



Maintaining social cultural dominance through intergroup helping: A critical discourse analysis of an international fundraising campaign

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### **ABSTRACT**

A British coffee chain's fundraising campaign constitutes a background for this study to examine the underlying ideologies behind British charitable giving. The chosen charity executes projects in 'developing countries' by providing education for children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The inter-group relations that are mediated by the campaign -the poor versus wealthy, the empowered versus the oppressed, the colonizer versus the victim- allows us to investigate charitable behaviour from inter-group perspective through the prism of power and inequality. The study takes a critical stance from a discursive paradigmatic perspective to analyse visual contents used in the campaign. The applied visual critical discourse analysis was inspired by Barthes's semiotic theory. Findings revealed that the adverts' interpretative repertoires serve ideologies that sustain the donors' social-cultural dominance over the recipients by justifying group-based social hierarchies. The chains of signifiers do not question donors moral position but rationalise status quo and maintain undisturbed consumption. Findings suggest the possibility that prosocial behaviour that is incited under consuming conditions do not challenge but reconstruct and eventually sustain global inequality.

<b>KEY WORDS:</b>	<b>VISUAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS</b>	<b>CHARITABLE BEHAVIOUR</b>	<b>ROLAND BARTHES</b>	<b>IDEOLOGY</b>	<b>SOCIAL DOMINANCE</b>
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## Introduction

While an extensive literature exists that is concerned with reasons for donating to charities (Sargeant, 1999; Nadler, 2002; Stevenson and Manning, 2010), inter-group helping relations have not been investigated from a critical discursive perspective thus far. This study has been designed to investigate visual adverts of a charity campaign that is led by one of the leading coffee chains in the UK. The Costa Foundation develops and executes projects in developing countries, -in their words- to ‘...improve the life changes of boys and girls of coffee growing communities by providing the opportunity of a safe, quality education’ (2013: online). The chosen campaign is considered a successful one: from the donations, 46 schools have been constructed and opened in only three years in 7 ‘Third World’ countries to provide education for children in coffee growing communities, and another 16 school projects are in different stage of execution (The Costa Foundation, 2015). Based on the assumption that discourse is able to facilitate certain political/cultural/social ideologies (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 2005), the aim of this study is to critically analyse the campaign’s visual adverts and evaluate those ideological presuppositions that motivate charitable behaviour.

While the global participation in donating money is 31% among the world’s population, there are significant differences between countries in the willingness to help others via charities. In 2014, the UK was ranked fourth in donating money (75%), and seventh in the overall CAF World Giving Index that includes charitable giving, volunteering and helping behavior (Charities Aid Foundation, 2015). These cultural characteristics clearly affect large UK corporations too: the level of donations made by large UK businesses has increased substantially in recent years (Campbell et al., 2002). Study shows that such increase in large corporations’ charitable activity does not stem from pure altruism: the firms’ alignment of philanthropy is more of a strategic activity in order to change the scope of the organizations (Johnson et al., 2008) and to positively influence investors’, customers’ and suppliers’ perception (Himmelstein, 1997). Furthermore, consumption can be directly influenced by taking social responsibility: almost a third of British customers had purchased a product due to the corporation’s philanthropic activities (Brammer et al., 2006). Hence, corporate philanthropy has evolved to improve strategic position, and eventually to increase financial success (Saiia et al., 2003).

Psychological research concerned with individuals’ charitable giving prevalingly focuses on the affirmative psychological aspects by showing its positive correlation with physical and psychical well-being (Brooks, 2007). Alternatively, it is concerned with factors that affect charitable behavior including situational factors (Fennis et. al., 2009), individual differences (Winterich et al., 2012), perceptual reactions (Sargeant, 1999), demographic characteristics (Mathur 1996), cultural determinants (Kimmelmeier et al., 2006; Winterich and Zhang, 2014), or it offers neuroscientific explanations (Matusall, 2013). Others apply altruistic-egotistical scale to place donors based on the nature of their motivation (Andreoni, 1990; Vesterlund, 2006).

Few social studies found that societies do help other nations (e.g. international aid) out of genuine empathetic concerns for others (Batson, 1995), or by calculating that

their generosity will be reciprocated (Eisenberger et al., 2001). These studies, however, show that both the altruistic and the anticipatory motives are fostered by a shared group membership, since individuals are able to amend and re-identify the boundaries of group-inclusion in order to form a new recipient-included in-group and express their helping intentions. Such flexibility of group membership was successfully demonstrated by Levine and Thomson (2004), who demonstrated that inducing the salience of 'European' identity in British participants before obtaining responses to natural disasters increases the willingness to help their European allies compared to South American victims.

