connection to this subject. In mentioning Biafra, one refers to the great famine that followed in the wake of the Nigerian-Biafran War in the end of the 60s. Swedish media was flooded with images of severely famished children with blown up bellies, and the term ‘Biafra-child’ was coined.

Another outcome of the interviews by Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg was that aid organizations frequently returned to the image that media gives. This image is considered one-sided, mostly negative, and therefore in need of balancing, which would be the task of the aid organization. The general opinion was that the organizations did not need to engage themselves in describing misery, because media does it so well.

Though the one-sidedness of this picture is disturbing, it is nonetheless a shift from the explicitly racist imagery of early imperialistic ads such as the one for Pear’s soap. This is however not a surprising discovery, as the rest of society changed prominently during the years in between. With the decolonization of the 1900s, and the civil rights movement of the 60s and 70s, racism has become an undesired phenomenon, and both the language as well as the imagery in the public sphere have gradually transformed.

Still, if we are to believe the postcolonial thinkers, stereotypes and racism are deeply anchored within the historic processes that have shaped our self-understanding, and they are part of our imaginary world; within our language categories. This would mean that what was explicit in the early imperialistic ads could lay implicit in modern day ads.

108 Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg, p. 11.
109 Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg, p. 11.
110 Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg, p. 11.
111 Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, p. 38.
3.3 The nameless Other

So what can a survey of some of the major players’ informational material and ads tell us? My observations are based on the websites of eight major players in aid work – in Sweden and internationally. I chose the three organizations that are most active in Swedish television when it comes to fundraising: Radiohjälpen, Unicef, and Plan Sweden; the three organizations that Swedes say they would preferably turn to if they wanted information about aid: Save the Children, Sida, and the Red Cross\textsuperscript{112}; and to these I have also added the Swedish government’s informational page on Swedish aid, and World Vision, to bring in an international player that is very active both internationally and domestically, though not in Sweden. I will here present some general observations, as well as give some specific examples to illustrate my findings.

I can summarize my findings under three headlines, namely ‘nameless’, ‘placeless’, and ‘faceless’, with an emphasis on ‘nameless’.

The first observation to be made is that the most common person in a picture is a child who is non-white. When an organization or institution wants to deliver general information about something, it seems common to illustrate it with such a picture. The Swedish government, for instance, have chosen to illustrate their webpage about humanitarian aid with a picture of a nameless boy who looks to be from a middle-eastern country.\textsuperscript{113} But without any information about him – how can I know? Who is he, and how does he relate to the work of the Swedish government? These are all unanswered questions. This boy can be said to be both nameless and placeless, since no information about him is provided at all.

A second observation is that in these matters, there is a difference between whites, or people from one’s own country, compared to the poor person in a third world country. When western people are captured in pictures they are, as far as I have seen (unless it concerns a celebrity), always presented with name. This is an observation that Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg also made, and they point to a review of aid organizations’ material from 1997 that shows that it was only in 37% of the cases that the persons in the pictures were named.\textsuperscript{114} The American aid organization World Vision illustrates this phe-

\textsuperscript{113} Regeringen. Home Page. URL = <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/10400>, viewed May 22, 2011
\textsuperscript{114} Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg, p. 13.
nomenon well, as they not only do work in third world countries, but also at the moment are trying to get donations for relief work after the disastrous tornado that struck Alabama hard on April 27. Their webpage contain many pictures of children from all over the world who serve as illustration for the needs that they try to relieve. But there is only one single picture out of all with a presentation of those in need of help, and it is the one of an American mother of two who lost their home in the tornado.115

How the third concept, ‘faceless’, comes into play is through the times when organizations want to illustrate a need in the own country. There seems to be a reluctance towards putting a face on something that can be considered ‘embarrassing’ – in western countries that is – such as poverty. When Save the Children Sweden seeks to illustrate child poverty, which they have recently come out with a report about, it is through a manipulated image that after some looking I can identify as the backside of a child wearing a winter coat and hat. No face. And no other images at all. Which is a fact that is completely understandable; to pinpoint someone to be the face of something considered bad seems very unfair, especially when it concerns children. But why is the nameless woman from the Ivory Coast on the picture above the manipulated one treated differently?116

