

**New Practices of Giving:
Ethics, Governmentality, and the Development of Consumer-
Oriented Charity Fundraising**

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Abstract

This thesis emerges in the context of recent developments in the field of charity fundraising. In particular, in order to increase, or simply maintain, fundraising levels charities have had to develop innovative devices which both take charity giving into the spaces in which individuals carry out their daily activities, and provide mechanisms through which they are able to give to charity in their daily lives. This thesis focuses on one such attempt. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate both the practices of constructing alternative giving and the materials which result from this, and the practices of giving and receiving an alternative gift. Alternative giving refers to a fundraising device which is built around a range of gift cards or certificates produced by the charity, each of which represent one particular item or service provided by the charity to its beneficiaries. The cards or certificates are then sold at a price which is designed to mirror the actual cost of providing the item or service represented and are intended to be used by the purchaser as a gift for a friend or relative. As such, alternative giving, as a form of fundraising used by international development charities, raises a number of questions, particularly in terms of how it affects the relationships between individuals and charities, and individuals and the specific beneficiary. Therefore, this thesis draws on literatures around ethics, governmentality, consumption and gift theory to examine the implications of alternative giving for these relationships. Having drawn these literatures into conversations with empirical research based around interviews with charities and those engaging in alternative giving, and a range of textual materials surrounding this, the thesis argues that practices of alternative giving are carried out by ethical subjects who are situated within broad sets of social relations, and which matter to how connections in the charitable act are manifest.

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Introduction

Situating Alternative Giving

In the closing plenary of the 2008 Institute of Fundraising National Convention,¹ Alan Clayton, a central figure in the UK fundraising community, stated that a key message he had heard at sessions he had attended, and from speaking to delegates at the convention, was that the charity ‘experience’ for donors needs to become better (Clayton, 2008). In order to survive in what he referred to as ‘the current donor climate’, charities need to be new, revolutionary and unique in the ways in which they aim to engage donors; charities must enhance the experience they offer to potential donors. This statement echoes both the interpretations made of statistics in the sector where it is advised that charities need to work harder for their voluntary income (Guardian, 2005), and what can be seen to be taking place in the fundraising output of many charities, where a diverse range of fundraising devices are devised and enlisted to attempt to engage the public in giving activity. Evidently there is a mood within the charity sector that real efforts must be made to transform and enliven the ways in which funding is secured from individual donors – a very different prospect to gaining funding from grant-making bodies such as government and trusts – so as to sustain an income from this group (Masters, 2000), in a changing society. The broad sector opinion is that existing, long-established fundraising methods are not sufficiently sustainable or successful in their own right for engaging the individuals of contemporary society and therefore a change in the mode of fundraising must take place to ensure future donations are secured by charities from this source.

¹ According to the Institute’s website, this is ‘the largest event for fundraisers outside the US’. See: <http://www.nationalconvention.org.uk>

More broadly, one possible reason put forward for a decline in charity donation is that it is part of a wider decline in social capital, or, in other words, a decrease in social interconnectedness and involvement in a public life (Putnam, 2000). This implies that there was a ‘golden age’ of charity donation at the height of civil society from the 1940s to the 1970s (Masters, 1999) where there was a positive and easy increase in giving to charity, but that in the years since, this culture of giving has been just one aspect which has faded in the wider decline of social connection and community involvement. It has been argued though that as these traditional forms and places of connection and community decline, new ones have emerged (Rich, 1999), and that it is essential to recognise these in order to ‘address citizens’ new concerns and new styles of involvement’ (Stolle and Hooghe, 2004: 266). These include the development of technologies such as the internet (Olsen *et al.* 2001), which is of huge significance for charity fundraising (Bennett, 2009; Saxton, 2001). The internet is part of a vast shift in the technological landscape, and this has had profound effects not only on the ways in which people interact with others, but also on how they go about activities such as shopping, accessing news and finding information (Bennett, 2009). Of great significance is that these technological changes have not simply meant a different tool of communication and marketing, but instead are altering the very kind of communication that is possible, the speed at which it happens, where it takes place, and the qualities of this. These features are all recognisable in theories of a postmodern society (Binkley, 2003; Simmons, 2008), which is characterised by an immediacy and constantly changing range of visual stimulation, whereby the superficial surface is privileged over depth, as an extreme result of the image-impressed spectacle society (Binkley, 2003). Particularly, such theories of society have been bound up with the notion of the consumer, and it is this aspect which appears to be leading the way in the development of new directions of charity fundraising.



Figure 0.1: Image from Innocent-Age Concern marketing

There is an abundance of recent fundraising devices which can be seen to utilise mediums of consumption. ‘Cause-related marketing’ (CRM), as a contribution to a charitable cause by a business whereby the amount is determined by customer purchasing behaviour (Pracejus and Olsen, 2004), provides a starting point for illustrating the extent of this. Since 2003 smoothie brand ‘Innocent’ have run a winter campaign with charities Age Concern and Help the Aged, entitled ‘The Big Knit’.² During these months Innocent’s small bottles of smoothies are sold topped with a miniature wool hat that has been knitted by a member of the public and from which fifty pence of each sale goes to the charity (figure 0.1). It seems both the business and the charity benefit from this type of fundraising, with the business gaining a kind of ‘bluwashing’ of their product (Cliath, 2007) and the charity gaining both income and exposure from being placed in a space utilised in the everyday routine of the consumer. This CRM campaign is slightly different

² See: http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/thebigknit/?Page=thebigknit_story

to most though in that the consumer gets not only the knowledge that their purchase has resulted in a contribution to the charity, but also the physical item of the miniature woolly hat. Similarly, charity shops operated by individual charities to sell new and second-hand items both raise money for the charity and make the charity more visible in the space of retail.

Other recent attempts to enhance the fundraising experience for donors appear to be based on participation in an activity. Included within this type of fundraising are myriad opportunities for different novel and ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ experiences such as walking the Inca Trail,³ facilitated by charitable organisations in return for funds raised; collective occasions like concerts and telethons, for example Red Nose Day which takes place on BBC television in the UK every 2 years and brings to presence a sense of a country-wide fundraising community built through the transmission of information about mass involvement in thousands of small fundraising events in different places; and running events such as the London Marathon where participants may choose to raise money for a particular charity by obtaining monetary pledges of sponsorship from individuals. The attempts of charities to stimulate giving are increasingly sophisticated, aiming to engage individuals either by providing them with opportunities to build giving-to-charity into their lives in everyday ways, or by giving them a sense of being involved in something different and not so everyday. This move to greater sophistication and innovation in charity fundraising, alongside the increasingly commercial organisation and glossy appearance of it, is the starting point of this research.

³ For example with Christian Aid this is one of their ‘Challenge Events’ in 2007. Participants pay £445 and pledge to raise £2,750 in sponsorship. See: *Challenge yourself – Change the World*. Available from: http://www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/ChallengeEvents07_tcm15-21545.pdf

The charity Comic Relief's statistics indicate the significance of this presence of charity fundraising in such everyday landscapes: 'On Red Nose Day in 1997 over 90% of the population knew Red Nose Day was happening...over 25 million people watched at least 15 minutes of the television programme' (Green and Silk, 2000:320). While the effects of this particular telethon on the giving practices of the 25 million viewers are not deducible from data available, estimation from the Charities Aid Foundation that £8.9 billion was given by individuals to charities in 2004-5, with an average of over 50% of adults giving money every month (NCVO and CAF, 2007: 9), demonstrates that there is prolific interaction from individuals with charitable organisations in the form of monetary giving. Evidently there is a culture of charity giving in the UK, and this is being increasingly infused into everyday settings through a wide range of fundraising devices.

With a change in the way in which fundraising is carried out though, there emerge the questions: what is charity, and what endures despite these changes in its landscape? These are particularly significant questions given that charity has been described both as a 'loose and baggy monster' (Bryson *et al.*, 2002; Kendall and Knapp, 1995), but equally, despite this diversity, as still conceptually coherent (Bryson *et al.*, 2002: 49). A framework for understanding charity has been advanced by Land (2005: 32) which conceptualises it as a three-fold entity consisting of charity, charities and being charitable. In this configuration charity is defined as being a normative process oriented toward others and made in both the institutions of charities, which create opportunities for such normative action, and in the being charitable, which are actions undertaken by individuals which are oriented toward others. The difficulty in realising the cohesion in this field though comes with the lack of tangibility of the notion of other-orientation because this essentially equates to a particular quality of a relationship, either in the organisation of the institution or in the actions carried

out. Essentially this quality of the relationship becomes more intelligible in considering some of the seven words defined by Land (2005) which he associates with charity, these being: altruism, egoism, benevolence/beneficence, philanthropy, organisations, charitable acts, and ethics/approach. It appears, from the associated words Land (2005) discusses, that he is attempting to gain purchase on the qualities of the charitable activities and organisations, qualities that exist in less formalised activities which take place outside of institutionalised charity.

Considering altruism and egoism in combination is a useful point from which to begin to assemble some points of understanding of the qualities of charity that I am starting from and building on in this thesis. Egoism and altruism are largely used in tandem because of the binary distinction between them. This is based on the place of the self and other in these definitions (Clohesy, 2000; McBride and Seglow, 2003), with egoism putting the self at the centre of its dispositional and behavioural definition, and altruism placing the other at the centre and before the self. Despite disagreeing with the absolute binary distinction between these terms, which I come to next, they are useful here for outlining Land's (2005) notion of 'other-orientation', in that this means that the needs and well-being of the other are considered in place of those of the self (Clohesy, 2000) and so are based on altruism.

Clohesy (2000) draws out these characteristics of altruism through discussion of empirical evidence of those involved in rescuing Jews in Europe during World War II, many of whom did so on the basis of there being a shared humanity rather than any more tangible social connection, which highlights the extent to which altruism is considered to be carried out through a sense of care for the other, rather than because of it being an obligation. Egoism is generally conceived of as muddying the purity of altruism. For example, as

Andreoni (1990) argues, there is an extent to which acting charitably is motivated not by pure altruism but by the ‘warm-glow’ felt by the donor upon acting in this way.

Two points must be made in light of this argument. The first of these is that in this thesis an orientation to ‘the other’ is conceptualised as only ever being able to emerge from the self, and here Cloke’s (2002) ‘going-beyond-the-self’ is useful to invoke. A going-beyond-the-self is made possible, in Cloke’s (2002) view, when the self becomes responsible for who they are. This may be for the positive benefit of others, such as in recognisable practices of collective action which are motivated by a range of reasons. The second point to make about the egoism of the ‘warm-glow’ is that this is not being discounted as part of action for the other, for it may well be one effect of this action, but it does not negate the charitable action from which it emerges. Rather, it raises the question as to the place of the self within the action.

It is in part through conceptualising charity as being a unique quality of other-oriented disposition, action and institution that the importance of charity in contemporary society can be realised. When understood in this way, charity becomes significant in its own right, not simply an extension of government (which is rudimentally understood as being self-oriented in its purpose of creating and maintaining the best possible conditions for the society of the self) or economy (which is readily understood as a self-interested, even if not necessarily only this (Sack, 2003; Sayer, 2000)). This is not to deny the interaction of charity with spheres of government and economy though, and so these interactions will be considered in this research as they take place in the different scales of charity in the recent context of the UK. Significant too is the recognition of the situation of charitable practice

initially in the self, and so the implication that the context of this self is important to the action that might follow.

These considerations in mind, and returning to recent changes in the ways charities raise funds, alternative giving is one prominent form of fundraising that has increasingly emerged in this response by charities to the ‘contemporary donor climate’, and as such this will form the empirical focus of this thesis. Various also referred to in both the national and charity-specific media and institutional discourse as beneficiary giving (Guardian, 2006a; Institute of Fundraising, 2009; Third Sector, 2007a), virtual giving (Third Sector, 2007a, 2007b) and ethical giving (Daily Mail, 2006; Third Sector, 2007c), this fundraising device enables people to build giving-to-charity into their everyday social activity if they so wish and are able to. This is one significant feature of many of the fundraising devices have recently been developed and used by charities. Specifically, alternative giving is marketed as a way of enabling charity giving to be built into gift-giving activities commonly carried out at times such as Christmas, birthday’s, Eid, weddings and Easter.

Typically an alternative giving scheme is built around a range of gift cards or certificates produced by the charity (known as the fulfilment materials), each of which represent one particular item or service provided by the charity to its beneficiaries. The cards or certificates are then sold at a price which is designed to mirror the actual cost of providing the item or service represented and are intended to be used by the purchaser as a gift for a friend or relative. Goats are synonymous with alternative giving, being both the first alternative gift sold (by World Vision UK in 2002) and also being the ‘face’ of an early Oxfam marketing campaign. A vast expansion of gifts available has since taken place, with

gifts now including water pumps, donkeys, school desks, plumpy nut and footballs, among dozens of others, and over twenty charities now running such schemes.

The purpose of focusing solely on one fundraising device is to critically examine the relational geographies that are produced through one particular manifestation of charity fundraising. Each form of fundraising is different and so constructs a unique donor-charity-beneficiary relationship. Alternative giving is distinctive because of the greater complexity of relations produced through the format of it as a gift as well as charity donation in this particular type of lifestyle donation, leading to interesting questions about the place of ethics within this. Furthermore, although there are charities with UK-based beneficiaries who fundraise with alternative giving, the use of alternative giving as a fundraising device is most prominent in overseas development charities. Indeed, the discourse of alternative giving as produced through the media and institutional framework almost solely presents alternative giving as synonymous with overseas development fundraising and so indicates that there is a special affinity of overseas development with this type of fundraising, and this is part of this interest here. The heavy emphasis on the use of alternative giving by overseas development charities indicates their perception of it as highly compatible for representing the needs to their beneficiaries in the 'South' in order to raise funds from those in the 'North'. This means that analysing the construction of such places and people presented in the materials of alternative giving has the potential to provide understanding of geographical imaginaries and so speak to literatures on the post-colonial, charity and (developmental) ethical consumption. As Jackson (2006) highlights, great possibilities are provided by geography through such relational thinking for the critical analysis of practices of care at a distance as present in alternative giving. In addition to this, 'international' causes such as these are the most popular in terms of the income they raise from the public,

with this segment raising £888 million in voluntary income in 2005/6, compared with the next largest category, 'Arts and Culture' with a voluntary income of £630 million (Third Sector, 2007d), indicating the significance of international charities in the public imagination of charity.

In light of these features of alternative giving, this research seeks to contribute further insight into emerging geographies of ethics, charity and giving. In so doing it connects with four key geographies. The first of these, geographies of consumption, conceptualises commodity-based histories, practices and materialities (for example, Crewe and Gregson, 1998; Holloway and Hones, 2007; Jackson, 2002; Trentmann, 2006), in and beyond the point of purchase, and so is especially relevant for the idea of the commodification of charity. The second connection is to a geography of ethically interconnected worlds, which is comprised of devices which both facilitate such connections and frame them as ethical. Prominent here is literature on fairtrade as a form of consumption which aims to build ethical connections between 'North' and 'South' (see Barnett *et al.*, 2005a; Bryant and Goodman, 2004; Goodman, 2004, 2010; Low and Davenport, 2005; Varul, 2009; Wright, 2004) and so the theoretical framework in this literature is particularly relevant to an analysis of alternative giving. Thirdly, this thesis is related to geographies of the gift (see Sack, 2003; Silk, 2004), both in terms of the notion of charity-giving as gift, and the context of personally given gifts. Fourthly, and finally, this thesis is relevant to geographies of the Third Sector (see for example Cloke *et al.*, 2005, 2010; Fyfe and Milligan, 2003; Haylett, 2001; May *et al.*, 2005; Milligan and Conradson, 2006a), as a realm which includes charities as organisations within this field. As such, this thesis is centred on the ideas of three geographies of connection, these being: new spaces and events of connection; new ethically imagined connections; and new materialities of connection.