Although, shared identity between helper and recipient facilitates pro-social behaviour (Levine et al., 2005; Levine and Thompson, 2004), it could be reasonable to say that most helping relations typically occur between groups (e.g., Van Leeuwen, 2007; Stevenson and Manning, 2010). That certainly applies for charitable giving, where the primary reason for helping is understood through the power/status inequality between the giver and the recipient, which is also overtly articulated through charity media channels. Hence, charitable behavior occurring between members of different groups based on group membership should be examined from intergroup perspective in line with social identity approach (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Turner, et al., 1987). One might argue that charitable giving could also be interpreted as an exchange between individuals. However, drawing from self categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), when group identities are salient, charitable behavior is triggered by the individuals' group affiliations.

While there are studies that attempt to explain inter-group helping through ingroup favouritism (Levine et al., 2005; Stürmer et al., 2005), they differ in identifying the reason behind ingroup bias: restoring national identity (Stevenson and Manning, 2010) and maintaining social dominance (Nadler, 2002) can motivate inter-group helping while the threatening values assigned to the outgroup could inhibit such motivation (Jackson and Esses, 1997). Moreover, some findings challenge the very idea of ingroup favouritism in helping by reporting evidence that people's motivation lies within favouring the outgroup (e.g. Dovidio and Gaertner, 1981).

An inter-group perspective provided by Nadler (2002) offers a model that aims to categorise the conditions in which an inter-group helping is motivated: drawing from the assumption that helping an outgroup always serves the goal to boost the perceived value of the in-group, Nadler distinguishes between autonomy-oriented and dependency-oriented help. Autonomy-oriented help fosters the positive social identity of the receiving group by '...providing the recipients with the tools to solve their problems on their own'. On the other hand, dependency-oriented help implies that the higher status group maintains social order by '...providing the recipients with the full solution to the problem' (Nadler, 2002:491). Therefore, it threatens the social identity of the aid-recipient. Nadler's explicit intergroup perspective presumes that intergroup relations in real life settings (rather than groups created in laboratory conditions; cf. minimal group paradigm; Tajfel et al., 1971) necessarily imply power and status distinctions between the helper and the recipient. Based on this presumption, it may be argued that aid-givers -naturally the higher status group- prefer dependency oriented helping in order to maintain their positive social identity through social advantage.

Beyond the advanced applications of social identity theory, the present study considers primary assumptions of social dominance theory (SDT; Sidanius and Pratto, 2001). SDT is highly applicable in cases when hierarchical group relations occur, as it considers that the social discourse (e.g. ideology, stereotypes) and individual and institutional behavior both contribute to constitute a group-based social hierarchy. SDT also proposes that, in order to maintain status quo and to justify social dominance, different processes of hierarchical discrimination take place via legitimising myths (Sidanius and Pratto, 2001). One legitimising myth that might be the paternalistic myth that the white, wealthy Western citizens have moral obligation to look after the incapable minorities from the so-called 'Third World'. Such cultural myth goes back to the XIX century anthropological traditions (Kuper, 2005), in which 'primitive societies' were described as follows:

The educated world of Europe and America practically settles a standard by simply placing its own nations at one end of the social series and savage tribes at the other, arranging the rest of mankind between these limits according as they correspond more closely to savage or to cultured life. (Taylor, 1871:26)

Drawing from social identity theory, these myths effectively discriminate outgroups and increase self-esteem through ingroup favouritism. Moreover, in the line with system justification theory, it is asked, whether the adverts implicitly rationalise the status quo of the privileged groups (e.g. Jost et al., 2004).

At first, it may seem contradicting that -while we investigate oppression that is manifested in discourse- the subject of our investigation is a fundraising campaign whose very motivation is apparently to tackle inequality. However, as stated before, corporate philanthropy should always be treated with the right amount of scepticism, as for-profit organizations are, by definition, amoral (c.f. Henriques, 2005). Furthermore, a charity that exports education -that in Marxist terms is the key component to reproduce and legitimise ruling ideology and eventually to maintain social inequality- should be investigated from a critical discursive perspective.

Still, it is not the intent of this study to condemn or even criticise the achievements of the campaign in any way. However, it is its intention to critically investigate the social dominance such campaign -even if subconsciously- legitimises. Therefore, this study takes a Foucauldian perspective, in which empowerment is not seen as a natural kind but a social construction that is necessarily imbibed with impersonal power and exercised through normalisation, domination and the mode of subjection (Foucault, 1984). If we accept this premise, then the question becomes, whether the power that is exercised through empowerment *deconstructs* or *reconstructs* social stereotypes, and whether it tackles or sustains existing social hierarchy through the mode of subjection.

This study might challenge the traditional boundaries of social psychology. If findings unfold strategical corporate moves under the philanthropic surface, or suggest neo-colonial aspirations, it stems from the multidisciplinary theory of ideology: ideologies are -on the one hand- cognitive, meaning that they '...function as the interface between the cognitive representations and processes underlying discourse and action' and -on the other hand- social, meaning that they also function as '...the societal position and interests of social groups' (Van Dijk, 2005:17).