Another general observation is that frequently aid workers, or journalists in promotion films, speak for the aid receiver, rendering them only a face to illustrate what is being said, instead of having a voice of their own. At one point in an informational film for Save the Children International’s health campaign ‘Every One’ the British reporter, and what appears to be a worker at a local hospital, kneel at the bedside of a severely malnourished 3 year old. The British reporter is appalled by the state of the child and they both talk about the child, while the mother is on the same bed, only a few feet away.117 Another version of this takes place in Unicef Sweden’s informational segments from their big annual fundraiser show in Swedish television118; the person assigned to talk about the situation in Kenya, for instance, is a Swedish aid worker, not a Kenyan119. There are also frequently pictures of non-white children together with white adults, and Unicef’s Sweden’s whole campaign ‘För varenda unge’ (‘For every kid’) is built around

115 See Appendix A
116 See appendix B
117 Film clip on Rädda Barnen. Home Page. URL = <http://www.rb.se/vartarbete/internationell/halsa/Every-One/Pages/default.aspx>, viewed May 20, 2011
118 ‘Humorgalan – för varenda unge’
119 Film Clip by Unicef on Youtube. Home page.
URL = <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNx2Ur7Zz1w&feature=related>, viewed May 22, 2011
Swedish celebrities travelling to third world countries to give their view of the situation.\textsuperscript{120}

When Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg interviewed aid organizations they encountered a quite unison voice on what the organizations themselves considered their image of the third world to be like, and what type of image they wanted to convey. It was expressed in terms of wanting to show individuals, not a ‘grey mass’; not wanting to show people as victims, but as in possession of power and initiative; and not indicating any difference between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’.\textsuperscript{121} The image that they found to be the strongest was however a different one. The authors point to the fact that the organizations do show images of strong people who build up houses, organize themselves, work for changes etc. The problem is that these are not the images that speak the loudest. Their impression was that these images will be ‘suffocated’ by other elements in the information.\textsuperscript{122} My own conclusion is a similar one. There are nice photos that focus on culture, on positive projects, and there are photos of happy people, of children that are not starving. But despite this, the majority of them still fit under the headlines ‘nameless’ and ‘placeless’, and they are still treated differently than the ‘faceless’ domestic pictures, and I will come back to this in the discussion.

3.4 Stereotyping in advertising

When people have little to no prior knowledge about a subject, place, culture, or other, the information in the public becomes the main source of forming an opinion. As we could see in the discussion of Jo Ellen Fair’s findings above, the media is for instance that largest source of information on Africa for both the public and the government in the US. Since the early imperialistic ads, such as the one for Pear’s soap, the importance of advertising has also grown immensely, to the point where documentary film maker Morgan Spurlock is coming out with a movie this year called ‘The greatest movie ever sold’ where he attempts to sell every single thing in the movie as an advertising spot – and also succeeds to.\textsuperscript{123} To keep their work going aid organizations have to keep up with this social climate, or, as Save the Children Sweden expresses it on their webpage: “Do

\begin{footnotes}
\item[121] Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg, p. 12.
\item[122] Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg, p. 20.
\end{footnotes}
Save the Children have the means to advertise in TV, radio and newspapers? The answer is that we have to make the means. If we do not make ourselves visible we’ll soon have neither donors nor members.124 If this is so, and if stereotypical images still prevail to some extent in aid organizations’ depiction of people in the third world; what are the implications of stereotypes in advertising?

Norwegian professors Kjell Grønhaug and Morten Heide made an experimental study in the early 90s, looking into stereotyped advertising.125 They discuss this phenomenon as something produced by the representativeness of stereotypes in combination with the need to be effective in advertising.126 They say that stereotypes stored in memory are easily accessible information, and the frequent use of them is because the advertiser must be effective to be successful – to reach as many as possible with the least money and time possible. Another aspect of this is that the more complex the product is, the more the advertiser has to rely on specific attributes believed to be crucial for the buyer.127Departing from the fact that “When the receiver has no detailed knowledge about the phenomenon communicated, it is likely that ‘biased’ advertising messages may result in standardized and biased stereotyped perceptions”128 they investigated the effects of a country advertising for Norway designed to attract tourists. The target object was chosen because it was deemed to fall within the categories that seem to bring about stereotypes; Norway as a travel destination is a complex phenomenon, containing both goods and services, while at the same time being something distant foreigners have limited familiarity with. The experiment consisted of exposing two different groups of students at a major US university to two different sets of movies. The first group (the test group) was exposed to a promotional film from the Norwegian Tourist Board, especially designed for the US market, attempting to give the viewer a taste of everything Norway can offer as a travel destination. The other group (the control group) was shown other films about Norway, of the approximately same length, but completely unrelated to the country as a travel destination. After the viewings they conducted a survey, both concerning the prior knowledge of the students, as well as of the impact of the films. The results showed that none of the respondents had ever been to Norway, and the gen-