In light of this, the broad aims of this thesis are to examine: the emergence and spaces of alternative giving as a new form of connection, and the occasions on which this giving takes place; the way in which this new space creates and represents an ethical imaginary, particularly in terms of the construction of the beneficiary; and the modes of ethical subjectification and the significance of materiality to this. Specific to the empirical study of alternative giving, the following research questions are then examined in addressing these overall research aims:

- 1) In what institutional, societal and governmental contexts has alternative giving, as a distinct fundraising device, emerged and how is alternative giving manifest in the social milieu?
- 2) What processes of mediation are carried out by charities in their construction of ‘development’ through alternative giving and what are the implications of these for an imagined geography of development’s people and places?
- 3) In what ways does alternative giving govern the ethical subject?
- 4) What is the place of ethics in the practices of giving and receiving alternative gifts?
- 5) What is the afterlife of an alternative gift for the recipient given the gift’s material form and what are the implications of this?

In light of these research questions, the rest of the thesis is structured as follows. Chapters 1 and 2 outline the key literatures and theoretical material that the rest of the thesis is situated within and draws upon. Chapter 1 focuses on the institutional and governmental scales of charity in the context of the UK. Particularly, it outlines concepts associated with the institutional manifestations of charity before moving on to examine literatures related to consumption and the spectacle. Further, this chapter looks at the government of charity and the governing of the charitable self, drawing on Foucault’s writings on governmentality and

associated literature. Chapter 2 then goes on to look at charitable practice in terms of subject-based ethics. As such, the chapter examines existing work in geography on ethics as well as developing this through an engagement with literatures on virtue ethics and ethics of care. Based on this, the chapter builds a concept of ethical action revolving around the importance of the situatedness of the ethical subject.

Having outlined this theoretical material, Chapter 3 discusses the research methods employed by the thesis. Wholly based on qualitative methods, the chapter outlines the use of interviews, focus groups, visual and textual analysis, and participant observation in the production of original empirical material for the thesis and the rationale for this. This chapter also highlights the significance of the positionality of the researcher and research participants.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 bring together the main empirical findings from this research and discuss them in light of the conceptual material outlined in chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 4 provides a genealogy of alternative giving in terms of how and why it has emerged as a prominent form of charity fundraising, particularly in international development charities. Drawing on interviews with the charities that initially adopted and adapted alternative giving, and charities who have subsequently taken it up, the chapter examines the specific evolutions of this fundraising device in the context of individual charities. In particular, the chapter looks at how and why charities have adopted a consumption-oriented approach to fundraising. Chapter 5 analyses the visual and textual marketing materials produced by charities for alternative giving, and particularly the decision-making processes that lie behind their production. In doing this, the chapter discusses how the developmental and relief work of the charity is constructed in these materials as a purchasable commodity in

the forms of a gift through the utilisation of particular mediums and the logics of their representation. The chapter also critically examines the ways in which the beneficiaries of the charity are represented in these marketing materials and how they conform to particular geographical imaginations. Finally, Chapter 6 looks at practices of giving and receiving alternative gifts and the experience and opinions of the individuals involved in this. In particular, this chapter draws on the discussion of ethics in Chapter 2 to examine the ways in which the situated practices of alternative giving complicate certain understandings of ethical reasoning. As such, the chapter draws out the messiness of the ethics of alternative giving as it plays out in terms of the considerations gift-givers have to make and the demands these gifts make on the recipients.

Finally, the thesis concludes by summarising the key findings of the above chapters and suggesting how this research could be expanded upon and taken further in the future.

Chapter 1

The Changing Relationship between Society and Charities

1.1 Introduction: Defining Charities and Other Associated Terms of Organisation

Before discussing the context and outcomes of the changes in the relationship between society and charities that are taking place I must first clarify what I am referring to as ‘charities’ and outline the relationship between this and other cognate terms. There are those charities which are obviously recognisable to a large proportion of the UK public, charities such as Oxfam, Cancer Research UK, The Salvation Army, The British Heart Foundation and the National Trust, all of which the Charities Aid Foundation list as being in the top ten fundraising charities for income in 2005/6 (CAF, 2007) and are listed in the top ten most valuable charity brands for 2007 (Guardian, 2007). There are over 160,000 ‘main charities’ registered at the Charity Commission of England and Wales.⁴ However, there are many charitable organisations that exist within the definition of ‘charity’ that are not so recognisable publicly, and sub-sections of the charity field which might not be readily thought of as such. Examples of these include private schools, religious bodies and more civic-based organisations such as the Scout Association.⁵ The defining aspect of any charitable organisation though is that it is legally recognised as such. For an organisation to legally qualify for charitable status it must ‘operate for the public benefit and independently of government or commercial interests’.⁶ This means that while the most well-known charities are those which are fundraising organisations, there are many organisations less well-known as charities but which are recognised as such as they fulfil

⁴ Available from: <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/>

⁵ <http://scouts.org.uk/>

⁶ Available from: <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/tcc/ccabout.asp#1>

these criteria. One such example is Nuffield Health, which has an income of almost 600 million pounds but is a charity by virtue of the fact that it re-invests its profits into its activities rather than profiting shareholders.

There are a number of other terms which are also used to describe some organisations that are also charities, primarily: non-governmental organisation (NGO), nonprofit organisation, voluntary sector organisation, and third sector organisation. The main difference between ‘charity’ and these other terms is that the latter are broader in definition, also incorporating forms of organisation other than that of charity in different ways. Some of these terms also lack the legal significance and upstanding of charity emerging instead, for example, through administrative use. I principally use the term ‘charity’ throughout this thesis because it is the term with which my main subject, fundraising, is most closely associated, and also because the organisations I am studying in this context are both legally constituted and publicly known as charities. Charity is not simply the form of organisation, it importantly also refers to a culture in which fundraising takes place in the UK. It is useful to consider the terms mentioned above that are often associated with the organisational form of charity though, in that they articulate different contexts in which charity can be understood, and also tap into a range of literatures which analyse the relationship between such organisations and society.

‘NGO’ is a term that is often conflated with ‘charity’; for example, Willis (2005:25) defines NGOs as ‘[o]rganisations which are neither run by the state nor are they profit-making companies...[they] can be very small-scale organisations, or very large global organisations such as Oxfam or Médecins Sans Frontières’. In that it defines them by what they are not, i.e. governmental or commercial, this definition is very similar to that of ‘charity’ from the

charity commission. Furthermore, both of the organisations cited by Willis (2005: 25) are registered as charities in the UK. In a literal sense of NGO as being non-governmental, these of points of definition are certainly true, and NGO (and *INGO*, or International NGO) is a term that is used in areas of the literature in this way (for example Murphy, 2005).

Moving beyond this definition though, NGO is used by others in a more nuanced way. Rather than encompassing charities with the term NGO, Fowler (2000) and Jalali (2008) distinguish NGOs from charities, with the former working with beneficiaries, and the latter raising the money through which these NGOs are funded. Nonetheless, it is difficult to find a definitive definition of 'NGO', and for this reason there is some credence to Land's (2005) argument that NGO is essentially a meaningless and pointless description. However, while I empathise with this sentiment, I think it is more useful to perceive the idea of NGO as being deployed in a complex and diverse way and acknowledge that 'the term carries different connotations in different circumstances' (Willetts, 2002).

Additionally, it is also pertinent to recognise that the term NGO, unlike that of charity, carries with it an emphasis on advocacy as being integral to its mission (Paul, 2000). This is not to say that charities do not carry out advocacy work, for a great number do, but in the organisations I am interested in then advocacy is a small part of their activity rather than the central component of it. Moreover, NGOs, due to their advocacy emphasis, are less likely to receive funding from government. In this instance then charities can be seen as part of, but not identical to, NGO in a broad sense. The consequence of the term NGO being used in different ways is that there are areas of this literature that are relevant to a discussion of charity, but that the literature must be read with a mind to the way in which the term is

being deployed and to the specific type of organisations that are being discussed with this term.

The second term used in reference to charity, nonprofit, is a one that is largely favoured in the USA but that has been used in literatures which discuss the UK context. In the USA ‘nonprofit’ is the dominant term used because of the legal standing that it has, a standing that is similar to that of charity in the UK. However, this does not mean that literature is strictly demarked on such a geographical basis; in the UK based literature, charities are sometimes referred to as nonprofits (for example, Wenham *et al.*, 2003) and in the USA literature nonprofits are often referred to as charitable organisations (for example, Hager *et al.*, 2002; Jacobs and Sobieraj, 2007). Broadly though, the literature from the USA is more strongly aligned with the term ‘nonprofit’, and this is a term which reflects the different political, historical and cultural background of the sector to that of the UK. Due to the consistent prominence and large size of the sector in the USA, the influence of the USA’s terminology is visible throughout much literature, in both book (for example: Anheier, 2005; Salamon and Anheier, 1997) and journal titles declaring themselves international in nature and perpetuating this use of terminology. Journals include: Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing; Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly; International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing; Journal for Nonprofit Management; and Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations. The implication of this is that, despite the non-UK context of much of this literature, and consequently the differences in the contexts of government and culture of the organisations being discussed, ‘nonprofit’ is a prolific and perhaps even defining term of the international literature on the sector. Work in this field is relevant to this thesis then, both because some of the UK-based literature uses the term, and because there are points of significance and cross-over with

non-UK literatures, such as that discussing the role of marketing within charities (such as Kotler and Andreasen, 1995).

Several of the journals named above also include ‘voluntary’ in their title. Voluntary organisations have similar characteristics to UK charities in that they do not make a profit, unlike a successful business, and they operate independently of government. Alongside these attributes, voluntary organisations are just that, they exist because people have ‘joined together voluntarily to take action’ (National Council of Social Service, 1975), which means they are run by volunteers and, or instead of this, they run on money that has been voluntarily given.⁷ Therefore, this means that all charities are voluntary organisations, if only because all charities must have a volunteer board of trustees to ensure that the mission of the charity is being fulfilled through the activity that the charity is carrying out (Kendall and Knapp, 1997: 272). The voluntary sector is not wholly comprised of charities though, it also encompasses, for example, unpaid volunteers within statutory services and voluntary organisations such as self-help groups (Lowe, 2005). ‘Voluntary’, therefore, exceeds the meaning of charity.

Of late there has been much interest in the voluntary sector and voluntarism within academic circles (for example, Anheier, 2007; Bennett, 2008; Cloke *et al.*, 2010; Dekker and van den Broek, 1998; Fyfe and Milligan, 2003; Kendall and Knapp, 1995; Milligan and Conradson, 2006a; Morison, 2000). This interest has been prompted both by an increasing recognition within certain state governments, such as the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand, of the important role that voluntary organisations play in society, and also by a

⁷ Although I discuss later how one increasing entanglement that the voluntary sector has with government is due to funding being obtained from the latter.

move in these governments to increasingly integrate the voluntary sector into the formal provision of welfare and services. Part of the rationale given by these governments for embracing the voluntary sector is that participation by individuals in such voluntary capacities builds social capital which thus fosters senses of citizenship and strengthens civil society, deemed by some as necessary for a good democracy, where this activity takes place (Brown, 1997; Dekker and van den Broek, 1998; Etzioni, 1995; Milligan and Conradson, 2006b; Putnam, 2000). Putnam (2000) identifies three components to social capital: prosocial norms, social networks, and trust. The degree of participation by individuals in voluntary organisations has therefore been used to measure the level of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Stolle and Hooghe, 2004), although the existence of all three as a necessity for different forms of giving have been questioned by others (for example see Bekkers and Veldhuizen, 2008). Due to the empirical focus on international development charities in this research though, the concept of global civil society is also a vital consideration, not least because this raises questions about the potential for such endeavours to be Eurocentric and postcolonial (Anheier, 2007).

Additional evidence of the changing relationship between the charity sector and government lies in the increasing engagement of the UK government with the ‘third sector’, a key term to recognise in order to appreciate this shift in the approach of the government to such types of activity. The significance of this shift is evidenced in the creation in May 2006 of a Cabinet Office of the ‘Office of the Third Sector’ by the UK government, an office that amalgamates, reinforces and facilitates the intentions of the government towards

the sector.⁸ It is in the remit of this Office where a definition of the third sector can be found, with their website describing the third sector organisations comprising it as being ‘non-governmental, value-driven, [and] principally reinvest any financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives’.⁹ Again, it can be understood that this definition includes charities as one type of third sector organisation in that charities are non-governmental and not-for-profit. Indeed, it is this government office which creates the core government policy relating to charities. In this definition ‘third sector’ greatly exceeds that of charities though. Included in non-governmental bodies are also any organisations or businesses which have ‘social, environmental or cultural objectives’ and, for this end, it refers to activities such as fairtrade and forms of organisation, including social enterprises,¹⁰ which previously had been ‘institutionally dealt with as businesses’ (Carmel and Harlock, 2008: 160). Here then third sector is an important term to draw on because of the prominence of its use by and in relation to government engagement with such organisations and activities, of which charity is included. As initially explained, this has strong connections to the notion of voluntary sector and to the conceptions of civil society and citizenship, which will be discussed later in relation to the interaction of individuals, charity and government.

The important commonality between all of the terms outlined here is that in some capacity they refer to the organisational form of charity, but to different sets of literatures. The very fact of there being different emphases in each set of literature indicates the degree to which each term is tied into different politicisations of these types of organisation, politicisations

⁸ Although this government office was disbanded following the change in elected government from Labour to a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition in May 2010. The activities of this office which have been retained by the new government in office are now carried out by the Office of Civil Society.

⁹ See: ‘About Us’ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/about_us.aspx

¹⁰ See: ‘About Us’ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/about_us.aspx

that are important for starting to understand how charities are implicated in particular ways in broader processes. These issues are worthy of elaboration in themselves, but it is also interesting to consider this alongside the shift that I initially identified in the introduction to this thesis: the move within the charity sector to provide potential donors with an enhanced giving experience. I will therefore attend to both of these changes in greater detail in the rest of this chapter, responding to the questions:

- 1) What changes are there in the way in which charities aim to obtain funding from individuals?
- 2) How have changes in the governing rationality affected the organisation and activity of charities?
- 3) In what directions are these changes taking charitable organisations and their activities?

And

- 4) How are these processes being governed through and in charities?

In order to address these questions I am going to approach them through two related but theoretically different arenas: firstly, that of the commodity and consumption, which speaks to the question of what is taking place in regard of charities and the ‘donor experience’ being expounded; secondly, that of government, in relation to the changing approach of the government toward charities, and also in relation to the affects of this on attempts to govern individuals.

1.2 Charity and Consumption: Commodity, Spectacle and the Hyperreal

To talk about charity and commercial activity in the same sentence is not unusual. In a USA-centred literature, there is work which discusses how nonprofits have increasingly turned to the commercial activities of selling goods and services which might or might not

be related to the mission of the organisation (Toepler, 2006). Significant in this work is a distinction between this type of activity of commerce, and donations which have been given by the public. Indeed, a decline in donated income is cited as one of the reasons for the need to move to commercial activities. In this section I aim to challenge the dichotomy between commercial and donor activities set out in this conceptualisation by arguing that fundraising has moved, and continues to move, to the commodity form, addressing individuals as consumers. I now build on this argument through use of the work of Best (1989), by illustrating how some of the wide variety of fundraising types can be understood as different forms of ‘commodity’. Best puts together a typology of three successive incarnations of the commodity form: firstly, the initial ‘invention’ of the commodity by and with the beginnings of capitalism; secondly, the commodity becoming spectacle in later capitalism, drawing on Debord’s writings; and thirdly, the death and implosion of the real into the hyperreal commodity, drawing on Baudrillard’s simulacrum. I am going to discuss the basic arguments of these three concepts in turn, and consider how each could be used to articulate and understand changes that have been and still are taking place with charity and charities.