Thus, by applying critical discourse analysis, the aim of the present study is (1) to reveal underlying power-discourse relations constructed through the chosen media, (2) to identify the ideologies served by such discourse, (3) to point out the intergroup relations such discourse intends to construe between the donor and recipient, and (4) to evaluate findings in the light of relevant social psychological theories.

## **Methodology**

In this qualitative study, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis is used to evaluate visual and textual semiotic choices that have been applied as primary tools of advertisements for The Costa Foundation's fundraising campaign (2013). CDA studies the implicit and indirect meanings in texts by focusing on practices and conventions behind language to reveal social inequality, abuse and dominance that is resisted, enacted and reproduced by language (Van Dijk, 2001).

### **Justification for choosing visual adverts from a foundation linked to coffee industry**

The images are partly displayed on the official website of the fund, partly found on leaflets in coffee stores. Most photos expose children from coffee growing communities intended to demonstrate the achievements of the campaign: the characters are displayed in positively exposed scenes propagating the achievements of the Foundation and mediating conformity and discipline (Appendix 1.a), as well as happiness, hope and belief (Appendix 1.b). Short textual descriptions or quotes from the character(s) are linked to many of the photos guiding the viewer's imagination and offering narratives (Appendix 1.c). Such occasions, where visual and textual language complement each other, their collusive meanings offer even more opportunity for CDA.

Choosing multi-semiotic language as the subject of analysis refers to the assumption that texts in contemporary society are increasingly multi-semiotic: internet and television are manifest examples of the fact that textual language is often combined or replaced by other forms of semiotic forms including images, sound-effects and music (Kress and Leeuwen, 2001). Moreover, campaign messages need to be salient and easily comprehensible, hence, most fundraising advertising campaigns primarily build upon seductive visual adverts and clear, brief textual messages rather than detailed descriptions of goals and achievements. Such phenomenon is in line with Elaborated Intrusion theory, claiming that visual adverts are internalised by the viewer as mental images, whereby they effectively function as a motivational link for pro-social behavior (Kavanagh et al., 2005).

On the other hand, our choice is justified by the cultural position coffee stores hold in post-modern society: according to Soukup (2012) coffeehouse culture is seen as a '...summation or prototype, for the broader "digital screen culture," [where], due to the ubiquitous communication technologies of the postmodern condition, identity is no longer "specified" or coherent' (Soukup, 2012:229). Such consideration involves Gergen's (1992) social constructionist definition of the post-modern identity that is a shifting, saturated entity exposed to different cultures and the multiplicity of ideas. In this sense, coffee shops can be understood as plural cultural spaces (combining ritual,

language and the range of identities), where pro-social behaviour, consumerism and forms of group-identities can be incited simultaneously (c.f., Cheshmehzangi, 2015).

Hence, the chosen campaign seems an appropriate choice for our investigation for multiple reasons: (1) it effectively applies internalisable dichotomies (poverty/wealth, benighted/enlightened, oppressed/rescuer etc.) through visual adverts, whereby it invites the viewer to form an ingroup identity and construe intergroup relations; (2) the adverts are linked to consuming practices, therefore it may offer a unique insight into the relationship between consumption and altruism; and (3) the viewers are likely to be British, meaning that their post-imperial identity is likely to be invoked, which raises the possibility to implant post-colonial ideologies.

### The application of CDA for analysing images

Recently, visual applications of CDA -inspired mainly by Barthes's semiotic theory (1973, 2000) and the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2001)- have been adapted in many discursive studies (e.g. Hansen and Machin, 2008). Drawing from Barthes's semiotic theory (1973), images can denote, meaning that they depict particular people, places, things and events in order to document. Images also connote: expose things, people and events to get general or abstract concepts and ideas across. While the campaign images have an overt, explicit denotative message (to show achievements), they also rely on multiple connotators that carry implicit meanings that should be understood (even if unconsciously) by the viewers. Moreover, semiotic messages often mask connotation by pseudo-denotative visualisations. Hence, while there are meanings that are not explicitly denoted, all objects carry 'meaning potentials' that can be activated in the right context (exposed to the right subject in the right place). According to Barthes (2000), photographic connotations are assigned to modify reality, however, these modifications are rarely graspable immediately. Barthes distinguishes between three major connotation procedures: objects, trick effects and poses. *Trick effects* are described as the faked effects of the images (any visual technique that alters reality including adjustments, colour effects etc.). Trick effects utilise the credibility of the images by mediating an objective denotative message, that is -in reality- heavily connoted. *Poses* utilise stereotyped attitudes and they are able to signify broader ideas and identities. *Objects* are known as '...accepted inducers of associations of ideas' (book case = intellectual)' (Barthes, 2000:194) that can be subjected to connotative processes.