126 Grønhaug & Heide, p. 57.
127 Grønhaug & Heide, p. 58.
128 Grønhaug & Heide, p. 58.
eral knowledge of the target object was very modest.\textsuperscript{129} They also showed that the test group – the one exposed to the promotional film – was more positive to Norway than the control group; indeed, it was even more positive towards Norway than actual tourists that had been there.\textsuperscript{130} They conclude that “[t]he above findings indicate that the film has been ‘successful’ as it seems able to change and create more positive evaluations among the subjects in the target group with modest prior knowledge about the target object”\textsuperscript{131} The results also prove that the test group was more similar in their evaluations, suggesting that the film had created a more coherent and stereotyped image of the country in this group.\textsuperscript{132} The finding that the test group was found to be more positive towards Norway than people that had actually been there shows that “[…] advertising may not only change the perceptions and image about the target object, but also that such created images may deviate from evaluations based on personal experience”\textsuperscript{133}.

Their conclusion is that advertising as such employs a standardized message, and the use of it may result in more coherent and prototypic images.\textsuperscript{134} They also found that even when one is in possession of very modest prior knowledge, one may still hold stereotypical images of target objects; stereotypical images that are crude and ambiguous.\textsuperscript{135} “The findings clearly suggest that images rooted in modest prior knowledge may both be strengthened and altered”\textsuperscript{136}. This is an intriguing statement if one is interested in combating stereotypes.

\textsuperscript{129} Grønhaug & Heide, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{130} Grønhaug & Heide, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{131} Grønhaug & Heide, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{132} Grønhaug & Heide, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{133} Grønhaug & Heide, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{134} Grønhaug & Heide, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{135} Grønhaug & Heide, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{136} Grønhaug & Heide, p. 65.
4 Discussion

After going through the history of stereotyping as viewed through the postcolonial lens, and looking at the actual imagery conveyed by aid organizations today, there are a few things worthy of discussion. To begin with; do the results of the empiric investigation match with the theoretical explanations?

4.1 Is the postcolonial analysis applicable?

There are a few key concepts to grab hold of concerning stereotyping in the postcolonial perspective. First of all it is the historic processes of the colonial time that have shaped our identities and the way we view the world; we ‘type’ and ‘stereotype’ according to what fits with our culture. What happens is that the power relations of the colonial time lives on embedded in the discourse. Discourse is also not only language, but should be seen as practice, leading to power relations showing in our notions of the third world, albeit unconsciously. This could be an explanation for why pictures of people in third world countries are treated differently from pictures of people in our own, and why white people are so frequently speaking for the aid receivers instead of giving them a voice of their own.

So, stereotyping is related to our culture and how it has been shaped over the years, but it is also tightly knit to security. Stereotyping is a ‘momentary coping mechanism’, and if we look at it in terms of what aid work comes in contact with; gross inequalities in the world, poverty, famine, disease, and so on, it seems to be a fairly accurate analysis, as there are plenty to shield oneself from. If we stereotype the third world it could be because of the need to distance ourselves from the huge issues at play, and by signaling this distance through nameless images of persons clearly different from ourselves we manage to fight the troubling emotions that arise from knowing about tough situations in the world. Eriksson Baaz discusses this in connection to development workers she interviewed in Tanzania. It seems to her that being relocated to another country, like coming from Sweden to Tanzania, gives rise to feelings of insecurity, unpredictability, and lack of control, which strengthens the need to secure one’s surrounding; “As such, the relocation itself can be seen as constituting a good breeding ground for the stereo-
type – the effort to fix the Other." And if field workers are in situations that easily breed stereotype images, it is not so strange if that view make its way into the thinking of the organization; reflecting into the way they describe their work and the way they advertise.