1.2.1 Charity as Commodity

Best describes how the central element of Marx’s analysis of the process of commodification is that it involves the production of things that can be sold and bought with universal units of exchange (i.e. money). For this to become the main form of existence in a society, it is argued, people must become separated from any means of satisfying their needs on their own which, during Western capitalisation, took the form of the appropriation of land which the population existed from by a small number of people – capitalists – and the subsequent removal of this population. With no land off of which to

survive this larger population then only have one thing left – their labour – and so they must sell this to the capitalists in order to obtain their means of survival. It is with this shift from subsistence to capitalism that the materials of survival are turned into commodities, because labour is sold for money which provides the labourer with the ability to purchase, from capitalists, the things that they require to live. In turn, the sale of commodities enables the capitalist system to be born and sustained. One particular point that Marx wanted to make with this analysis of capitalism was that the separation of people from their means of subsistence has led to the degradation of society. This degradation is caused because capitalism places people in a disempowering matrix of control and causes the disengagement of people with the very animality of being human (Best, 1989): a dual separation from power and from the physicality of the human body. This is a vast simplification but this archetype of commodification draws out central features of the effect this has had in recent Western (and arguably, global) history which can also be used to think through the changes in charity. One feature is the separation of people from the means to subsist, and the other feature is the turning of ‘things’ into commodities which can be bought and sold. These two features highlight how dramatically societal cultures changed over time into being commodity-oriented, consumer cultures.

In simplistic terms it could be argued that ‘commodity’ and ‘charity’ are, by definition, opposites of each other; the commodity emerges from, and is based in, capitalist relations, whereas charity can be regarded as an altruistic or selfless action, and therefore as an exception to these capitalist relations. However, this would be to misunderstand both the interrelationship between the commodity and emotion, and the socialised situation of charitable activity. There are many ways in which the commodity and charity are brought together, including the specific involvement of charity with commodities themselves and

commercial techniques which have been taken up. To explore these connections between charity and commodity I will work through four strands. The first relates to the very existence of charities as organisations acting as agencies for charity. The second strand relates to what can be seen as a general trend of the increasing professionalisation of charitable organisations. Third, I will look at the very direct involvement by charities in trade, including in the fairtrade movement. Finally, and of primary significance, I will look at the shift in the way in which fundraising is carried out.

a) Organisations for Charitable Activity

The history of charity existing in a collective form is reasonably long and relatively well charted (by Owen, 1964; Tompson, 1979), with charities, as organisations, first being recognised in statute in England in 1601 (Owen, 1964: 70). Arguably, charity in an organisational form which mediates between giver and beneficiary, rather than charity as a single, direct act of giving from an individual to a beneficiary, signals a mode of alignment of charity with the commodification. A central characteristic of capitalisation is the division of labour, which comes about because ‘individual producers cannot produce all possible goods and so must exchange in order to satisfy their needs’ (Best, 1989: 25). Arranging charity so that it is concentrated into organisations that carry out charitable work displays a rationality that is in line with the compartmentalising rationality of a division of labour, that there are collectives which purely focus on this one type of activity and to which individuals give money in order for the organisation to carry out this activity on their behalf. One logical conclusion from this would be that charity itself becomes a commodity available to individuals for purchase simply through giving their money to a charity. As with all charity though, regardless of whether it is mediated or direct, the activity redistributes whatever is being given, and therefore cannot be said, in a strict sense, to

provide the giver with something they are in need of in the same way as a commodity purchase is outlined as being. That said, conceptualising the organisational form of charity in this way is important for what follows. It is only because of this move to mediated, organised charity that the next characteristics of charities have become possible.

b) The Professionalisation of Charity

One process connected to commodification and which I associate with organisational charity is professionalisation. Professionalisation is an increase of professionalism, which is the move to there being an established set of norms of skills, knowledge and conduct for particular roles (Hodgson, 2005). In the case of charity this can quantitatively be observed in the replacement of unpaid volunteers who are unqualified in the area of charity with ‘suitably’ qualified employees in roles fulfilling the central functions of charities which can be said to go hand-in-hand with the adoption of management structures and practices from the commercial sector (Cumming, 2008). More important for evidencing this shift though is the existence of professional bodies for the guidance and monitoring of the charities and employees activities as this indicates that there are norms of these roles on which such judgements can be made. This constitutes part of the move to commodify charity because professionalisation implies that labour will be now be *purchased*, and that with this, there will be a greater division of labour, with ‘experts’ working in specific roles. Parsons and Broadbridge (2004) highlight how the trend to professionalisation recognised as taking place in the nonprofit sector in the US in the 1980s and 1990s can easily be translated to that which has been taking place in the UK. In support of this there has been research into the professionalisation of one part of the nonprofit sector, the charity retail sector (Broadbridge and Parsons 2003a; Broadbridge and Parsons, 2003b; Parsons, 2002, 2004; Parsons and Broadbridge, 2004) exploring what has been happening and how this has

affected the sector. The main effects of this shift to professionalisation are cited as managerial uptake of strategic planning and strategic marketing techniques, and in the charity retail sector professionalisation has involved the payment of members of staff, the membership of staff to specific expert work communities and a generally more business-like and competent working activity (Broadbridge and Parsons, 2004).

There is much evidence of these professional practices becoming more commonplace in the charity sector as a whole in the UK context. The very existence of multi-million pound charities, such as Oxfam, Cancer Research UK, the National Trust and the Salvation Army, is only possible when run professionally. However, even more convincing is the fact that there is a whole industry created around this professionalised sector, including: professional bodies such as the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations¹¹ (ACEVO) and the Institute of Fundraising;¹² news companies such as ‘Third Sector’,¹³ ‘Charity Times’¹⁴ and ‘Professional Fundraising’;¹⁵ consultancy services which include The Good Agency,¹⁶ Bluefrog,¹⁷ and nfp synergy;¹⁸ and specialist university postgraduate degree courses on not-for-profit and charity sector fields, for example, at City University, London.¹⁹ Also, in January 2008 there was the instatement of a professional code of conduct which the ACEVO praise as being a ‘mile-stone towards professionalising the third sector’ (ACEVO, 2008). Increases in professional paraphernalia such as these agencies and codes means that charities now have the resources and expertise to operate with the same

¹¹ See: www.acevo.org.uk

¹² See: <http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/>

¹³ See: <http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/>

¹⁴ See: <http://www.charitytimes.com/>

¹⁵ See: <http://www.professionalfundraising.co.uk/home/index.php>

¹⁶ See: <http://www.thegoodagency.co.uk/>

¹⁷ See: <http://www.bluefroglondon.com/>

¹⁸ See: <http://www.nfpsynergy.net/default.aspx>

¹⁹ See: <http://www.cass.city.ac.uk/masters/courses/index.html>

professional capacity as if they were for-profit businesses. The sole aim of making charities more business-like should be to enable them to more fully achieve their charitable mission and therefore to make them more efficient or bigger. However, as Horne (2000) points out, in some areas of the charities activity, this might conflict with other benefits which come from that particular activity. Nonetheless, this ambition of efficiency, and potentially expansion, reflects the increasingly professionalised nature of the charity sector, indicating the move to a commodity culture.

c) Charities and their Involvement in Trade

Fairtrade by its very name is about the trading of commodities. However, it also has an additional layer to it which is morally based, the purpose of fairtrade being to ‘create opportunities for producers and workers who have been economically disadvantaged or marginalised by the conventional trading system’.²⁰ Charities are heavily involved in this scheme. Not only is the Fairtrade Foundation a charity, but other charities such as Christian Aid and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) are also engaged with fair-trade. For example, Christian Aid was involved in setting up the fairtrade chocolate label ‘Divine’ and CAFOD operate a fairtrade shop under its charity brand with the profits going to the work of the charity. This is strong evidence to suggest the increased involvement with charities in commodity oriented action towards the goals to which they are aiming. The idea of commodity-based action is well documented in an ever expanding literature on ethical consumption (see Barnett *et al.*, 2005a; Bryant and Goodman, 2004; Goodman, 2004, 2010; Low and Davenport, 2005; Varul, 2009; Wright, 2004). Barnett *et al.* (2005a) even mention the role of charities in fairtrade activity. This is

²⁰ See:

http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/what_is_fairtrade/fairtrade_certification_and_the_fairtrade_mark/the_fairtrade_mark.aspx

a useful area for highlighting the intertwined nature of charity with the commodity form. It is not in itself a direct sign that charities are becoming increasingly about commodification themselves though, rather it is an indication that they are getting more involved in this form of action, perhaps in addition to their other forms of activity which are more traditionally associated with them, such as fundraising.

d) The Marketing of Charity and Fundraising

Charity marketing is increasingly becoming big business and it is this which arguably demonstrates the most profound shift of the charity sector towards commodification. According to Bruce (2005), marketing in charities takes three forms: the marketing of charity services to potential beneficiaries, campaigning and awareness raising as in education by charities of their causes, and in fundraising. Some of these marketing activities might be connected, although perhaps not as much as might be expected due to the way in which individual charities have developed and grown (Ruderham and Lawson, 2008). As mentioned above, the marketing of services, campaigns and for fundraising in charities is increasingly being carried out by professionals, often people who have worked in the for-profit world prior to working in the charity sector, or who have worked their way up through the charity sector following professional training in the area of marketing. In a for-profit world the purpose of marketing is predominantly to sell commodities, and it is these marketing skills which have been introduced into these areas of the charity sector. This is not to suggest that this is the *reason* that charity marketing and fundraising are becoming increasingly commodity culture orientated. Rather, this professionalisation is part of this commodification of charity in the form of a symptom, and so is not the reason why charities have become increasingly commodity-oriented in a society which has this as a central cultural feature. Charity marketers are following marketing technologies such as

posting flyers through doors and putting them in magazines and newspapers, placing adverts in the written media and also using audio-visual advertising. In addition to this, charities at the more professionalised end of the spectrum have public relations departments which aim to promote the charity.

Interpreting a move to commercial techniques in the charity sector as a move to the commodification of charity is important in this line of argument, but even more so are the particular ways in which these marketing mediums are being used for fundraising purposes. It appears that charities are increasingly aiming to mould the charitable work that they carry out into commodities which can be marketed and sold in the fundraising process. This can clearly be seen in the phenomenon of alternative giving which I outline in the Introduction to the thesis, in that it involves the packaging of a project or aspect of the work of the charity into the idea of a particular item, such as a goat or a mosquito net, and makes it purchasable in the form of a card or certificate for example, therefore becoming a commodity to be bought and sold. There are other examples of the commodification of charity, and there have been over the years, such as the NCH ‘sunny smiles’ appeal in the 1960s and 70s where pictures of smiling children were sold by children to raise money for the charity – the idea being that the picture represented the ability of the donation of money to make a needy child happy. This scheme is no longer in existence, but the contemporary equivalent would be child sponsorship, where a certain amount of money is given by an individual each month for a particular child, through an overseas development charity. This is supported by discourse from within the charity sector, for example, an article by the financial director of charity Jewish Care in *Third Sector* (Third Sector, 2008) directly compares these forms of fundraising with commercial sales, arguing that charities have to highlight to donors the areas in which they demonstrate good value for money.

1.2.2 Charity as Spectacle

Taken from Debord (1992), spectacle is the next shift in society after the commencing of the commodity society that Best (1989) moves on to discuss. This ‘society of the spectacle’ is still a ‘commodity society, ultimately rooted in production’ (Best, 1989: 29), but it is now not only a society which is organised around the buying and selling of things which have an exchange value (commodities in their raw sense), but is a society where the commodity and consumer have moved on to a stage where image becomes a primary element to the buying and selling of the commodity. The very introduction of the term ‘consumer’ here indicates a new aspect of the society of the spectacle. Individuals are no longer largely producers in this system, instead they are predominantly consumers who have lost the means to ‘make’ their own life and so must now do this through the consumption of that which has been fabricated for them. The spectacle then

‘generally...refers to the vast institutional and technical apparatus of late-capitalism, to all the means and methods power employs, outside of direct force, to relegate subjects to the critical and creative margins of society and to obscure the nature and effects of its distorting power.’

(Best, 1989: 29)

Best (1989) describes how, in the stages of early capitalism, discourses around use value were suppressed in order to exploit labour, but in the consumer society the idea of human needs is re-introduced as it is a source of further capital accumulation. Use value was implicit in the exchange value but is now ‘explicitly proclaimed...deployed in an abstract and ideological way’ (Best, 1989: 30), like a panacea to the crisis of capitalism (as the misery that capitalism causes), the spectacle’s use of abstraction and ideology distracts from this and displaces it.

Central to this thesis of the spectacle is that the use value of the commodity is replaced by the perceived use value of the commodity which is articulated in the image of it. The difference between use value and perceived use value can be found in the relationship of the subject to them. It is the perceived use value which is articulated in the image of the commodity, and this image or representation which becomes the main currency of life; it becomes ‘a spectacular and speculative universe of images and signs, where subjects do not constitute their own lives and society, but contemplate the glossy surfaces of the commodity world’ (Best, 1989: 31).

We can elaborate on the relevance of the image of the commodity being so significant through Cray’s (2007) individualisation-consumerism-constructivism triptych, particularly in terms of the connection between individual subjects’ contemplation and the consumption of images. Within Cray’s (2007) triptych, it is with consumerism that there has been the rise of the authority of the individual over themselves and the sense that they must make choices and decide things for themselves. Whereas in past forms of society external factors have ‘made’ who people are – specifically, their role as producers and the way in which this has led individuals to form communities around class based factors – individuals must now ‘make’ themselves. Consumerism, Cray (2007: 70) writes, is central to this idea of choice through which self-making takes place. Due to a need for individuals to ‘make’ themselves to be who they are, they must decide what they want to be and how they can then fulfil this through what they consume. Objects of consumption become synonymous with particular ways of life through the way in which they are marketed. Commodities are not only manufactured physically but also ‘made’ by marketing which connects particular products to particular seductive images of who individuals could be were they to use the product (Cray, 2007: 75). Commodities do not stand alone but are connected to a whole

network of images and other commodities which pertain to a particular ideal and vision of a type of person which can be bought into through the consumption of the 'right' commodities which, as discussed above, become the main currency for everyday life.

It is possible then to elaborate on how an understanding of spectacle is important to contemporary charity. Using this concept of 'the society of the spectacle' to consider the marketing that charities carry out, we can develop an understanding of the ways in which individuals relate to charities. I will therefore now draw on one specific example from fundraising marketing to reflect upon how charities could be said to use this idea of the spectacle in their marketing with the aim of connecting with the public.

Of late there have been a proliferation of running events through which fundraising has been conducted, such as Cancer Research UK's 'race for life' events of which there were almost thirty in the South-West of England alone over the summer months of 2009. As with many charity events, the way in which money is made is through sponsorship of individual participants who undertake a particular activity. For this the charity must market themselves to these potential participants and then these participants essentially act as volunteer fundraisers by appealing to family, friends and other acquaintances for sponsorship. Fundraising in this way means then that the individual sponsoring is not simply giving a donation to the charity but is paying for the individual to participate in an event.

However, there is more to such events for those participating than simply raising funds. For example, individuals run for health reasons (Nettleton and Hardy, 2006), but significantly also to be a part of an event or an occasion (Wharf-Higgins and Lauzon, 2003). It is not

simply that the money will be going to the charity – that the charity work will be ‘bought’ by the individual – there is another layer of value achieved through the connection to other images and ways in which participation performatively brings the individual into being a particular kind of person through their participation. As such, Nettleton and Hardy (2006: 454) suggest these types of charity running events are spectacles themselves due to their carnival-like atmosphere which is brought about by being ‘ordinary lives in extraordinary events’. The giving of money for charity in running events such as Cancer Research UK’s ‘Race for Life’ goes hand-in-hand with how participants are affected by their participation. Although participation and fundraising are intimately linked here, there would be no fundraising without a spectacle, and this spectacle is created through the circulation of images of health and running and doing-good quite generally as much as through the idea of the particular work that will be carried out by the charity with the money raised.

1.2.3 Charity as Hyperreal? Baudrillard’s Society of the Simulacrum

Baudrillard’s society of the simulacrum is the last concept examined by Best (1989) that relates to the notion of the commodity and is by far the most extreme. As Best (1989) writes, with the society of the simulacrum the system of representation of the object that constitutes the society of the spectacle is greatly and further abstracted to the point where it is totally absorbed by the image and dematerialises in the process of semiotic exchange; the subject and object no longer exist in isolation from one another, but the object instead becomes only a sign of its use, no longer connected to the fulfilment of physical need. Because it is no longer reliant on an objective reality then this sign can freely float and create new and different meanings. In the fluidity of this new sign-based world then the sign can only refer to itself in that it is decontextualised from the previously anchored structures of meaning. In this society it is not simply that the commodity subsumes all

sign-values in its exploitation of all facets of life. Rather, it means that signs themselves are the locale of power, and for which use value is merely an alibi of a rationalising system which is governed by a determining code which positions the symbolic as being that through which exchange and use value operate. In this formulation then an attempt to change the existing social order should not aim at the systems of production and consumption, but rather aim to destroy this code and return to the real system of the symbolic.