Based on Barthes categories, Machin and Mayr (2012) offer detailed strategies to conduct visual CDA. For example, *salience* (focus, tone, potential cultural symbols, colour) provides central symbolic value; *individualisation and collectivisation* refer to the technique by which people are depicted in groups in order to emphasise group salience; *settings* connote values, identities and actions by communicating general ideas. Furthermore, drawing from Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) suggestions, what makes an image 'real' is not simply the truth of verisimilitude but the 'sensory truth' of the image (like impressionist paintings or children's toys). In this sense, modality and certainty can be expressed through visual modality markers (e.g. degrees of colour modulation and saturation). Photos also can be analysed based on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) instructions on how poses and gaze can fulfil the concept of 'speech act' in order to either 'offer' or 'demand'. Demand images acknowledge the viewer, address social interaction and require a response.

## Justification for the chosen methodology

This study is justified through the theoretical presupposition of CDA, namely that discourse function as an expression and reproduction of ideologies. Discourse includes verbal and non-verbal semiotic messages: anything that has been left behind by culture.

Within critical discursive paradigm, text is a multifunctional phenomenon: texts (even visual texts) are social spaces. Text is not only the cognition and representation of the world but also function as social interaction. Language simultaneously works ideationally as a representation of the reality, and interpersonally as it constructs a social interaction between those who participate in the discourse (i.e., Halliday, 1978). In this sense, language constitutes belief and knowledge on one hand (it is referred to as 'objects' in Foucauldian terminology; Foucault, 1970), and social subjects (identities, forms of the self) on the other. Drawing from these theoretical premises, our investigation is twofold: first, it looks at the objects that are constructed by photographs and investigates *how* these are depicted: 'values', 'beliefs', 'knowledge', 'empowerment', 'poverty', 'culture'; and second, it aims to capture the psychological subject that is constructed: 'the donor', 'the rescuer', 'the white liberal', 'the enlightened', 'the progressist', 'the altruist', 'the British', 'the European'.

Hence, the assumption that language does not simply represent but constructs reality is a focal point of our investigation: social processes and structures are not only reflected upon, but produced and reproduced by discourse. Therefore, the visual advertisements in this fundraising campaign do not simply function as communicative and persuasive semiotic elements, but viewed as a force to control the viewer and dominate social relations.

CDA investigates discourse as a relational, dialectical entity, and doing so from a transdisciplinary, critical realist viewpoint (Fairclough, 2013). *Relational* discourse assumes that there is a constant implicit communication between the chosen language and the environment in which it is manifested (including objects, persons, institutions etc.). The discourse being *dialectical* presumes that power can be transmitted through discourse and discourse can be internalised in power, or as Fairclough claims, '...the complex reality of power relations are 'condensed' and simplified in discourses' (2013:4). Hence, they are different but not discrete moments of the same entity. CDA is necessarily *transdisciplinary*: CDA analyses not only internal relations within a discourse but also the relations between discourses and objects, therefore it crosses the conventional boundaries of disciplines. Finally, CDA is *critical realist* as it presumes that there is a real world outside the discourse. Hence, CDA is a moderate form of social constructionism: we construe the world based upon power relations, but there are ways we cannot construe the world.

Considering these theoretical premises, our aim is not only to reveal the form of group identities constructed through discourse but also to contextualise such identities in the light of 'power', 'dominance', 'social order' and 'ideology'.

Hence, this work aims to systematically investigate links between social processes and language (discourse) from a critical discursive paradigmatic stance. By considering that discourse is embedded within sociocultural practice at multiple levels (from the immediate situation to institutional and societal levels), images -following Fairclough's (2013) suggestions- will be analysed on three levels: (1) linguistic



*description* of the visual texts (subject positions; denotative access), (2) *interpretation* of the link between the text and productive discursive processes (interpretative repertoires; connotative access), and (3) *explanation* of the link between discursive and sociocultural practice (ideological dilemmas; myths).

### **Ethical considerations and risk assessment**

The analysed visual adverts have been taken from The Costa Foundation website (2013). While the subjects of these photos are mainly children from African, South American and Asian countries, neither the nature of the pictures, nor their applications in the proposed study involve any risk factor that could cause harm, or threaten the dignity and autonomy of the persons. However, using these images involve copyright issues. As the images are owned by The Costa Foundation, permission was sought (Appendix 2) and given (Appendix 3) by the owners to link images to the academic work. Application for Ethics Approval Form (AEAF) has been accepted (Appendix 4-5).

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The Foundation website images are predominantly positively toned throughout, regardless of the actual visual theme. The themes are repetitive, generic and interchangeable: newly built facilities, children captured within educational settings, recurrent emergence of tools symbolizing superficial, de-historicized and de-contextualised local/regional traditions (rituals, traditional clothing, jewellery etc.; see Appendix 1/d), banal captions of children having fun or engaging with the camera (the viewer). They narrate that the same integrative work is conducted everywhere from Asia to Africa, and that social, cultural, regional, religious and linguistic differences are of secondary importance. Hence, the analysed photos are not chosen arbitrarily: they cover the generic philosophy of the campaign's visual narrative.

### **Subject positions and interpretative repertoires**

#### ***Documentary photography as trick effect***

While the primary motivation of the website is to advertise, it consciously uses the toolkit of documentary photography: the photos function to chronicle events, and report real life.