We can see that postcolonial analysis is applicable to the empiric observations of how aid organizations depict people of the third world in their information and ads, but we have not yet defined the stereotype of the third world as conveyed by aid organizations. Is it even possible to do?

4.2 Defining the stereotype

The conclusion to be drawn from the empirical material is that to define the stereotype of the third world in more than general terms is not possible. But despite this there are still important characteristics to bring up.

Out of conversations with people around me, and through the interviews by Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg, can be said there seems to be a common perception in Sweden of a stereotypical image – a ‘misery image’ – close to the ‘Biafra children’. And I have encountered this image in the material of the organizations I have looked through as well. There are after all terrible things going on in the world, and this image might be the one you need to show, especially if you are concerned with health care. It is not the dominant image however.

The real problems are how the images are dealt with. The observation of the namelessness made by both me and Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg is concerning, though from a postcolonial analysis not surprising. This does not only stand in stark contrast to the desire by the organizations to show individuals and not a ‘grey mass’, but it can be seen as a continuation of the imperial creation of ‘the Other’. If we were to define the stereotypic image of the third world as conveyed by aid organizations, and not as in the minds of people, it would be a nameless non-white child, frequently also placeless. This can tell us that skin color is still a signifier of otherness, but in this particular context it works in a different way than domestic racism in the west. It seems that paired with other elements - such as dirty clothes, or a background that is clearly non-western – it places the aid receiver firmly ‘somewhere else’, which is a further indication of stereo-

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137 Eriksson Baaaz, p. 18.
typing as a ‘coping mechanism. In brief one can say that the stereotypical image does not show people in a certain state, for instance ‘starving’, but it is rather the vagueness of the images that define them as stereotypical; the blurring together of a large group of individual people into a single mass of ‘otherness’.

4.3 Problematization

4.3.1 The media image

As we can see above there is a small discrepancy between the image that people hold in their minds and the image conveyed by the organizations. There exists in one way two different stereotypes; the notion of the stereotype and the manifestation of the stereotype. If these two are different, can the notion of the stereotype then really be connected to the manifestation of the stereotype by organizations?

What we can say for sure is that there are several different processes and actors that produce stereotypes. In the context of this theory there is another major player besides aid organizations, and it is the media. Jo Ellen Fair showed that media influences not only the public, but also governmental policy. News media are always early at the scenes of catastrophes, and photo journalism plays a big part in making an impact with the stories. Personally, when I worked in Haiti in the wake of the 2010 earthquake, I felt that the media portrayed the situation worse than it was. Horrible things had happened there, as well as the country having huge political and humanitarian problems even before the catastrophe, but the journalists that flooded the country seemed to focus on the worst of the worst. Many agree with me and it gave rise to a debate about how photo journalists used the situation that one blogger calls ‘disaster pornography’. This is also what the organizations themselves claimed to be the origin of ‘the misery image’, as mentioned above, that it is the media that is concerned with showing suffering, and therefore the organizations do not need to dedicate themselves to that.

But aid organizations have many and diverse connections to media, so this separating of the two is not so easily made. Organizations depend on media for promotion of their work, while they are relied on for expertise information on different situations when

138Example blogs at
URL = <http://www.foto8.com/new/online/blog/1076-does-haitis-crisis-call-for-a-new-photojournalism>, and
URL = <http://tiffanybbrown.com/2010/03/20/on-haiti-photo-journalism-or-disaster-pornography/>

139Tiffany Brown at
URL = <http://tiffanybbrown.com/2010/03/20/on-haiti-photo-journalism-or-disaster-pornography/>
media report. Some larger organizations also hold fundraisers in television in partnership with different networks. I think it is safe to say that media have a hand in organizations’ representation of the countries and situations they work in, at the same time as organizations contribute to the information that media present. They are interwoven, even though they of course do much work separately, and as such do not always share views and styles of representation.