Best (1989: 36) notes that Baudrillard himself wrote that the ideas he developed later in his work should no longer be considered social theory, even postmodern social theory, but instead be considered science fiction (Best, 1989: 36). In this work Baudrillard develops the concept of the 'hyperreal', a concept that goes beyond the idea of a masking of reality that is presented by the spectacle, to the idea that this appearance is all there is, the 'reality' has gone, and so all that is left is the reality of the sign and therefore that there is no stable point of reference left. Baudrillard explains this process as taking place through the constant reproduction of the object of reality through the mediums of the postmodern society to the point at which the non-representational qualities of the 'original' are totally lost. Two senses of the hyperreal are elaborated from Baudrillard's writings by Best (1989), these are that it has both a 'hard' and a 'soft' meaning. The former of these refers to where the real and the illusion cannot be distinguished, the example given being that the difference between television and reality cannot be made. The latter, soft hyperreality, refers to the argument that the reality and illusion can be distinguished, but that the hyperreal – the simulacrum – is preferred to the real; the 'real' has been made to seem too dull and mundane by all the 'faster, sexier, realler-than-real' hyperreality (Best, 1989: 38), and so it is in this that society now lives.

The consequences of this conceptualisation for society appear to be associated with the place of the beneficiary in the symbols that are proliferated by charities (and others) in their name. At stake here in terms of the hyperreal is the disappearance of the essence of the beneficiary, or of what might be put in the terminology of literature discussed in Chapter 2, the face of the other. In other words, it is the humanity of this beneficiary that is at risk of being destroyed in the fundraising that is carried out by charities for such people. This could mean that as the image of the beneficiary is circulated in different spaces and forums then this humanity is neglected or even lost in favour of the shinier, glossier context in which it is placed. Equally, it could mean that the very face of this other is erased as fundraising becomes about ‘the name of’ the beneficiary. For the purpose of illustrating these two possibilities of the hyperreal in charity I am drawing on the example of ‘Live8’.

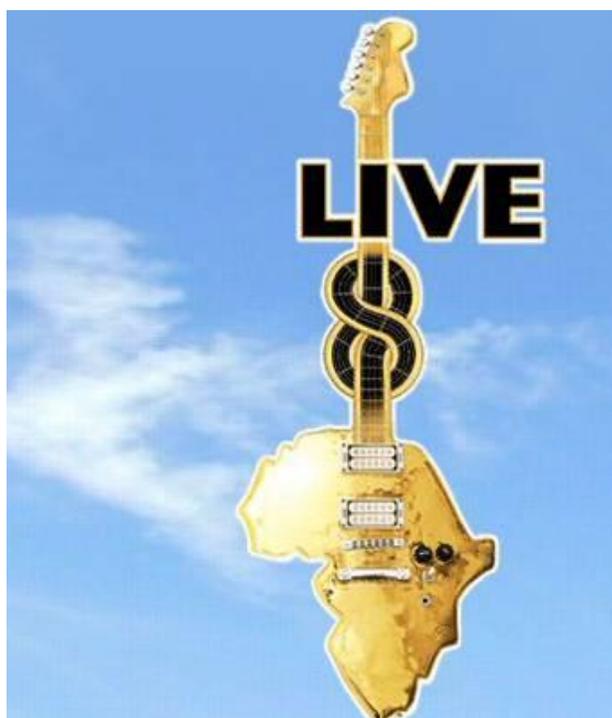


Figure 1.1: The Live8 symbol²¹

²¹ <http://www.live8live.com/>

Live8 was a set of concerts that took place on 2nd July 2005 in the G8 countries (comprising of France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, USA, Canada and Russia), and also in South Africa, with the aim of persuading G8 leaders to make changes which would ease poverty in the poorest nations of the world, including, for example, cancelling the debt of these countries and committing to giving them more aid. The reason for the timing of Live8 was to coincide with the annual summit of the G8. According to the Live8 website, 3 billion people watched the event, whether through attending one of the concerts, or watching the televised version.²² In terms of the size of the audience, this certainly seemed to mark the event as a ‘success’, being explained in terms of signalling a message of solidarity and the promises that this precipitated from the G8. Putting aside Live8’s arguably limited success given that, with just eighteen months left to deliver on the promises that had been made in July 2005, the G8 were assessed to be just a third of the way to meeting these targets (ONE, 2009a), a number of other aspects of Live8 can be called into question by Baudrillard’s hyperreal.

Firstly, and highly significantly, is the likely centrality of the huge number of global music stars who performed at the concerts to the number of people who attended or watched the event. Although supposedly done for the purpose of sending the message to the G8, and therefore being a charitable act, there surely would not have been this number of people involved had the event not promised to feature live performances from some of the biggest names in popular music, and for no cost to the attendee. The symbol of Live8 alone indicates the significance of this (western) music for the popularity of the event simply with the incorporation of the continent of Africa into the electric guitar (see figure 1.1), alongside the slogan of it as ‘A day that rocked the world!’. Secondly, the iconic status of

²² <http://www.live8live.com/whathappened/#>

an event called 'Live Aid' which took place twenty-years previously, and for which Live8 mirrored both in style and in the continuity of some of the celebrities involved in the organisation of the event, adds weight to the significance of the Live8 event in terms of its appeal to attendees; Live Aid gave Live8 a status in history for which attendees could say they were a part. Finally, it is arguable that the certain celebrities, such as Bob Geldof and Bono, and the Live8 event have become almost inseparable from each other, signalling each other in their invocation. In terms of these observations about the Live8 it seems that the event does not signify, at the forefront, the individual in Burundi who may benefit from improved healthcare as a consequence of the event taking place (Ndayishimiye, quoted in ONE, 2009b) but rather is used in a whole string of other associations in the production of meanings which have detached it from the face of this other. It is highly probable that very few of those who attended the Live8 event have given recent thought to the actions of the G8 since the event, let alone are aware of and looked up the reports that have been written about its progress (for example, ONE,2009a). However, in their delight over the excitement of the Live8 event itself they may well have purchased the DVD which is part of the reproduction of the event which gives it greater meaning as iconic moment in itself.²³

Arguably, these points mean that Live8 could be considered as hyperreal in both senses of the word. In the 'hard' sense of the hyperreal, it is difficult to determine the reality of the event in terms of whether it had a real or pseudo effect on improving the situation for those in extreme poverty. The promises made by the G8 in light of Live8 were celebrated as being a real outcome, regardless of whether they resulted in real change. This tension seems to be less than significant to the judgment of the event itself. The sentiment of the

²³ This DVD is described on the Live8 site as being: 'The official Live 8 DVD, crammed with amazing performances by the biggest artists in the world. A who's who in music with exclusive rehearsal and unseen footage.' See: <http://www.live8live.com/>

charitable actions of Live8 has become more important than the reality of influencing the G8 to enact real change around which Live8 was originally situated. In the 'soft' sense of hyperreal then Live8 can certainly be considered to be better than the potential reality (which is no longer attached to the meaning of the event). The emphasis on the celebrity performers of Live8 continues even on the website which holds details of the event, with there being a list of the performers at each of the concerts and hyperlinks to their own websites and, moreover, it is the description of these performances as 'amazing' that wins out in the DVD description. The website does contain information about the issues around which Live8 campaigned, but the more exciting elements of Live8 have become the focus and reality of the event. The use of the hyperreal here warns of the loss of charitable meaning that can take place in the dissociation and freeing up of the symbol of charity from the reality of charity. Here, it can be argued that charity is no longer even the illusion of Live8, but that Live8 is a hyperreal sign, an un-real reality in its own right.

1.2.4 Commodity, Spectacle and the Simulacrum Societies for Charities and Fundraising

Theorising forms of charitable organisation and charitable actions through the lenses of the commodity, spectacle and simulacrum societies highlights the potential outcomes of changes in society around consumption for the ways in which charities are engaged with and acts of charity carried out through them. In all three forms it becomes apparent that the act of charity cannot be thought of as pure, for through all of them the actor receives something in return, either directly, from an associated meaning, or in disconnection from the originating source of the symbol of charity. In all such forms the purpose of the action is in danger of being lost to the sense of benefit gained by the actor, but ultimately the significance of this in terms of the action of charity itself can only be assessed in terms of

the place of the beneficiary within this, and the ability of the charitable form to sustain the prominence of this beneficiary in the meaning that is created around the device, be it a commodity or event. It is this that will be carried forward into the questions raised about the fundraising device of alternative giving and connections that this enables between society and the beneficiary. Therefore, I will now move on to discuss the governmental contexts of charities.

1.3 Charity and Government: Organisation and Practice

In the previous section I outlined how, from the organisation of charity to the participation of society in charitable action, contemporary charity is thoroughly tied into particular modes of consumption. This provides a useful foundation to consider how changes in charity, as both organisation and practice, are related to rationalities of government. Therefore, I will begin this section by outlining the theoretical framework being used here to identify and analyse the changing relationship of charity and government, before going on to consider this in the context of charities as organisations and the practices of charity.

1.3.1 Government, Governmentality, Governance

There are three key terms within the ‘neo-Foucauldian’ literature on government that I am going to draw on: government, governmentality and governance (Larner, 2000: 12). In this literature the meaning of government is taken from Foucault and used to mean the ‘conduct of conduct’ (Gordon, 1991: 2; also see Dean, 2007: 82; Lemke, 2001: 191; Rose, 1999:3). Here, ‘conduct’ is being used both in its meaning as a noun and a verb (Dean, 2007: 82). The phrase therefore means the directing, management or guidance (noun) of behaviour (verb). Gordon (1991: 2) elaborates that it is ‘a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons’, and therefore incorporates much more than

just state rule, vastly expanding on the range of activity encompassed by statutory meanings of ‘government’.

Foucault identifies that government exists in all manner of non-state influenced spaces, a commonly used example being a ship (Foucault 2002a; also in Dean, 2007; Gordon 1991; Rose *et al.*, 2006; Sharp *et al.*, 2000), and that, in particular, it operated prior to state government in specific ways in the Western European church which provided both a model and apparatus for rule (Foucault, 2002a). As a form of rule it is different from, for example, the rule of the feudal Lord over his land, or the rule of the emperor over his empire, as it is only with government that rulers began to understand that attending to the details of the individuals and collectives in their territory – viewing and analysing them as a population was beneficial to creating a well ordered, secure and peaceful state (Rose, 1999: 6). The dominant cause that Foucault identifies for any shift in the type of rule is that it is always in response to a problem of how to rule. Foucault argues that from the mid 1500’s to the mid 1700’s in Western Europe there was an ‘explosion’ of rebellion, violence and rioting, particularly among the poor, and that in order to prevent this the question, or problem, was of how to turn those in a territory into loyal and obedient subjects (Foucault, 2002a: 201). Dean (2007: 106) notes that the state was concerned with ‘the establishment and maintenance of order in the face of perceived disorder, threat, and disintegration’. Government then became the solution.

The emphasis in government on knowing the subject means there are two scales in the functioning of government, one being that of a governing authority (the macroscale) and the other being that of the individual subjects (the microscale), which compose the space of government activity. Evidently these roles can be said to be linked by actions of governing

but moreover, of central interest for Foucault and in neo-Foucauldian literature, is how the two operate together (Sharp *et al*, 2000: 16). Although government and subject are separate domains they are interdependent, co-determining the form that each will emerge as (Lemke, 2001: 191). This brings into relief the notion of subject that is being discussed here. It is a subject that is historically contingent and anti-essentialist rather than eternal and fixed. Equally, the forms of government are neither eternal nor fixed, but shifting as they face particular problems (Rose, 1999: 24). It is here that the concept ‘governmentality’ comes to the fore.

This literature then aims to understand and analyse the ways and resulting effects of the interconnections between the different scales that government operates at and through. Foucault discusses this concept largely in his lecture series entitled ‘Security, Territory, Population’ delivered in 1977-8 (Foucault, 2009). The literal meaning of governmentality is governmental rationality (Gordon, 1991: 1), with the word governmentality being a combination of “gouverner” (the French word for ‘government’), and “mentalite” (the French word for ‘modes of thought’) (Lemke, 2000: 2). From this literal translation others have explained that governmentality is about how to govern (Gordon, 1991: 7), the way in which a particular mode of government is both rationalised and systematised (O’Farrell, 2005: 106). With specific reference to the subject, it has also been described as the way in which ‘subjects’ could be brought to internalise state control through self-regulation (Bryant, 2002: 270). Governmentality then is about the way in which the rationality of the governmental form is made specific, articulable in a unified way and possible to practice; it is the basis from which action within a form of government is made possible. Before discussing this concept in relation to the form of government in recent times, it is important

to provide a short exposition of one final term central to understandings of governmentality: governance.

Governance might be thought of as all that exists as the practical space between the governing and the governed. A broad definition of governance is that it covers any ‘strategy, tactic, process, procedure, or programme for controlling, regulating, shaping, mastering or exercising authority over others in a nation, organisation or locality’ (Rose, 1999: 15). Rose (1999) elaborates by saying that governance is a useful concept for drawing attention to how some come to be under the control of others and others come to be in control because it focuses on the processes and techniques through which this power operates. Like governmentality, and therefore government, the form that governance takes varies with the particular incarnation of governmental rationality (Larner and Walters, 2000). My use of this is slightly different from some who refer to governance and governmentality as particular eras of government, with the former referring to roll-back/roll-out neoliberalism and the latter referring to a more powerful moment of roll-out neoliberalism (Ling, 2000; May *et al.*, 2005). While some forms of government imply there to be a quantitative increase in the number of areas of the social being subsumed within government and so could be argued to have greater emphasis on governmentality, I use these concepts as tools for analysing and understanding the specific power interactions of political government, organisations and individuals and how these have changed over time as particular governmentalities have become more or less dominant. I am less interested in diagnosing a specific age as governmental and more interested in analysing the evolution of governmental rationalities and how they operate.

Governmentalities of key interest in the literature on changes taking place in terms of welfare provision in the UK are Keynesian welfarism, neoliberalism and Third Way politics (Fyfe, 2005; Jessop, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Rose, 1999). Although I refer to these rationalities in their named entities, it is timely to mention that this does not mean they are set out as such at the start of each new mode of government. Instead, and in line with the spirit of a Foucauldian-analysis, these names have come about as the result of a set of contingent occurrences which have happened in response to perceived problems. The responses have then coalesced into a particular organised form of government, within which there are still many differences of rationality (Larner, 2000; Larner and Walters, 2000). These contingent occurrences then come to be thought of as belonging to a broader rationality, such as neoliberalism, rather than starting out as actions which have been planned according to a particular rationality. As Larner and Walters (2000: 364) would like to put it, these specific actions become ‘inevitable-ised’, meaning that while it appears that they were planned in this way, it is only retrospectively that they can be identified as such; the action of naming the rationality merely ‘individuates’ rather than creates (Rose, 1999: 28).

1.3.2 Governmentality and the Subject

Synonymous with an understanding of government, governance and governmentality in Foucault is an understanding of the subject, predominantly elaborated on in the last of his writing (Foucault 1990a, 1990b, 1992). Central to this idea of the subject is freedom, but whether this is simply a device for dominance by government or, alternatively, the way in which individuals are able to influence the operation of government, is contested. Within the Foucauldian literature discussing the subject the notion of ‘freedom’ is used to form an alternative hypothesis of power whereby it is productive rather than repressive; power does

not stop things and take away life but rather is productive in that it makes things and creates outcomes (Foucault, 1990a; Sharp *et al.*, 2000). In this then productive power relies on the idea that individuals do not have fixed identity but are able to create themselves. This is the premise of government: ‘to govern means to presuppose a liberal subject and their freedom to act; it means not to remove their ability to act but to recognise it and to utilize this capacity to achieve ones own objectives’ (Ruppert, 2006: 281).