Barthes (1977) argues that photographs have a great realism-potential as they are - being somewhat reproductions of reality- capable of capturing an ineffable richness of detail. Such detailed scene always contains quasi-spontaneous, or quasi-accidental things that 'are just happen to be there' without directly contributing to the message, but helping to naturalise the image through heightened realism. It means, that the connoted cultural message of the photograph can be hidden through the denotative presence of randomly displayed visual details. However, as Barthes stresses, 'we never encounter (at least in advertising) a literal image in its pure state', as any achieved naivety 'would immediately join the sign of naivety and be completed by a

third — symbolic —message’ (1977:157). This paradox serves to bring about a transparent denotative access through naivety and spontaneity. Still, even a totally naïve photograph completes a symbolic message through its own intentional naivety, or -with Barthes’s terminology- the ‘myth’ of naivety. Such naturalisation serves as a confirmatory modality that narrates the meaning as something substantial rather than relational through the images that pretend to be ‘captured’, rather than ‘designed’. Hence, such ‘naivety’ of the images incites an illusory denotative access to the meaning of reality.



FIGURE 1. *Children during lunch break*

Figure 1. shows young girls during their lunch break. While the main figures on the front impart the photograph a reasonable symmetry, the orderliness is deconstructed through number of erratic elements (the randomly situated dishes and cups, the sloppily thrown slipper). The partially covered figures on the background connect the viewer’s imagination to the world that has not been captured by the photographer and imply continuity: the unseen is just as idyllic as the captured genre.

Still, the quasi-verisimilar settings grow suspicious through the overdrawn optimism mediated via smiles, poses, vivid liveliness, overexposed colours and the constant feeling of ‘togetherness’. Such designed positivism is equiponderated through the mentioned pseudo-documentary narration. While one may argue that the overextended emotional charge hurts the intended objectivity of the images, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) suggest that emotive resonance is another criterion for the truth of images besides the truth of verisimilitude. The concept of *sensory modality* assumes that when images lose the sense of naturalistic or empirical truth, they sustain their authenticity through ‘sensory truth’ via ultra-deep perspective, the richness of detail or the vividness of the image. Hence, the overexposed colours and deliberate liveliness (that apply to each photo on the website) do not weaken the

realism-potential, while -at the same time- they help to trigger a positive emotive response from the viewer.

### **Gaze**

Halliday et al. (2014) argue that language can be thought of as fulfilling *speech acts*: we can either *offer* or *demand* information, goods or services through prescribed 'mood systems' (e.g. commands, tone of voice, posture). Following Halliday's theory, Kress and Leeuwen's (1996) argues that images can be analysed similarly as *image acts* that can realise offers or demands along with the form of address. One main technique through images can demand is when the model is gazing at the camera, whereby it creates a form of address and requires action.



FIGURE 2. *Children sitting at the table*

Many images, in this way -including Figure 2- fulfil the criteria of demand images. The model is acknowledging the viewer's presence and demanding action. The girl is looking up, which has strong metaphorical associations in Western culture: it clearly connotes power relations and dependency. The viewer's existence is grasped through his/her higher status, which invites certain associations of inter-group relations.

### **Models as symbols**

On the Foundation leaflets (that are -being displayed in every coffee stores- the most effective advert materials) the models are not presented as individuals but as (stereo)types representing identities.