We can then not come to any conclusion as to whose “fault” it is that stereotypical images of the third world are still prevailing in the minds of the public. From a postcolonial perspective we can however say as much as that the historic processes of colonialism have shaped the way we perceive ourselves and others to the point where differentiation and power relations are embedded subconsciously in our imaginary world. This would mean that both the notions of, as well as the manifestations of stereotypes are results of a process that started with events that took place long before our time. It is therefore not even interesting to assign blame, but instead to look at how we can change this trend.

4.3.2 Consequences

Another important aspect of stereotyping by aid organizations is its real life consequences. One of the views expressed in the interviews with the aid organizations is that the failure to convey more nuanced images of the third world is because the view by the public is rooted a long time ago, usually in childhood or adolescence, and it is therefore very hard to change.140 This view is planted by journalists or PR people who make campaigns for aid organizations. They do not have to take responsibility for the message, but are instead focused on selling copies, getting high ratings, or reaching collection goals. And the aid ‘business’ seems to be a complicated mix of media, advertising, and the goals of the own organization. When Unicef every year make their big televised fundraiser; how much of what is presented is their own making, and how much is suggested by the production team? Many aid organizations depend on the pro bono work of advertising agencies to make their campaigns without it taking too much money from the ones they are trying to help. That creates a sort of dependency situation that could be an interesting subject for further research; how much of ad campaigns come out of the

140 Gunnarsson, Hatt & Åberg, p. 17.
organization and its values, and how much do the organization rely on the expertise of the PR people?

What can be concluded though, is that advertising matters. As the study by Grønhaug and Heide showed above, it is possible for advertising to both strengthen and alter previously rooted images. This finding places responsibility in the hands of the organizations; to make advertisement with caution. But it is also a hopeful finding, as we can see that it is possible to change the stereotypical image in people’s minds. The problem then seems to be the control issue; the balance between media, PR agencies, and the own goals.

That information and advertisement by aid organizations can contribute to establish stereotypical views of the third world – as well as change it for the better as we have concluded – is one of the consequences of stereotyped images. Another is the spilling over of the imagery into other spheres, which moves it from just being a picture to being a label. This has to do with namelessness again; it transforms any member of a nation, or sometimes continent as we frequently see with Africa, into a representative for any problem that might occur anywhere in the nation or continent. An example of this is informational videos that film a random person on the street, add some sad music, and a voice telling the story of all the problems with that country. Who is to say that the person filmed has anything to do with the problems just described? Sometimes the problem in itself is filmed and you can see the connection, but frequently any person regardless of involvement gets to be the face of it. So what is probably thought of as ‘just a picture’ can turn into a vague representation of a whole nation that contributes to the establishment of a one-sided view of the concerned countries. The problem with this is that every individual gets to represent poverty and whatever other issues that particular nation has, making every person who looks to be from there associated with these issues. This is why the Swedish government can have a picture of a supposedly middle eastern boy on their webpage without any other information; because the ‘otherness’ of him is enough to represent the problems connected with aid. We look at him and do not think ‘what a cute little boy’, but instead his image awakens sympathy because of the things we connect him with.

The same thing happens when we bring these images to the countries we want to help, or depict in a news story. I remember looking at a photo reportage from Haiti and there was this image of Haitian women with their heads covered with plastic bags, which you saw everywhere, because who wants to ruin their hair on a rainy day? The
funny thing was that the caption read something like ‘Haitian women with nothing but plastic bags as a shield for the rain’; a clear formulation of pity. Would a picture of business women in New York City running for cover with a newspaper over their head have gotten the same caption? This is an example of bringing the stereotype image with you, and interpreting everything by it. It is an extension of what is described above of every individual getting to represent the issue; when everyone is a representation of poverty, for instance, then *everything* is also an expression of poverty. The conclusion is that because the women are black in a non-western environment, they are a representation of the otherness that symbolizes poverty, and therefore their behavior is also an expression of poverty. Ergo putting a plastic bag on your head is because you cannot afford anything else, not because it is a simple solution. Another example is the American man I met in Port-au-Prince who said that Haitians lacked true joy. Sure they are a tried people, but I never experienced this very generalizing statement. Again, he was bringing an already made up mind into a situation, and judging what he saw from that stereotype, not from what was actually there.