The freedom of subjects is what enables them to be governable (Rabinow, 2000: xvii). With government, individuals are required to form a moral relationship with them self so that they are then able to monitor and judge their own conduct in relation to moral discourse. The relationship of the self to itself is one Foucault terms the government of the self, or technologies of the self (Foucault, 1990a), and it is argued in the governmentality literature that it is because of this that political government, or indeed other forms of government, are able to work. Foucault contrasts technologies of self to technologies of power and, as he puts it, it is the ‘encounter between the technologies of domination [power] of others and those of the self that I call governmentality’ (Foucault, 2000: 225). It is only with these technologies that government can operate at a distance on individual subjects. The type of relationship of the self to the self has changed with different incarnations of governmentality (Rose, 1999: 42), so while all forms of government then require this notion of a liberal, or free, subject, contemporary forms of government such as neoliberalism, or as Rose (1999: 139) diagnoses it the ‘advanced liberal’, create a ‘deep’ subject where choice and autonomy are central to the government of the self (Rose, 1999: 46).

Cruikshank (1999) provides a thorough example of the production of a mode of subjectivity for the purpose of governing in analysing how the notion of empowerment emerged in 1960's USA in antipoverty movements such as the 'War on Poverty'. Within this she argues that empowerment was used as a technology of citizenship, which she describes as a 'method for constituting citizens out of subjects and maximising their political participation' (Cruikshank, 1999: 67). Empowerment became the focus of programmes which wanted to reform 'the poor'. For example, 'Mobilisation for Youth' aimed to prevent juvenile delinquency by increasing the participation of this group of people in education and social learning to improve their own lives and address inequality in terms of poverty and racism. Participation in activities such as this could only happen voluntarily though, and so apathy to participate in such programmes was deemed to be the first problem to address; the poor needed to take an interest in their own empowerment. First, a group with a set of shared problems, 'the poor', had to be created. This took place through a construction based on definitions of their 'characteristics, capacities and desires' (Cruikshank, 1999: 76) which made them knowable and able to be discussed in policy and politics as a 'truth'. Until the poor were constituted as a group they were dissipated and isolated, often conflicting identities such as juvenile delinquents, coal miners from Appalachia, the elderly and the unemployed (Cruikshank, 1999: 86).

Cruikshank cites a book by a socialist, Harrington, as one of the key sources of the creation of such a group. This book argued that the poor of America shared a culture, and it is with this that they became a united set of people, able to be the object of policy. These policies then aimed to get the poor to mobilise as a group in community action, because it was only when constituted as empowered subjects that they could be engaged with and 'acted upon' by government (Cruikshank, 1999: 81). The technologies that aimed to

create them as citizens, by first labelling them as powerless and then aiming to empower them, attempted to govern the production of subjectivity to make them active citizens, aware of and interested in their own capacity to act, which in turn produced them as governable subjects.

Cruikshank argues that although Community Action Plans in the 'War on Poverty' succeeded in building a 'logic of empowerment and model' (Cruikshank, 1999: 81) for expanding the limits of government, the specific campaign in effect failed because it was not able to fully create a sense of common need between the disparate 'poor', which led to deep divisions of purpose and a great deal of conflict. While this demonstrates one example where the constitution of subjects did not go exactly to the plans of the government and actors involved, this also demonstrates Foucault's argument that power relations cannot exist without struggles against this power, here a struggle against being subjectivised in a particular way and being made knowable to others in this way (Foucault, 2002b).

This type of project 'failure' being brought about through the resistance to government is strongly critiqued as being one of the problems with theorising the agency of the subject through governmentality. As Barnett *et al.* (2008; see also Barnett, 2005) argue, a governmentality approach only allows for social political action to be understood as reactive behaviour, as taking place in resistance to governing, rather than as something from which 'socio-cultural change might actually emerge' (Barnett *et al.*, 2008). If the latter is not identified then subject-formation is reduced to a disciplinary process whereby people are coerced into believing things against their interest and for the purpose of social control (Barnett, 2005), and freedom simply becomes a function of government rather than a

possibility in and of itself. The central point of this argument is that rather than purely constructing the relationship between government and subjects as a top-down approach, a more ‘modest’ role should be given to political rationalities for the way in which social change comes about (Barnett *et al.*, 2008). Essentially then the relationship between government and subject as theorised in governmentality should be questioned through paying greater attention to negotiations taking place in practices of self-formation (Barnett *et al.*, 2008).

In this chapter, government will be considered within the two contexts of the government of collectives and the government of self in relation to charity, firstly to consider how changes in the mode of government have affected the way in which charities operate and are organised, and secondly to consider how the mode of government is carried through into the relationships between charities and individuals and is taken up in the form of ‘government of the self’. The first part of this question then is about where charities fit into government and how this is changing, the second part of the question is about the role of individuals within this framework in relation to charity, and how this is changing with potential changes in the form of government. I will now address each of these in turn, starting with the ways in which a shift in governmentality has affected the relationship between political government and charity, and in some instances altered what charities are and what they do.

1.3.3 State Government, Welfare and the Changing Role and Place of Charities

State government and charities in the UK have long been interlinked in a variety of ways, a relationship that has taken various shapes as it has changed over time. I am predominantly interested here in the contemporary form that this is taking and in how recent changes have

affected what charities are and do. However, because change is a central focus here then a sense of the history leading to the present is also important. Throughout this history there has been a succession of different ways in which charities have been thought of by government, according to the governmentality around which this governmental action has been formed. In each of these different forms (be that Keynesian welfarism, neoliberalism or Third Way rationalities of government), charities have been governed through the policies and procedures of the government which, to a greater or lesser extent, has led to their role as governors of individuals. This means that charities are in the position of being both governed and governors, forming an important layer of governance between political government and individuals. As I now go on to discuss, this has meant that charities have effectively been different types of organisation with the different uses they have had with different governmentalities over time.

In one sense all UK charities have always been a part of government in that they are only made as such by governmental law, as discussed at the start of this chapter. Law is the domain of the government, with all laws having to be passed by UK parliament, therefore meaning that charities are a government creation. This is also vital for the notion that charities are independent organisations too though, for it is only in law that it can be prescribed that charities must act in respect of this independence. It is for this legally defining term that the government department of the Charity Commission exists, established, following several decades of inquiry and reform (Tompson, 1979), by three acts in close succession (in 1853, 1855 and 1860), the last of which gave the commission the legal power to carry out 'wide-ranging state supervision of charities on a centralised and permanent basis' (Chesterman, 1979: 66). Arguably then, although the law has recognised charities officially since the Elizabethan Statute of 1601 (Owen, 1964: 70), it was not until

the charity commission was formed as a state apparatus for the monitoring of charities that there was a more co-ordinated attempt to ensure the use of these funds in a way deemed appropriate by the state. In this way then the state has determined the nature of charity through specification of what it deems appropriate in the law and regulation of charities.

During the long history of charity prior to the welfare state money from charitable sources played a central role in the provision of basic human needs, such as with health care for those who could not afford to pay for it (Howse, 2006). Owen's (1964) history of charity from 1660-1960 charts the territory of charity in the UK during these years, indicating throughout how the government minimally influenced charity. During this time there was the general encouragement for the existence of charities through the making of laws which highlighted the importance of charitable giving (Owen, 1964: 70-1). For example, Brundage (1998) highlights how the charities in nineteenth century England, although driven by altruistic purposes, also shared common ground with the Poor Law of 1834 in that both were concerned with social control and strengthening national power through increasing the strength of the labour force and the military (Brundage, 1998: 100). As early as 1934 there is literature on the relationship between the statutory and voluntary social services in the UK (Macadam, 1934). The ways in which this became recognised and monitored by government are relevant for the present in that the laws and institutions around which this was done have not simply been wiped from the slate with a new epoch of governmentality but have been reformed and altered for new needs and to solve new problems. This then shows how not only does charity have a long history, but that this is a history where, although charities were the main providers of basic needs provision in many instances, there was interest from government in charities who recognised, encouraged and eventually monitored them.

The major change for charities came in 1945 with the introduction of a welfare state. Interestingly, this did not mean the disappearance of charities, but rather caused a different and changing relationship between the state and charities. As Lowe (2005: 109) explains, the welfare state was not meant to be in competition with philanthropy, but was hoped to enable charity to move onto different challenges other than the provision for basic needs and, as envisioned by Beveridge, pioneer and experiment where the state could not (Bryson *et al.*, 2002). However, the central relationships between welfare and charity now present indicates a different outcome – charities still provide welfare. The term ‘welfare’ does not have stable meaning and has been taken to refer to different things at different points of government but broadly it can be taken to mean the provision by the state of basic needs for its population, also referred to as social security (Haylett, 2001: 44). Although there is an implicit reference here to welfare as being provided by the state, particularly in the sense of social security being integral to state (see Rose 1999 on ‘the social’), charities have continued to fill this role either in addition to, or as a part of, this state provision for basic needs.

This suggestion is supported by recent work which questions the relationships between charities and government in terms of welfare and voluntarism (for example, Kendall and Knapp, 1997; Milligan and Conradson, 2006a). However, Bryson *et al.* (2002) highlight how this welfare literature only considers domestic charity, with literature about charities operating overseas being found in work on development. These overseas development charities are therefore distinct from notions of welfare as defined above in terms of providing for poverty alleviation beyond their home population. This is particularly important to consider here where the central analysis of the thesis is about a fundraising mechanism largely associated with overseas development charity.

Although charities are still heavily bound up with welfare provision, a much broader range of charities has then developed in the time since 1945, most notably in regards to overseas development. Escobar (1995) outlines a history of this in which he cites the speech of President Truman in 1949 and other similar surrounding discourses as being central to the idea of there being a 'third world' to be developed and from which international development charities have both emerged from and become a part of the discourse of. Oxfam and Christian Aid are two such well known international development charities which emerged at this time, both initially being started to help refugees in Europe during and following the second world war, but both also fairly rapidly shifting to an international focus.²⁴ Since these beginnings there has been a vast expansion in the number of international development charities, the links between these and government being complex. Not only are such charities monitored and regulated by the charity commission still but they are also, within the UK, connected to the Department for International Development (DFID) as it is now known, particularly through funding, as well as being linked to various other government departments which aim to shape both these charities and others.

I briefly mentioned above the way in which the governmentality is said to have changed in the UK from a Keynesian welfare state, the all encompassing nature of which broke down in the 1970s and led to a neoliberal, or advanced liberal (Rose, 1999), mode of government following the re-election of the Conservative government in 1979, whose government continued throughout the 1980's and for much of the 1990's. During this time the predominant mode of government was to 'roll-back' the state, i.e. to make it less about

²⁴http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam_in_action/history/index.html
<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/history/index.aspx>

intervention and focus instead on enabling the smooth operation of the markets (Peck and Tickell, 2002). The early effect of this was to once again make charities important in the provision for certain basic needs. As May *et al.* (2005: 708-9) explain, the Conservative government did encourage the growth of the non-statutory (non-profit) sector, although this also went hand-in-hand with the more general encouragement of individuals to take responsibility for themselves. Homelessness is one area and example of this which has been extensively researched, partly in relation to this shift in the mode of state government (for example Cloke *et al.*, 2010; May *et al.*, 2005) and is a prominent outcome of the rolling-back of the state welfare, being identified as a main cause of the ‘growing number of homeless people visible on the streets of Britain...in the mid-to-late 1980’s’ (May *et al.*, 2005: 705). During this time it is argued that there was little done by the government to augment this growth other than a general expectation that individuals should take care of themselves: a new responsabilisation. This means that the relationship between charities and government was minimal, with charities plugging gaps rather than being the explicit object of government policy in specific ways.

Despite a general understanding that government is still operating with advanced liberal rationalities in the main, the relationship between government and charities has significantly grown (Bennett, 2008). This change has taken place gradually, but was especially part of a broad move from government, since the election of the ‘New’ Labour Party in 1997, to embrace and encourage what has recently been termed the third sector as a part of a Third Way politics. From an income of £4.2bn from government in 1992/3 for the voluntary sector, this grew to an income of almost £10bn – 38% of the sector’s income – in 2003/4 (Bennett, 2008: 272). The reason for this move in government is predominantly attributed to the ideal of civil society as being beneficial to the mode of government. This

mode of government does not supersede neoliberalism but is a different form of government which involves the closer governing of individuals in ways which are (hopefully) more conducive to the mobilisation of these individuals in ways which are beneficial to the nation and therefore state. This shift in governmentality is most prominently articulated through the 1998 government Home Office Compact (Home Office, 1998) which signifies the first real attempt of a government to have a mainstream approach to the third sector (Kendall, 2000). The main shift that this is heralded as signalling is a dual motion whereby the non-state sector is recognised and praised for its unique strengths and also whereby the state has gained a new confidence in its ability to oversee the sector (May *et al.*, 2005: 709). That said, an alternative view is that the increase in the centrality of governance acts to displace the authority of the state, with rule now working in a complex relationship with the ‘dense field of public and private actors...networked with and through a host of private, para-state, third sector, voluntary and other groups’ (Walters, 2004: 27-9).

Although the Compact is very much focussed on local places and the idea of building communities around the country rather than internationally, which is reflected in the literature on the ‘dispersed state’ (Carmel and Harlock, 2008: 155), the rationale behind this is visible throughout the government approach to the third sector. This means that although overseas development charities will have felt no direct effect from this document, there is evidence of a full change in attitude which may have been felt in these different channels, such as the move to standardise and co-ordinate across the sector through measurements and quality assurance practices (Morison, 2000). One aspect of this relates to the way that government is encouraging the whole of the third sector through the recently founded Office of the Third Sector. Much like the Compact, the aims of this part of the Cabinet

Office are stated as being to encourage the growth of the third sector by enabling partnerships between government and the sector in order to increase the contribution of the third sector to society, the environment and the economy.²⁵ Again, this is largely focused on ‘public services’ (i.e. welfare in the UK), but there is more overspill here into the charity sector as a whole. For example, the Office of the Third Sector encourages and measures giving to charity in general, which includes the overseas development charities that I will be focusing on (Cabinet Office, 2007). Fairtrade is another area that is covered and advocated as a part of the move to social enterprise which is relevant for overseas development charities which, as mentioned earlier, are often involved in such activity and campaigning. It appears that although the specifics are generally focused on the local benefits of such philanthropic and socially orientated activities, there is the potential for global effects. Within this area though, government of overseas development charities is still, I argue, secondary to the main civil society building aims of the Office.

The main direct link between government and overseas development charities is though the DFID, although there is some development related funding, amounting to £128 million in total in 2006-7, from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for work along these lines, but not just for charities. It is largely through DFID though that the government allocate funding to charities for the purpose of overseas development – £317 million out of a total expenditure of £6,027 million in 2007/8 went to Civil Society Organisations (CSO) (DFID, 2008a: viii), the majority of which are charities. The majority of this money appears to be given for specific projects. This means that the project has to be tailored to the objectives of DFID. One example of this being a Concern Universal Microfinance project in Malawi which received £2.5 million of DFID funds between 2003 and 2007 and fitted in with a

²⁵ See: ‘About Us’ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/about_us.aspx

DFID theme based on the millennium development goal associated with trade, aid and partnership.²⁶ Funding such as this is provided through DFID country offices and therefore is already highly specified prior to applications for it.

This is not the only major source of government funding for overseas development charities though. DFID have also become increasingly keen on Programme Partnership Agreements (PPAs). These are agreements between CSOs and DFID which provide what are technically known as unrestricted funds. However, because they are made with a CSO with which DFID share a 'significant working relationship, a common ethos and vision and a strong match in priority areas' and also revolve around strategic objectives which are to show measureable outcomes and are heavily monitored, this by no means provides the CSO with a free run of activity.²⁷ As with the 1998 Home Office Compact, this can be interpreted as being part of the general move within government to view CSOs as having potential benefits for governmental aims. Notably a document discussing an NGO-DFID partnership agreement for Latin America highlights how any increase in money going to NGOs 'recognises the important contribution CSOs can make in empowering civil society to reduce inequality and address social, economic and political exclusion' (DFID, 2008b). This shows how CSOs are not just seen as merely empty channels through which government money can flow but as channels with characteristics which make society more governable; CSOs, and therefore charities acting within this framework (all NGOs through which DFID directs money must be charities), are a technology of government (Lemke, 2001: 191).