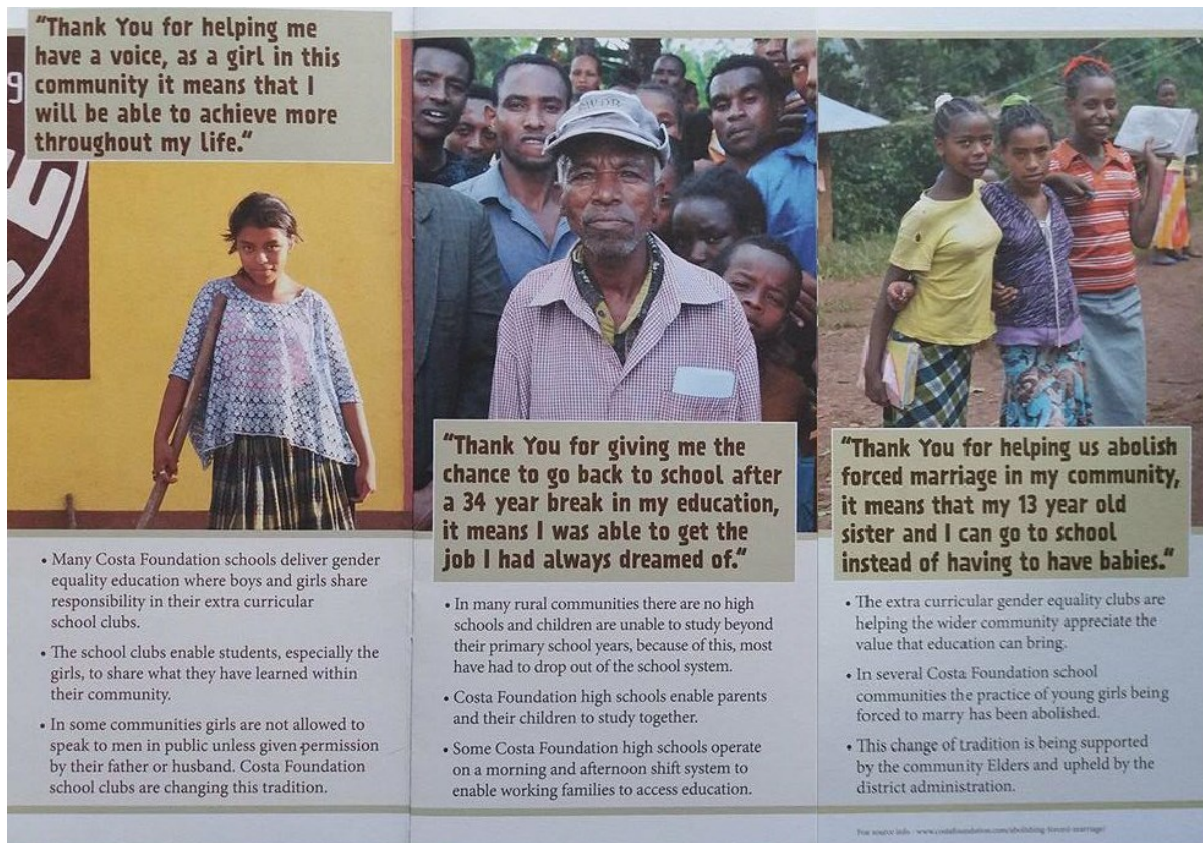


FIGURE 3. Snapshot from a leaflet: short comments linked to the photos offering narratives to viewers.

Deliberate features (posture, objects, anonymity) help to evoke genericity, and textual comments articulate generic egalitarian messages explicitly. Each leaflet page presents a parable through the chain of three different discourse practices: (1) the visual display of archetypical recipients, (2) their quasi-personalised generic textual salutations that are visually placed as 'speech balloons' to strengthen the models' subjective modality, and (3) informative bullet points aiming to culturally contextualise and generalize the 'personal' fables in a more descriptive tone (see Figure 3).

The models carry ethnic and economic signifiers (e.g. 'African', 'black', 'poor'), hence, the primary message would be that of tackling global inequality. However, the source of the problems is explicitly attached to the local community: the Foundation 'is changing [bad] traditions', replacing them with 'good ones'. The signifiers can be easily identified and associated with ultimate liberal values, such as tackling ableism, ageism and misogyny (see the models on Figure 3), whereby the source of injustice is relocated from *global* (in which the privileged West is part of the discourse, hence part of the problem) to *local* levels (inequality grow from *within* the communities). The so called 'traditions' are never contextualised or explained: they are narrated as an elusive power through passive verbs ('young girls are being forced' or 'girls are not allowed to talk to men'). The agency disappears in the use of passive voice or it becomes a locative ('in some communities') by which direct cultural confrontation is avoided. Such non-disclosure carries out the programme of political correctness, while still implying cultural hierarchy.

### **Collectivisation**

Most images, however, capture people in groups. It works strategically to homogenise individuals and create the impression that 'they are all the same'. Even single models (as it is seen on the leaflet) are depicted as generic types representing the collective. Thus, their individualised visual presence only there to ease and counterpoint the overt homogeneity that the classroom scene mediates on Figure 4.



FIGURE 4. *Classroom scene*

Obedience and conformity are tangible in this image. The vertical camera angle allows the viewer to *look down* on the pupils. It does not only clarify the hierarchy of power but provides the viewer with the chance to take the teacher's position (who passes on the knowledge), implying cultural superiority and higher social status.

Accepting Barthes's (1973) suggestions that poses are able to signify values, identities and perceived behaviours of the figures, then poses depicted here do not imply individual freedom and empowerment. Rather, they connote total success of disciplinary power: all pupils wear white (symbolising purity, light, goodness, knowledge and sterility) and raise their hands (signifying positive attitude, engagement and compliance): there is no sign of defiance or dysfunction. The image almost overexposes the disciplinary power of a totalitarian imperial regime (you) through the models that are presented as tamed cheerful robots.

Another type of collectivisation is formed through a more spontaneous, playful setting (Figure 5).





FIGURE 5. *Children smiling at the camera*

The absence of regulatory symbols and poses -again- counterbalance the rigour depicted on Figure 4. Models are depicted here through their 'childness'. Such objectification helps the image to emphasise qualities that are universally attributed to children: playfulness and purity. The background is completely removed, whereby societal context is taken away, and the exaggerated smiles on the children's face, (whose smile is 'just as ours'), mediate presumed universal human qualities. Such naturalisation of the human kind implies the idea that human nature is primarily a 'tabula rasa', and holds the promise that the subjects' mental content is still malleable.