4.4 Responsibility and Change

There is no point in trying to figure out who is responsible for the fact that stereotype images of the third world exists and to some extent are reproduced by aid organizations, there is however relevant to talk about responsibility in the sense of our actions today. What emerges most strongly from the postcolonial analysis in my eyes is awareness. We cannot change the imperial past, and we cannot be blamed for the inherent structures in our culture, but we can make ourselves aware of them and as a result of that make more conscious decisions about advertisement and informational materials. It is always easier said than done, and as we have seen there are many factors at work in the web of aid organizations, PR agencies, and media.

A further problem is the balance between showing positive images on the one hand, and showing the images that legitimize the work on the other. This is another thing that was brought up in the interviews; representatives for the aid organizations said that it is important to show the needs that are there, without showing a one-sided picture of misery. ¹⁴¹ There is a contradiction between the image of the capable and active people one

wants to convey, and fact that one is looking for financial support for the organization and because of that have to show the needs of the aid receivers.

But, as stated before, it is not so much the content of the images that is the problem, but rather the way they are dealt with. So no matter how difficult it is to balance media, and to not show any ‘misery images’ at all, a thing that is actually feasible is to evaluate how pictures are used. To try to avoid the diffuse ‘otherness’ that seems to be prevailing today, and give way for a more uniform treatment of people and images; one that is the same for people in third world countries as for ‘western’ people.

What stands out the most in this investigation is the namelessness and placelessness that strengthens views of differentiation and dependency, which are in the end a question of equality. All who claim to work for human rights should therefore be engaged in a debate about this.
5 Summary and Conclusion

Stereotyping ‘the Other’ is something that has been going on for hundreds of years, and it emerged during a specific time in history. When the ‘civilizing mission’ picked up speed, and coinciding with the growth of advertisement at the end of the nineteenth century, popular culture in ‘the west’ was flooded with imagery of the savage colonized, which turned into a form of organized racism. Though these explicitly racist images have disappeared with the civil rights movement and the increasing focus on democracy, equality, and human rights after the end of World War II, according to the postcolonial analysis they still exist embedded in language and in an unconscious dimension of our imaginary world.

One way this manifests itself is through stereotypes, and in this thesis we have looked specifically into how it comes through in representational imagery of the third world, as portrayed by aid organizations. The empiric investigation shows that even though the racist imagery of the imperial times is no longer there, and that the misery images of the ‘Biafra children’ are not too common in depictions of the third world today, there are other concerns with the way aid organizations manage images in their ads and informational material. Common traits seem to be that aid receivers are presented without names, and often without a specific place as well. This practice is easily connected to the postcolonial analysis of imperialism continuingly shaping our culture and identities today, and to the explanation of stereotyping as a way to secure our surroundings. In the encounter with other cultures the stereotypic images we carry with us also lead us to interpret everything as an expression of the traits we have fixed to the stereotype instead of seeing what is actually there. Though unconsciously created, the fixed, but yet diffuse, otherness of the aid receiver sets up a clear division between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. We have also concluded that advertisement can both strengthen and alter previously established perceptions, which is a positive discovery when it comes to reversing stereotypes, and it calls for caution on behalf of aid organizations when it comes to designing ads and informational material.

In conclusion, even though there is no strong stereotype image conveyed by aid organizations in the sense of ‘the Biafra children’ today, the way the images in general are dealt with, with the ‘namelessness’ and ‘placelessness’, still shares worryingly many traits with the donations box of the introduction. Aid organizations have many and
complex relationships to the media and PR agencies, but that does not have to be a negative thing, as it opens up for positive influence if and when the aid organizations make this debate a priority. A postcolonial analysis of history and stereotyping can bring awareness to the processes that have shaped the discourses and identities of today, which is the starting point for the work of reversing stereotypes. With stereotyping firmly rooted as a human rights issue it is the responsibility of any organization that claim human rights as their value base to engage in the debate. If we really are interested in equality this is an area that needs review.
Screen Shots from the aid organization World Vision’s web page illustrates both the diversity of depictions you can find, as well as the common practice to only present western people with names.

Appendix B

Screen shot from Save the Children Sweden’s webpage serves to illustrate how domestic issues and international issues are differentiated when it comes to the imagery.

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