²⁶ See: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dfid.gov.uk/casestudies/files/africa/malawi-loans.asp>

²⁷ See: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/DFIDwork/ppas/partnerprogarrangements>

There is a question as to the degree to which this funding makes a difference to the charity sector, both in terms of the number of overseas development charities receiving this funding and also in terms of the amount of money this equates to in terms of their overall income. Regarding the former, I argue that this helps shape the sector as a whole, with the charities receiving funding having a great need to align their ethos and work with that of the government and those not obtaining funding being freer to pursue their own ethos but, in many cases, more restricted by the need to raise their own funds. That said, it appears that the majority of charities are still under pressure to raise their own funds – DFID partner charities need to match funding in some cases and have the funds to finance administration and governance costs, and non-DFID partnered charities due to a need to fully self-sustain. In the case of the latter, there is obviously a great deal of variation, but it is significant that some of the largest charities in overseas development (such as Oxfam) are those who receive the greatest level of funding from DFID.

The type of relationship between government and charities is therefore significant to what charities are, primarily in terms of the way in which funding is allocated because this determines in part what activity charities are able to carry out. This also influences the other kinds of funds that the charity will prefer to obtain – largely funds that are less restricted. This, therefore, may impact upon the way in which the charity structures the income that it obtains from voluntary donors. Having discussed this relation of government and charities, I will now move on to explore the question of governmentality in the context of individuals and charities.

1.3.4 Government and Charitable Subjects

A central aspect of the charity process is the participation of individual subjects in charitable practices. In examining this, to start with I am going to outline the distinctions that Rose (1999) identifies between the types of subjectivities created through governmental rationalities that he refers to as ‘the social’, advanced liberalism and community – welfarism, neoliberalism and Third Way respectively – and the type of relationships these create of an individual both to themselves and to others through the techniques of subjectification. Following this I will consider this in the specific context of charity fundraising.

Within the broader relationship between freedom and government then Rose (1999) outlines the general shift in subjectivities from the social subjects of the welfare state to the individualised subjects of advanced liberalism. Rose (1999) explains that, through government policies and other technologies, people in the welfare state were made to construct themselves as ‘passive citizens’. As such, they had rights to be activated in respect of the state. However, this way of constructing subjectivity has shifted, firstly, to being one of an ‘active citizen’, responsible for themselves, and then most recently elaborated into the ‘active community citizen’ whereby individuals are also responsible for others (Rose, 1999: 164-6). This is interesting with respect to charity and subjects because not only did the shift in governmental rationalities emphasise general differences in the degree of responsibility an individual should take for others, but also it marked a shift which made charity (or terminologically, the third sector) a form of governance. As such, this has seen the use of neoliberal forms of governance being used by these organisations to encourage individual involvement in overtly ethical practices.

Rose (1999: 133-4) identifies how during the mid-twentieth century individuals came to be invented as 'social individuals' who were to find their satisfaction from their social place within the group, constituted by social relationships created by their bonds in their workplace, home and neighbourhood. The welfare state brought about a particular type of citizen whereby the state secured certain aspects of life economically, politically and socially, and in return for this the citizen had particular responsibilities and duties. These duties are termed by Rose as 'ethical obligations' (Rose, 1999). This has been labelled as being a kind of passive citizen (Rose, 1999: 164) or entitled citizen (Kidd, 2002) because, although obliged to take on certain roles and responsibilities, these were already asked of them because of their social position. This relates to the modern notion of the subject as fixed and essential. The passive citizen was required to relate to their own morality in specified ways. In terms of charity, it certainly seems possible that part of the obligations of the passive citizen were to be involved in the voluntary activity through participation in civil society as defined by Putnam (2000) as connectedness of a community. However, specific references to the role of individuals in charity are hard to find. Kidd (2002) notes though that following the creation of the welfare state and the subsuming of many charitable organisations into the state structures of welfare provision, the voluntary sector dropped from the radar of scholars, with virtually nothing being written about it until later in the century. This indicates that, as a result of the welfare state, there was no particular relationship required of subjects to be involved in the charitable provision for others. Provided they played their role as required, the state would deal with such matters. Charity did not fade away as some predicted it would in this period with the intervention of the state, but extended into new areas such as development, indicating that this was one place where a global sense of civil society became apparent.

With the shift to advanced liberal rationalities of government, there emerged the active citizen, whereby the individual was made to be responsible for them self and, moreover, to make themselves in an entrepreneurial way. The entrepreneurial individual is a central tenet of the move to advanced liberal governmentality and also signals the specific importance of freedom to the mode of government. Entrepreneurial individuals are not simply free, but they are *obliged* to be free, they are obliged to choose in order to make themselves in the way they think is best. Rose (1999: 84-5) identifies how this is based around two interrelated technologies, those of consumption and psychologies (also see Rose, 1998), which have used surveys to construct a market by dividing up and labelling particular types of people as particular types of personality and use this information to market specific products to an identified group of people with particular desires.

Rather than being about duty and responsibility as for the passive citizen, the active citizen must actualise themselves through their choices which, in turn, creates their identity – of which they may be several (Cray, 2007) – and constructs their lifestyle. In this then, public spheres of life, such as education and healthcare, become a marketplace where the citizen has rights by virtue of their status as consumer (Rose, 1999: 165). This demonstrates the ethical relationship of the self to the self because the kind of person the individual is involves the negotiation by an individual of practical aspects of their living in order to construct a life for them self (Barnett *et al.*, 2005a: 28). Such constructions are then seen as expressions of their personality (Rose, 1999: 87). Those acting in this way become the norm of society, willing to create themselves entrepreneurially, seeking out the professionals as they need and making themselves and their families in the ‘best’ way possible. Those outside of this come to be marginal to this norm, and this is where charity comes to be located in this rationality, at the margins of society.

Where welfare-led care dissolves away, charities and voluntary organisations become ‘para-governmental’, funded both by state and private sources and being peopled both by professional ‘experts’ and volunteers. The former, according to Rose (1999: 89), attempt to do good while making a career simultaneously and ultimately seeking to govern those at the margins so as to make them into entrepreneurial individuals, and the latter engage with those at these margins either in contention with the prevailing political rationality or due to a personal experience, although, and perhaps in contrast to this, it is noted by Orton (2006) that the Conservative government of the time still framed this as an important activity of a citizen, but as a private act of philanthropy or charity, rather than in cahoots with government. Even in Rose’s (1999) formulation though volunteers often acted in complex relationship to their political convictions, taking up the mantle of governor in advanced liberalism and attempting to empower the clients of the organisation to make their own decisions. So although charity in this form of rationality lies outside of the governing of government and involvement by individuals being a result of dissatisfaction with the lack of care for others by such a government, those involved still often employ the hegemonic governmental rationality in their activity relating to others.

Rose’s (1999) citizens of advanced liberalism were only required to have a relationship to themselves, and in this theorisation it is only with the shift to Third Way or ‘community’ that, through consumption, new kinds of political actors were created through governing. These subjects were required not only to be responsible for themselves but also for their community networks, which potentially includes ‘moral’ issues such as environmental protection (Rose, 1999: 176-7). Rose (1999) terms this type of subject the ‘active community citizen’. No doubt during this period there was a marked shift by Labour to bring charity into the sphere of government through creation of the third sector, but the

question arises: how does this relate to the governing of charitable subjects through freedom, and to what extent is this a new development within this rationality of government? Clarke (2005: 448) suggests that New Labour's citizens volunteer so as to regenerate and activate community, and this has been encouraged through government schemes such as the 'Active Communities Initiative' (Fyfe and Milligan, 2003). As such, this is signalled by some as a widening of the scope of what is meant in terms of citizenship to mean that the activities of volunteering are subsumed within this in addition to more traditional activities of citizenship, such as tax paying (Fyfe and Milligan, 2003).

There are indications of parallel government initiatives relating to the donation of money to charity which primarily centres on taxation incentives. Morgan (2000) notes that, although there had previously been forms of tax relief for charity these had been seen as concessions to *charities*, and that it was only with Labour government from 1997 that the government actively sought to encourage charitable giving from individuals. One such encouragement was the implementation by government of their Millennium Gift Aid scheme – a tax relief scheme designed to enable tax relief on donations for overseas development in a far more flexible and lower value way than previously – and their marketing of this to 18-34 year olds (Morgan, 2000). The aim here appears to have been to persuade individuals to create themselves in a way so as to take responsibility for the welfare of others as well as themselves.

In addition to these very deliberate governmental schemes there are ways in which this governmental rationality can be observed, albeit with less obviously direct influence from government, and not with such strict adherence to the time period of particular political parties in office. In terms of consumption (to return to the earlier discussion of the

chapter), Vogel (2006) outlines a history of the emergence of the link between consumption and citizenly politics in the last forty years in the USA, and, albeit in different circumstances, the same has arguably occurred in the UK and other parts of Western Europe (Trentmann, 2006), particularly evidenced in the development of the fairtrade network (Trentmann, 2007). This is contextualised within a longer history of political consumption that was primarily about adequate food provisioning (Micheletti, 2003; Trentmann, 2007), and indeed practices of consumption have been identified as always morally concerned, entwined in the everyday dimensions of consumer practices, such is the moral nature of the economy (Sayer, 2000, 2003). However, citizenship and consumption are now increasingly connected through ‘broad concerns of global justice and solidarity as well as [these] more specific private concerns’ (Micheletti, 2003: 11). Such broad concerns have begun to be well charted in literatures on ethical consumption (Barnett *et al.*, 2005a; Clarke *et al.*, 2007; Clarke *et al.*, 2008; Harrison *et al.*, 2005), political consumption (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti *et al.*, 2006), alternative consumption (Bryant and Goodman, 2004), moral economy (Goodman, 2004) and developmental consumption (Goodman, 2010). Although largely focused on the overt politicalisation and ethicalisation of commercial products, there are strong links to new forms of charity fundraising, both in the relation to the notion of an ethical mode of living and in the reliance by this style of ethics/politics on governmentality and the government of the self by the self. This therefore examines the operation of power in the arena of consumption where there is no juridical force.

Work within the literature on ethical consumption has specifically sought to conceptualise governmentality – the mode of government enacted between an organisation and an individual – and the self-self relationship that is so central to understanding this form of

citizenship. Clarke *et al.* (2007) identify a two-handed process of the mobilising – or governing of consumption (Barnett *et al.*, 2005a) – of the ‘ethical consumer’. First, there is the use of what they term ‘devices’ (Barnett *et al.*, 2005a: 36), by which they mean ‘organisational strategies’ which make particular actions and desires of the organisation available to individuals in such a way as to enlist by enabling them to produce themselves through involvement. This is done by connecting up ethical imperative and action, by simultaneously outlining an ethical responsibility and providing a practical means with which this responsibility can be fulfilled. In that this addresses the individual consumer, the device operates at the level of the self because it presents ethically consuming as a choice which, in the uptake of the practical devices made available, performatively creates the individual. The concept of the device is one that highlights the place of the subject in the advanced liberal setting and the mobilisation of the subject in relation to distant others. As such, this is a concept that can be usefully translated into the context of the charity-individual relationship given that forms of fundraising seek to mobilise individuals in similar ways. Second, it is identified that this process of ‘mobilising the ethical consumer’ (Clarke *et al.*, 2007: 235) is about organisations ‘knowing’ these consumers, through technologies such as market research, so that their desires can be brought to the policy arena. This brings to light interesting questions relating to the influence of individuals in such arenas, and the balance of power between the organisation and the individual being enlisted, something that I will examine in Chapter 5 in particular.

To fully comprehend the way in which these devices function to mobilise the individual ethical consumer, we need to outline the mechanics of the governing of the consuming self (Barnett *et al.*, 2005a: 31). It is through doing this that we realise the significance of the advanced liberal individual, obliged to create themselves through the governing and

cultivation of their own life. Here, then, the active involvement of an individual in overtly ethical practices of consumption can be understood as part of this cultivation of the self. This includes both the creation of an outwardly ethical identity through display to others of such involvement in ethical practices, but also to attempt a more private ‘going-beyond-the-self’ in the engagement with responsibility to distant others (Barnett *et al.*, 2005a: 31) in the enactment of a global citizenship (Desforges, 2004).

Charities can be thought of as providing devices which enable individuals to govern themselves in particular ways, and so present a form of government and space of global citizenship beyond the state (Desforges, 2004), although rarely troubling to it (Painter and Philo, 1995), given the strong ties of charities to government through funding previously outlined. The opportunities provided by charities which enable this self governing are presented in fundraising devices which provide a reason for giving alongside a way of doing so. This reason for giving is part of a discourse of development education which is done both by charities and partly funded by government through DFID. In being offered as a means of giving alongside this reason in fundraising then individuals are provided with a choice about how they wish to govern themselves. There is no suggestion of power restricting them from doing anything else – they may easily choose not to give – but instead this fundraising operates through the arena of freedom. Indeed, there is a vast array of opportunities for giving to charity of which most individuals will only choose a few, if at all. As with the fairtrade goods though, individuals are performatively created in the uptake of the opportunity to give to the charity. The ways in which charities communicate with individuals can therefore be understood in terms of governmentality and the government of the self, and therefore as significant to the form of responsibility to the distant other that is possible in such institutionalised contexts.

1.4 Chapter Summary: Reflections on the Changing Contexts of Charity for Alternative Giving

Over the course of this chapter I have considered the broad and changing relationships between charity and society, both in terms of the different forms of commodity society that have arisen and in terms of the changing shape of government. In reviewing and drawing on concepts of the commodity and governmentality, particularly in relation to ethical consumption, certain questions for researching alternative giving emerge:

- 1) In what ways does alternative giving draw on the commodity context for its functioning as a form of fundraising?
- 2) Why have consumer-orientated forms of charity fundraising, and particularly alternative giving, emerged in the environment of Third Way politics?
- 3) How can alternative giving be thought of as a device of charity, and in what ways does it aim to govern individuals to donate through this device?
- 4) In what ways is alternative giving used by individuals in the governing and cultivation of the self, and how does this connect to notions of the globally responsible citizen?

I turn to these questions in the analysis of alternative giving in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. However, before doing so, in the next chapter I outline an understanding of the ethical subject, something central to an understanding of the cultivation and governing of the charitable self.

Chapter 2

Ethics, Giving, Connecting

‘[R]esponsible, caring action is motivated not in monological reflection on ones own obligations, but by encounters with others.’

(Barnett and Land, 2007: 1069)

2.1 Introduction: The ‘Moral’ and the ‘Ethical’

It is now well charted that a moral, or normative, turn has taken place within the field of geography (Philo, 1991; Sayer and Stroper, 1997; Smith, 1997a), which includes literature on both the ‘moral’ and the ‘ethical’ (for example, Lee and Smith, 2004; Proctor and Smith, 1999). While some argue that there is essentially no difference between the ‘moral’ and the ‘ethical’ (Proctor, 1999; Smith, 1997a), it has also been argued that ethics can be said to refer to the rules used to guide decision making (for example, as found in professional ethics) and is the subject of moral philosophy, while the moral realm, or morality, is what individuals practice with the aim of a particular version of what is good or right (Lee and Smith, 2004). Although both these perspectives are highly valid in that there is no definitive authority on this, there are two particular stands of work that I want to identify in order to contextualise the discussion that follows, both in this chapter and throughout the analysis of alternative giving, in terms of its central moral/ethical considerations. It is with recent shifts within the discipline to specific writing on ethics, in work inspired by Foucault’s later work on ethics of the self (Barnett *et al.*, 2005a; Clarke *et al.*, 2007; 2008) and other configurations of ethical subjectivity (Barnett and Land, 2007; Cloke, 2002), and work overtly situated within the non-representational gamut (McCormack, 2003; Popke, 2009; Thrift, 2003), that a distinction between the ethical and the moral is made. As such,

the purpose of the ethical is to attend to the embodied practice of existence in encounters with others in a wide variety of forms (Barnett and Land, 2007).