### ***Settings***

Settings also can be looked in ways they inform us of underlying general ideas and values (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Images that are taken outside of educational facilities often depicted within the nature versus civilisation dichotomy.



FIGURE 6. *Educational facilities surrounded by natural environment*



FIGURE 7. *Location scouting*





FIGURE 8. *Landscape*

What these settings sell to the viewers are not simply documentations of achievements (Figure 6), neither banal representations of the beauty of Nature (Figure 8). Rather, Figure 6. offers the connotative association of the triumph of civilisation over nature through the act of inclosure. Inside the facility, the objects are in order and the subjects are regulated, which implies total control over nature both extrinsically (over the environment) and intrinsically (through the control over the individuals). It may connote the triumph over the pre-industrial human habitat associated with the myth of primitive society that is stereotypically seen through nature-based religious practices, ‘bad’ traditions, and the lack of infrastructural and technological sophistication (Kuper, 2005).

On Figure 7., the central figure on the left (the ‘White Man’) occupies the unstructured *space* and visualises the human *place* that will emerge. Such message is told through the postural language of the model, whose hands behind the back connote confidence and intellectual effort, and whose salience is also emphasised by his enhanced size (due to perspective trickery), and the gaze of the other models, who seem to look at him waiting for direction.

On the other hand, conventional landscape photography that captures the environment as untouched by human action connotes post-industrial awareness and the importance of environmental sustainability (Figure 8). Such image aims to counterbalance the negative connotations one might attribute the other images: namely the negative environmental impacts of civilizational growth.

### ***The viewer’s subject position***

On the leaflets, the viewer is not only invited to participate but has been already positioned as the benefactor of the parables, not only through gaze, but through explicit subjective modality markers (e.g. ‘*Thank you* for helping/giving/teaching’; ‘it means that *I am* able to get the job/achieve more/go to school; Figure 3). Hence, not



only the models are generic, but so as the viewer. The ads do not only ask the individual for donation but invite the all-time viewer to internalise social identities and form an in-group by identifying themselves with the roles invited by discursive techniques (gaze, vertical angle, facial expressions and speech acts): the British, the European, the educated, the egalitarian, the altruist, the white Western enlightener, the rescuer, the master, the teacher. It does not mean that all identities are adopted by everyone: rather than the polysemous images (cf. Barthes, 1977) offer a chain of signifieds from which one can pick some and ignore others.

As the children are constantly depicted as vulnerable, dependent and having an inferior social status, they do not allow the viewer to identify with the models, even though positive emotional connection is created. Thus, the egalitarian denotative message is constantly overridden by the connotative associations that sustain power relations. Identification with the model is only possible through images such as Figure 9.



FIGURE 9. Children with figure emerging at the front

The emerging figure (or more precisely, his 'legs') occupies the image through grandiosity, and his protecting position symbolizes parental power. As the figure overgrows the boundaries of the photo, it connects with the outer world and helps the viewer to identify oneself with it, and -more importantly- applies the religious tradition of aniconism (the absence of material representation of God), whereby it endows the figure with transcendent power.

The absence of negatively charged depictions shows that the Foundation does not use the tool of guilt appeals (cf. Huhmann and Brotherton, 1997) to incite prosocial behaviour. It seems, that capitalist logic does not attempt to challenge the donors' moral position, as it does not risk negativity, where customer satisfaction and self-integration are of primary importance.

## **Ideological dilemmas**

The chains of signifiers continuously reconfirm social dominance and guarantee that dependency-oriented intergroup relations remain salient throughout. Therefore, the central message of the campaign (empowering the socially excluded by providing education) continuously overwritten through subject positions and interpretative repertoires that explicitly signify dependency through control and discipline, and reinvent the outdated anthropological term of 'primitive society' (Kuper, 2005).

### ***Legitimizing myths: Education and Liberalism***

While the campaign narrates the success of newly built educational settings all around the world, it does not once specify, what the fund means by education, and how it is carried out. The textual elements (supported by straightforward visual educational symbols) often use the word 'quality education' and 'knowledge' without the urge to explain the world views and the cultural belief systems, the ontological and epistemological presuppositions behind it. The absence of explanation functions as a purification of the terms: it gives them an eternal justification through uttering them as a statement of fact that does not require further explanation. The myth of education presented as something natural, something that goes without saying. Such discursive technique, as Barthes says 'transforms history into nature' (1973:129). It does not lie, rather it distorts reality by abolishing the complexity and the contradictions it involves.

The same action is taken, when the campaign mediates politically accepted liberal dogmas explicitly (tackling ableism, gender inequality, social exclusion and ageism). As these ideas are presented (and presumably accepted by the donors) as unquestionable, self-evident values, they pretend to carry universal meaning. Such naturalisation serves the illusion that liberal dogmas are not at all ideological, and those most obvious connotations that are associated with them are just as natural.