Firstly, within Foucault's ethics of practice (or 'praxis') (Foucault 1990a, 1990b), the ethical is located in the practices of the self in different ways in particular eras and, more specifically, is about the relationship of the self to the self and the connection between different practices of the self in this creation of subjectivity. Foucault distinguishes this understanding of ethics from moral codes, which he conceives of as sets of rules and values which are recommended by different bodies, with more or less authority, and with overlapping and conflicting advice (Foucault, 1992: 25). Significant in this work though is the way in which the understanding of the subject has been developed through greater consideration of the relation between the self and the other as found in concepts relating to this mode of ethics, such as generosity (Barnett and Land, 2007) and theo-ethical notions of agape and caritas (Cloke *et al.*, 2010). Secondly, within the non-representational literature, ethics is concerned very specifically with the affectivities of necessarily practiced events. This is both in terms of the way in which ethics is both learnt and practiced in the very moment and fabric of living and being in the presence of others, and in terms of the possibilities that are opened up by such affective encounters (McCormack, 2003). Neither of these denies the existence and impact of moral frameworks upon such practices, but both aim to widen the scope for understanding the functioning of ethics in practice, in the often ordinary and mundane encounters which constitute life, and to pay more attention to the less representational aspects which play an important role in such practices of encounter.

Charity can, in normative society, be described as moral (rather than amoral) but this does not attend to the ways in which charity is practiced, or rather to the ways in which practices

associated with charity, specifically here alternative giving, can be understood. The absolutely central activity of charity is that something is given; someone, or something, has a need, whether this is for, for example, money, material goods or a positive emotional lift, and someone helps fulfil this need out of no legal or social sense of obligation (see Introduction). Here subjective and affective ethics are particularly instructive in that they provide a theoretical foundation from which to consider such self-other encounters and the possibilities of these in giving (and receiving) relationships which are premised on charity and cultural acts of giving, but additional concepts built around the self-other relationship are also critically engaged with in this chapter. The purpose of exploring such ethics of giving (and receiving) is to build a framework through which to consider the ethics of these alternative giving practices.

Chiefly, my aim is to examine what the notion of ethical action means for the possibility of a self-other relationship in charitable and cultural acts of giving. In the previous chapter I was largely concerned with describing and explaining what has been analysed as a recent shift to an individualised, neoliberal constitution of the subject within the political, economic and cultural dimensions of society, and the implications of this for charities and their organisational forms and regulation. What follows in this chapter moves away from such specific contextual politico-cultural examination, to consider these questions of ethics. Literatures engaged with for this purpose include virtue ethics, ethics of care, gift theory, Levinas' 'first philosophy', and Casey's theory of the glance. By drawing points of connections and departure between them, I use these to provide a way of critically understanding the notion of an ethical self; what caring, benevolent or charitable actions are and might mean for the 'other'; and what the agency of the other might be, or should be thought of as being. Additionally, the importance of the material to such practices is

identified through literatures on material culture. The rest of this chapter is therefore structured around three main sections: ethics, particularly though the notion of subjective ethics that is found in virtue ethics; ethics as connections in terms of the self-other possibility of the relationship; and ethics of complex connections. Through these I aim to raise questions to be taken forward into the empirical chapters about giving to charity generally, and giving an alternative gift, specifically. Prior to these though I will introduce the field of moral philosophy, and provide a more detailed review of the uptake of ideas from this, and the development of related ideas, in geography. In so doing, it is pertinent to note that the deployment of the terms of 'moral' and 'ethics' within this initial review is not necessarily in line with that of the subject-based ethics of practice discussed in later sections.

2.2 Moral Philosophy, Geography and Ethics

Moral Philosophy, as the study of concepts to do with reasoning of ethics in practice (Blackburn, 2005: 121), is a vast field which carries with it the influence of several thousand years of debate and reasoning. Typically, this Western tradition is divided into two or three main bases of moral behaviour, each of which invokes a different form of moral reasoning or ethical living. Deontology and consequentialism are the most conventionally cited types of moral reasoning (Singer, 1994), but to this virtue ethics is progressively being added (Barnett *et al.*, 2005b; Darwall, 2003; Hursthouse, 1999). Firstly, deontology is generally held to be a Kantian based moral philosophy and that on which juridical and legal systems are based. It is a form of moral philosophy which attempts to work out codes of right and wrong, and is argued by Rawls (1973) to be a necessary revival in discussions of the moral because the main theory of Rawls' time, consequentialism, was too plural and subjective (Barnett *et al.*, 2005b). Consequentialism

reasons that the action to take is the one which leads to the best outcome, this being defined in various different ways according to the particular strand of consequentialism and what ‘good’ is considered to be. For example, utilitarianism, as a form of consequentialism, argues that actions should be oriented towards the outcome which is likely to produce the greatest amount of happiness (Bentham, 1994). In this view then each possible outcome that could result from the different options for action available must be carefully considered and measured against the criteria for good before making a decision (Singer, 1993, 2009). The final philosophical strand concerned with how to live life, virtue ethics, is about the *character* and life of a person, rather than with universal forms of *conduct* as the previous two theories are. It pays attention to the more ethically deep aspects of humanity (Darwall, 2003) and asks ‘what person should I be?’ (Barnett *et al.*, 2005b: 16). This basis in character means that reasoning in virtue ethics is understood to be more instinctive and, moreover, is seen as a rival to, or even replacement for, the morally concerned theories of deontology and consequentialism (Darwall, 2003). Hursthouse (1999: 1) differentiates the operation of these three moral theories in context by explaining that if someone needed help a deontologist would act according to the moral rule of helping others as they would want help themselves, a consequentialist would assess the consequences of the action in terms of well being,²⁸ and a virtue ethicist would act according to the virtues of charity or benevolence in deciding to help. It is the last of these, virtue ethics, which I am concerned with in seeking to understand the notion of ethical subjectivity, and that I will return to in the next section.

²⁸ Or as Hursthouse (1999) terms it here a ‘utilitarian’, who is specifically concerned with the consequence of happiness.

In addition to these three strands, ways of intersecting with the moral and ethical are also divided in Western philosophy into three different strands, depending on the type of engagement made with this field. These three types are: metaethics, which relates to a concern with what moral philosophy consists of, what its terms such as good/bad, right/wrong should or ought to mean; normative ethics, which relates to debate about which moral or ethical theory should be used to inform conduct; and descriptive ethics, which refers to the attempt to distinguish particular moral or ethical systems being used, for example, by particular people, groups or organisations (Proctor, 1998; Smith, 1997b). The latter two of these, normative and descriptive ethics, have been the prominent areas of ethical concern in geography (Lee and Smith, 2004). That said, while Smith (1997b) maintains (perhaps with a little tongue-in-cheek irony) that metaethics is largely best left to philosophers because of the ‘evident dangers’ of ‘fools rushing in, reinventing the wheel or slipping on banana skins’ (Smith, 1997b: 585), he does nonetheless argue that the question of universal versus relativism in morality is one aspect which is overtly relevant for geography, and argues that more work needs to be done at the intersection of moral philosophy and ethics in order to envision a better world (Smith, 1999a, 2001).

Outside of these more conventionally ‘moral turn’ geographies there are also elements of metaethical discussion in work which intends to expand an understanding of what the ethical consists of. For example, Cloke (2002) and McCormack (2003) argue for the significance of affective and spiritual aspects for understanding encounters and ethical practice, such aspects of which are given considerable attention by Popke (2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009). In so far as these literatures aim to develop such areas for ethical consideration and make use of empirical material in their writings though, they are also concerned with normative and descriptive ethics.

A concern for normative ethics in geography literatures equates to a concern with the directions, empirical fields of study, and research methods and ethics. Smith (1998, 2000, 2004), Cloke (2002), Valentine (2005) and Lawson (2007) each make particularly heartfelt arguments for going in a particular direction in geography or for practicing certain ways of engaging based on their own belief in that approach. In line with an argument about the morality of development praxis and its distant others by Corbridge (1993, 1998), Smith (1998) connects the partial theory of care with a universal theory of justice to argue for the possibility of dismantling parochialism and inequality in order to pursue the creation of a more equal world, both broadly and professionally (Smith, 2000, 2004). Cloke (2002) makes a strong case for practicing an emotionally committed human geography, which Valentine (2005) takes further in a discussion of caring in teaching practices also. There is also an emphasis on care in Lawson's (2007) presidential address to the Association of American Geographers, where she argues for the placing of care ethics (rather than theories of justice) centrally in geography in order to make the discipline assume more responsibility for others. I expand upon this discussion about work in geography on the moral imperative to take responsibility for the 'distant other' later in this chapter.

Such beliefs in particular normative ethics in geography are not necessarily always expressed in language as overtly concerned with the moral or ethical as these though. Geography's ethics are also expressed in the developments of new conceptualisations of space, and through the advocacy of different methodologies, particularly as Proctor (1998) highlights, in the way geography has shifted from the 1970's onwards from being a subject predominantly concerned with 'objective spatial analysis' to one concerned with values (Proctor, 1998: 8). One specific aspect of this has been the move to understand the mapping of social characteristics, such as the objective mapping of 'gay spaces' in studies

of sexuality, as 'unsophisticated' (Jackson, 1989: 121), and the related argument for the need to understand the social not as fixed and objective but emphasising plurality. As such, any representation, including one defined as objective, is constructed in the context of particular cultural meanings, and may be seen differently. A whole body of work within geography then has been concerned with reconceptualising this relationship between space and society in a challenge to the essentialist use and mapping of social difference which depicted spatial patterns as independent of social process (Smith, 1999c).

One such strand of work is that which still uses social categories (female/male; black/white; rich/poor, West/rest for example) but seeks to challenge the essentialist nature of them, arguing that space is involved in the construction of these differences both through material practices and politics, and in so doing, is a political project which seeks to illuminate the causes of social inequality so they may be eliminated (Smith, 1999c). Another related strand of work aims to challenge such binary distinctions entirely, and has been particularly influenced by Soja's work on post-modern geographies (1989, 2000) and 'Thirdspace' (1996), in the dialogue between geography and critical social theory that this has inspired (Latham, 2004). Broadly the aim here has been to write from within difference so as to change the very basis of this difference and meaning of it, in reclamation of the very 'real and symbolic spaces of oppression' in social constructions of difference (Smith, 1999c: 20). Many geographers have been involved in this project to write differently, including for example, Gregory's *Geographical Imaginations* (1994) which takes seriously marginalised feminist and subaltern voices (Warf, 2004). This has continued through, for example, in work that seeks to make visible and challenge the colonial present (Gregory, 2004), such as in the development of a method for moving to a postcolonial development geography (Raghuram and Madge, 2006).

The use of descriptive ethics in Geography also takes several forms with work that both overtly engages with it through the language of moral philosophy, and that does so implicitly through an exploration of the different values and norms of particular places and in certain spaces. Literature here that is thematically related to this thesis includes that on ethics; on different approaches to development (Grimes, 1999); in (charitable or humanitarian) actions for distant/different suffering ‘others’ (Carter, 2007; Clarke, 2007; Green and Silk, 2000; Korf, 2007; Lester, 2002); in organisational spaces of charity (Buttle, 2007, 2008; Cloke *et al.*, 2005, 2007); and in alternative systems of provisioning (Barnett, *et al.*, 2005b, 2005a; Clarke *et al.*, 2007, 2008; Goodman, 2004; Varul, 2009). Literature here is concerned with moral or ethical beliefs and intentions in practice, both in terms of the spectrum of ethical modes within one type of charitable practice which each result in a different forms of action (Grimes, 1999; Cloke *et al.*, 2005), and in terms of the way in which ethical practice often involves a range of material and symbolic devices which make ethics visible and possible in the everyday complexities of acting responsibly for a range of others (for example Barnett, *et al.*, 2005b, 2005a; Clarke *et al.*, 2007, 2008). In this work on everyday ethical practices then Foucault’s notion of ethics appears to have been influential for understanding the significance of the subject within practical actions, and so connects to the literature discussed in Chapter 1 about the governing of the subject. As such, the subject can be understood as always situated within networks and devices which aim to govern it, but the purpose of examining this type of subject here, in the context of moral philosophy, is because it helps understand the way in which these subjects act within these inevitably conflicting networks of power.

So initially it can be seen that moral philosophies, or ethical values, implicitly infuse many areas of geographic work, although some work (or, it might be said, any good work), is

more reflexive about the effects of this, with the hope of enabling a more caring approach. Here I want to examine one particular strand of moral philosophy in more detail: virtue ethics. Although this turn to the field of moral philosophy might be seen to imply a desire to find a moral theory which will provide ‘wise’ solutions, such as moral philosophers often aim to do (e.g. Singer, 2002, 2009), to the questions arising around charitable giving and alternative gifts, this is not my aim. I turn to virtue ethics because of the way in which it conceptualises individuals as unique subjects who are making the moral decisions, a conceptualisation that it shares with Foucault’s versions of ethics and the technologies of the self (Levy, 2004), but to a greater and richer depth. Virtue ethics provides an important route for rethinking the ethics of the self-other relationship, particularly in relation to overseas development charity, but not because of how it can have something to say about what we *should* do, or how we *should* act, but precisely because it is useful for trying to understand *how* people *do* act, and *why* they do this.

2.2.1 *Virtue Ethics*

Despite the early beginnings of virtue ethics in the work of Aristotle (2004) who was born in 384BC, it is only in recent years that moral philosophers have been working with the ideas in the field of virtue ethics. Notable works here include Crisp and Slote’s (1997a) and Statman’s (1997a) edited collections on virtue ethics, Hursthouse’s (1999) ‘*On Virtue Ethics*’ and Swanton’s (2003) ‘*Virtue Ethics*’, all of which have interrogated the concept of virtue ethics and argued for a particular form of it.

Broadly, virtue ethics relates to the operation of virtue, defined by Swanton as ‘a good quality of character, more specifically a disposition to respond to, or acknowledge, items within its field or fields in an excellent or good enough way’ (Swanton, 2003: 19). In this

definition then Swanton explains that the fields are both within and outside an individual, so in this sense then it can be thought of as anything that an individual encounters through the course of their being in the world. Key to virtue ethics is the notion of disposition, which is explained as being about the 'fine inner states' (Swanton, 2003: 26) of an individual, where the actions of an individual are brought about due to their subjective character and emotional response to the situation, or, in philosophical terms, the field, presented to them. Here ethics are understood as being embedded in this deep sense of the subject which is one of the most important features of virtue ethics because of the way that it engages with the question of how decisions about action are made *by* individual subjects who are both emotional and instinctive. Actions of virtue (or vice) are not isolated incidents but are based on habitual thoughts and feelings which are ingrained parts of an individual's character (Cottingham, 2000: 312). It is these ingrained dispositions, rather than purely action, which determines the individual's virtuous status in virtue ethics.

The importance of dispositional character is one feature of virtue ethics that distinguishes it from other moral theories because rather than being about discrete actions virtue ethics is about the whole life of an individual and their character (Crisp and Slote, 1997b). Hursthouse (1997) explains this in relation to the question of whether abortion is right or wrong, which she frames in the questions: 'would Socrates have an abortion if he were a raped, pregnant fifteen year old?' (Hursthouse, 1997: 236). With this illustration, Hursthouse (1997) argues that it is not about asking what the virtuous agent would do, for this would be to abstract away from the situation of the individual and simply provide a model against which to measure action. Virtue ethics instead, she argues, it is about the culmination of past and present experience, situations, knowledge, and the intimacy of the felt body which determines the decision that an individual would come to about the right or

wrong of having an abortion themselves. A discussion of the ethics of abortion seems particularly pertinent because of a fierce contemporary debate between anti-abortion and pro-choice groups over the subject. Missing from this dispute though is the likely majority of middle-ground voices, people who are undecided on the matter and cannot settle on any one side of this. It is here that virtue ethics may be the key to better understanding the moral/ethical dimension of such thought and supposed indecision (although this is not to say that virtue ethics does not apply to the overtly *moral* debate taking place between the two extreme ends of it).