In line with assumptions of SDT (Sidanius and Pratto, 2001), these mythic representations work economically: they simplify social complexity and allow donors to accept the overt portrayal of dominance that is seen through the 'ideology glasses' (cf. Žižek, 2011) of liberalism and empowerment.

### ***De-historicised reality***



Figure 10. *Girls wearing traditional dresses*

The recipients' cultural dimensions are never related to real social-economic facts and historical order, but only to commonplaces, which -together with idyllic depictions (smiles, togetherness, harmonic coexistence with nature and each other)- mediate ease and innocence. These innocent depictions transform history into folklore: rites, dancing, traditional clothing (Figure 10) – all there only so one can enjoy their beauty and stop wondering, where they came from. Hence, exoticism with its romantic banality ignores the complexity historic perspective would imply. The Other (the recipient) is eventually removed in its difference, and his 'sameness' connotes the myth of 'we are all the same eventually' (or rather, that 'they are just as us'). It mythicises global injustice, whereby it immunizes donors against any responsible content: it helps them to preserve self-integration and justify their own social-economic dominance by '...maintain[ing] expropriative relationships between dominants [...] and subordinates' (Sidanius and Pratto, 2001:41).

### ***Consumer identity***

The campaign does not challenge the viewers' moral position, as it does not intend to interrupt consumption. The campaign, instead of demanding immediate help, mediates a success story through exclusive positive framing: the message that 'the change has already been happening'. It reinforces the neoliberal capitalist myth namely that more consumption is better for everyone eventually (you enjoy your coffee, whereby you successfully tackle inequality). At the same time, it sustains the myth that poverty grows *from within* poor neighbourhoods and not inherent in the socio-economic structure. As Baudrillard argues,

'the sacrifice of useless millions in the struggle against what is merely the *visible phantom* of poverty is not too high a price to pay if it means that the myth of growth is preserved.' (1998:56)

It is deeply controversial that egalitarianism is *sold* as a commodity by a firm whose very interest is to sustain that social structure. The altruistic organisational practice maintains the idealist myth that all negative phenomena (dysfunctions, social exclusion, poverty) are deplorable, but residual and remediable side-effects of the industrial system, and that global inequality can be tackled *through* profit-oriented companies and not against them. As donors are addressed in the midst of their consuming practice, they are not challenged but reinforced through banal and oversimplifying myths. The discursive motives are in line with theses of system justification theory (Jost et al., 2004), as they rationalise status quo on (1) intra-subjective (ego-justification through inciting consumption), and (2) macro levels (system-justification through the myth of education and liberalism).

### **Concluding remarks**

The emerging discursive techniques imply a rather paradoxical ideological narrative, in which empowerment and cultural domination, emotionally loaded emancipation and disciplinary power, colonial instincts and post-colonial empowerment are presented simultaneously through a de-historicized post-modern saturated framework. The adverts, while implementing politically correct ideas of multiculturalism, empowerment and equality, they advocate that such qualities only become available through the enlightenment of the Third World. Therefore, these findings exceed Nadler's (2002) assumptions on dependency-oriented help, as they demonstrate that even explicit autonomy-oriented messages and tools can serve to sustain global inequality through enhancing the perception of in-group superiority.

The seemingly contradictory motives and depictions successfully resonate with people who are found in the midst of their consuming self-actualisation. Within the post-modern consumerist condition (Baudrillard, 1998), where people self-actualize through goods and commodities, such de-historicised pseudo-cultural simulacrum works effectively: socio-cultural privilege and politically correct superficial liberalism - all are offered as commodities.

While this study has obvious limitations -including the fact that visual interpretations are solely based upon my observations-, still it is hoped that such evaluation might contribute to a better understanding of the deeply paradoxical nature of charitable giving, and it may serve as an alternative to our naïve perception that charitable giving simply stems from our genuine empathy towards the oppressed.

### **Reflexive Analysis**

The normative standpoint, in which present study was conducted is in line with premises of critical discursive paradigm (Fairclough, 2013). CDA rejects the possibility of 'objective science', and considers scholarly discourse as influenced by, and part of

the social discourse (Van Dijk, 2001). However, the political and ethical stance I took was not a simple consequence of the chosen method. As Van Dijk argues,

The critical element of CDS [Critical Discourse Studies] characterizes scholars rather than their methods: CDS scholars are sociopolitically committed to social equality and justice. (2009: 63).

Being critical implies that social theory should be capable of changing society beyond explaining it. Hence, my goal was to “produce and convey critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009:7). Such self-reflection, however, needs to be applied to the critical work itself that is also condensed with ideologies. Wynne (1988), for example, while analysing accounts of multiple sclerosis, conducted a parallel discursive investigation of her own discursive formulation on those accounts to illustrate her own rhetorical constructions. Unfortunately, I do not have the means to conduct a parallel reflexive account, only to acknowledge that this work may be subjected to my own preconceptions and ideological presuppositions.



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