The main explanation given for the emphasis on virtue of the character rather than on right action is that the (virtuous) disposition of the individual is essential for their degree of wellbeing and human flourishing (Statman, 1997b).²⁹ As hinted in Hursthouse's (1997) discussion on abortion, character it is not simply a stable state of being but is a form which changes with different experiences, and it is also something on which an individual can work (Swanton, 2003). Moral networks are also significant to character in that an affiliation to one will provide shape to it. Again, the abortion debate is able to be drawn on in order to elaborate this point. In this debate then moral networks can be discerned in, for example, the conservative Christian network campaigning for an abortion ban, and the liberal humanist pro-choice campaigning groups. Although not necessarily fully coherent in their make-up, such groups nonetheless present a cohesive moral front and are the means by which those within them can determine their position on the matter, providing them with a moral framework and language through which to articulate and consolidate this. Moral networks can be understood as being one element of broader social networks albeit in a less

²⁹ The concept of human flourishing is a translation of Aristotle's 'Eudaimonia' and, along with Phronesis, translated as practical wisdom, is central to an understanding of virtue ethics. Eudaimonia, particularly, is a notoriously difficult concept to comprehend (Barnes, 2003).

coherent way. This argument is made by Cloke *et al.* (2007) who examine the influence of moral networks based around faith on volunteer ethics in the provision of services for homeless people. Equally though, Cloke *et al.* (2007: 1095) found these ethical frameworks to be ‘questioned and confronted in the didactic practice of serving homeless people’.

This demonstrates how virtue ethics emphasises the importance of action in place by a uniquely disposed, individual subject, and that although it is not fully arguing for an ethic that is necessarily constructed and relative, rather than universalistic, it does allow the complexities of how ethics outplay to be visible. As Swanton (2003: 69-72) highlights, morality is quotidian, extensive throughout all the seemingly minor and insignificant parts of life. Swanton illustrates how in virtue ethics this everyday can be observed in virtues such as tact. It is due to both the quotidian and implication within this setting that an individual can ‘work’ on their character that comparison can readily be drawn between the notion of ethics with virtue and the notion of ethics that Foucault presents (Levy, 2004). In making this connection between virtue ethics and Foucault’s ethics, comparison and areas of overlap can be drawn between this chapter and the last. The main difference between virtue ethics and Foucault’s ethics is the location of the drive for ethical disposition, and the implications of this on practices of the self. Whereas virtue ethics often seems to appeal to a higher authority or existence of an objective moral realm for qualification, Foucault’s ethics are largely situated within the framework of governmentality that he theorises and are, therefore, social constructs. This means that in the latter then the potential for what constitutes this relationship to the self is, in theory, infinite, unlike that in virtue ethics.

The emphasis in virtue ethics on the training of the fine inner states of the individual, and in Foucault's ethics on self-work, is similar in some respects to the approach Allahyari takes in her concept of 'moral-selving' (Allahyari, 2000). In an extensive empirical study about the construction and performance of volunteer ethics within two different homeless food kitchens, Allahyari (2000) conceives of volunteers as creating themselves into being a more ethical individual through their very actions as volunteers. In being provided by the charity operating each kitchen with a relatively coherent 'moral rhetoric' in the working arrangements of each place, volunteers were able to performatively carry out an ethic on the basis of this guidance and create their moral-self in that particular way (Allahyari, 2000: 32). Although she identifies differences between the two kitchens in this, with one being based more on an institutional notion of selves being created or achieved and not discovered, and the other more on an 'intuitional' notion of selves being discovered when inhibitions are lowered, each of these is about the moraling of the self through the performance of particular actions.

Moral-selving then is primarily concentrated on these efforts to make the self in a way so as to be more virtuous or spiritual (Allahyari, 2000: 4). The implication of this is that the dominant reason for any involvement with charity, be it volunteering or donating money, is because of individual aspirations to become a certain, charitable, type of person, and it is only through partaking in particular, charitable practices that they are able to achieve this outcome. Although this is a different kind of self-interest to that of the notion of civic duty discussed in Chapter 1, it is still unable to get beyond the idea of self-interest, either in terms of this kind of volunteering being a performance displaying do-gooding, or it being a means to achieve a particular sense of the self. Cloke *et al.* (2010), however, are critical of such self-oriented implications, arguing that homeless services volunteers are often

uncomfortable with being in such situations where this could be deduced. Their research stresses how there are far easier ways in which moral-serving could be achieved without entering into these spaces which are potentially risky and uncomfortable and which make volunteers more acutely aware of the injustice between what they have and what the homeless don't have. For these reasons, Cloke *et al.* (2010) maintain that these voluntary actions constitute a going-beyond the self in what Auge (1998) terms a 'sense for the other' through an emotional, connected and committed appreciation of otherness (Cloke *et al.*, 2010: 52).

Although this debate around the place of morality/ethics in these charitable actions is highly relevant here, the focus of this thesis is on forms of charitable action which take place over a much larger physical distance, and so I turn now to literature which addresses this question. This literature is also useful for highlighting how partiality is inevitable in the actions of the caring individual.

2.2.2 Virtue Ethics, Distance and Partiality

One of the most prominent ethical questions that has been asked with regard to the suffering of distant people, be this physical distance or emotional distance, is that of how such people should be related to. Eminent philosopher, John Cottingham, has posed the very direct question: 'Does distance matter from the moral point of view?', and discusses an answer, again through the three moral theories of consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics (Cottingham, 2000). He argues that these issues are not so much about what not to do – for example, it is no less wicked to bomb from a great height than it is to bomb at a low altitude. Rather, it is at times where omitting to take action constitutes the possible 'evil' that it becomes more complex – for example, deciding not to give ten pounds to a

famine relief organisation, but to buy a present for your own, well fed child instead (Cottingham, 2000: 310). Consequentialism, states Cottingham (2000), would almost certainly argue that the money should go to the famine relief organisation (as, indeed, consequentialist Peter Singer does argue (2002)), but this certainly can not be said to happen every time, nor does it seem to fully understand the situation. Deontology would provide little guidance, as neither giving the money to a famine relief organisation, nor buying your child a present would be breaking Kant's 'unbending negative prohibitions' (Cottingham, 2000: 311) which identify the limits of morality.

It is only with virtue ethics that more satisfactory understanding and guidance about the situation is provided. In allowing for the situated subject who carries out particular actions, and not purely the reflective and thought-through elements of reasoning, partiality can be shown to be an integral outcome of moral decision making. It is the very reason of ethics being ingrained throughout an individual's character, felt and expressed in and through emotion, that means a response to anyone, including to those at a distance, is possible: 'once we take seriously the idea that the ethical life is a matter of deep structural traits in our character and personality, we cannot pick and choose when those traits will be activated. Virtue becomes a seamless web' (Cottingham, 2000: 312-3). Therefore, a virtue ethics approach does not ask whether distant others should receive charitable donation, for example, but rather attends to how these forms of action might come about as being through the activation of these deep, emotional characteristics of the individual subject.

A second concept which picks up on the role of the instinctive situated subject in ethical action is Soper's (2007, 2008) 'alternative hedonism'. Although not expressly concerned with questions of distance, it is less proximally focused in that much of it relates to broader

concepts such as sustainability. In this, Soper (2007) is especially interested in examining the impulse driving those who are involved in anti-consumerist campaigns and practices, and she provides a push-pull reasoning for their participation. The push, says Soper (2007), is a dissatisfaction and distaste for the onslaught of consumption and unfulfilled promises about the satisfaction of consuming, and the pull comes from the pleasure of consuming differently. One example of this reasoning behind the anti-consumerist behaviour is illustrated through individuals' decisions to cycle or walk, rather than to drive a car to make a journey. Soper identifies a push here of a dislike of the congestion, noise and pollution caused by car use, and a pull of the pleasurable feelings which are intrinsic to cycling or walking and, because of this, that a car driver cannot experience due to being inside the car (Soper, 2007, 2008).

The subject-centred aspect of this argument is interesting here because, rather than claiming the individual's aim is to make them self into a 'better' person, it claims that this is an affect-led process – it is the hedonistic pleasure of consuming differently that persuades individuals to change their (over) consumption practices for more sustainable practices. This is a useful tool for considering the practices of alternative giving, and giving to charity more generally, because it allows for the importance of an individual's feelings for 'ethical' practices. That said, it still places the emphasis too strongly on the individual in this framework, as Allahyari (2000) does, rather than looking outwards more to the relationships formed between that individual and the other in the ethical relationship. This is not to reject the concept put forward by Soper (2007, 2008), but to argue that ideas of ethics which go beyond the isolated subject need consideration.

2.3 Ethics and Connection

There are certain literatures which present a relation-based account of ethical action, and so it is to these that I now turn. Specifically, these include literatures on the ethics and practices of care, gift theory and the face of the other.

2.3.1 *Care as Ethics and Practice*

An ethics of care is argued to be a challenge to the three dominant moral theories of deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics discussed earlier.³⁰ Work on care has in fact developed into a sub-field of its own right in geography in recent years. Inspired by a feminist literature (Gilligan, 1982; Hekman, 1995; Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 1993), care has come to be seen as important in terms of looking both at the spaces of caring practice, and at an ethics based on care. Geography has been especially interested in spaces where overt practices of caring – home spaces, mental health care environments, hospices, hospitals (Conradson, 2003) – and also, I would add, international NGO offices (McNamara and Morse, 2004) – take, or rather make, place (Raghuram *et al.*, 2009). The notion of an ethics of care has also been entering into moral and ethical discussions in Geography though, for example in Smith's (1998) paper, 'How far should we care?'. However, while spaces may be labelled as 'care spaces' and an ethics of care might be identified outside of these specifically labelled spaces, the very essence of an ethics of care is that it develops out of caring practices.

Broadly, the idea of an 'ethics of care' emerges from a feminine notion of morality. One key source from which this emerged in particular is Gilligan's work (1982) which was

³⁰ That said, some argue that there is a similarity between virtue ethics and an ethics of care (Held, 2004; Noddings, 1999), but I'll return to this shortly.

undertaken to respond to a dissatisfaction with the analysis that a colleague of hers had made of the moral development of humans, an analysis which had argued that the development of the mind leads to a reasoning of justice. Gilligan (1982) strongly argued that this was a thoroughly partial, masculinistic understanding of how children develop their sensibilities of morality and that, although there was not an *essential* difference between male and female moral development (Hekman, 1995: 6), there was a difference in development due to the way in which male and female are taught to make sense of their lives and their activities. The emphasis throughout writings on this is both that an ethics of care is developed through the everyday practices that have traditionally been ‘women’s’, practices, such as looking after a family and caring for the children within it, and that, in being cared for, children (or whoever else this might be) learn what care is. For this reason an ethics of care is argued to be based on relationships and is therefore a relational ethical theory.

Despite the alignment by some of care ethics with virtue ethics, Held (2006) strongly opposes this:

‘Although to be caring is no doubt a virtue, the ethics of care is not simply a kind of virtue ethics. Virtue ethics focuses especially on the states of character of individuals, whereas the ethics of care concerns itself especially with caring relations,...social relations and the social practices and values that sustain them.’

(Held, 2006: 19-20)

In this assessment of the difference between virtue ethics and the ethics of care Held (2006) critiques virtue ethics as essentially not being situated within social networks. Although I disagree with this assessment, I do however agree that the ethics of care highlights the absolute centrality of relationships to ethics in its emphasis on practice as the very foundation from which an individual’s ethical disposition emerges. Further, an ethics of

care also is better able to orient the idea of ethical action as developing from the relationship between carer and cared for.

Although an ethics of care is implicated in the above as being about proximal, intimate activities, it can also be used to consider practices which take place over large distances and are highly mediated, such as with the kind of charity donation in which this thesis is interested. This is because an ethics of care does not conceive of these forms of connection over distance as discretely different from proximal and intimate senses of relating. With an ethics of care these categories of proximity and distance are subsumed into the same logic. The capacity of an individual to care is just that, whether proximal or distanced, but their learning for this, the source of this capacity, arises out of their practical experiences, through their encounters with others and the way of relating that has emerged out of these encounters. Whereas an understanding of care has previously been largely confined to private spaces of, for example, the home, an ethics of care opens it up as a possibility for all forms of interaction. For example, ‘we can...develop caring relations for persons who are suffering deprivation in distant parts of the globe’ (Held, 2004: 144). This notion of a caring relationship taking place across a vast distance is a very different conceptualisation from that of justice which is often ascribed for explaining such forms of interaction. That said though, it is not enough to simply say this, and there are differences, even if they are not fully discreet practices. It is not enough to say, as Held does, that we can develop such a globally caring relationship.

A distinction is made by some between ‘caring for’ and ‘caring about’, which for Noddings (1984, 1999) appears to be more a matter of the depth of care and attention to details. As she explains, caring about

‘is too easy. I can "care about" the starving children of Cambodia, send five dollars to hunger relief, and feel somewhat satisfied. I do not even know if my money went for food, or guns, or a new Cadillac for some politician. This is a poor second-cousin to caring. "Caring about" always involves a certain benign neglect.’

(Noddings, 1984: 112)

It seems that, for Noddings (1984), caring about might still involve some form of activity, such as donating the five pounds to a charity, but there is little commitment on the part of the giver to seeing what has happened with that donation, whether it has resulted in that which was hoped. This is slightly different from Silk’s (1998, 2000, 2004) conceptualisation. While Silk also argues that caring about is less good than caring for, his description of caring about as being akin to benevolence, and *actively* caring for as beneficence, indicates a differentiation here between dispositions of benevolence and actions (such as giving a donation) as beneficence. This helps to clarify Noddings’ (1984) point, which is that caring actions might be distinguished between those which are engaged forms of care (caring for) and those which are less engaged forms of care (caring about). Whereas Noddings’ distinction is between the kind of relationship formed (or not) by the caring action, Silk’s is a difference of moral theory, between care as disposition (caring about) and care as some form of practical relationship (caring for). The differentiation that Noddings makes is one that is important to an ethics of care, because Silk’s ‘caring about’ would not necessarily be recognised in such an ethic because of the emphasis of it on self-disposition.

However, the problem still arises of whether to, and how to, make the distinction between caring in a situation where carer and cared for are in what Silk (1998: 170) refers to as ‘face-to-face’ interaction, and where carer and cared-for are at a distance from each other and never likely to come to interact without the mediation of an agency (see also Popke,

2004; Smith, 1999b). Noddings (1999) continues though by making the rather obvious, but I think essential, point that there is not a physical possibility that one person will be able to care *for* every person that needs care, but, she continues, this is where caring about might develop into a sense of justice, albeit in careful balance with caring for. In order to elaborate on this further, Noddings draws on a caricature written by Dickens of the individual only ever concerned with those far away and missing the need for caring activity proximally because of this. In an ethics of care, this would also arguably have a negative impact on caring generally because it is through being cared for that individuals are able to learn how to care. This raises some questions about the way in which care functions in charity giving and alternative giving, particularly in regard to the way in which the relationship might be conceptualised through examining the specifics of the practices involved. It certainly seems that an ethics of care would not be against these sorts of activities, but it does have things to say in terms of the form this relationship takes and, indeed, the influence of the format of the connection on the possibility of a relationship existing. A further point that needs consideration here in the context of highly mediated care is about how care might extend along the lines of mediation, and the role of transparency and trust of the caring practices of others within these forms of mediation (which I will discuss in Chapter 5).

In talking about an ethics of care stemming from relationships arguably a sense of both carer and cared-for must be present in the relationship for it to be just that. Slote (1999) raises this point in an article specifically addressed to Noddings, asking about whether the acceptance of care by the cared-for means that they are as morally praiseworthy as the carer. This, argues Slote, seems implausible. But, retaliates Noddings (1999), it is not so much about who should be receiving moral praise, but the contribution that each make to

the relationship, that a basic smile from the cared for might be the basis of response, but that this is potentially essential to the relationship. Neither Noddings nor Slote directly address this in terms of long-distance and mediated charity giving, but it is with this in mind that I want to move on the next section and consider this in the context of work on gifts and gifting. Some of this work has quite a different perspective in regards to such relationships and, I think, helps to highlight some of the issues with this notion of the relationship between care-giver and care-receiver.

2.3.2 Gift Theory

Gift theory is perhaps one of the most obvious literatures to use in considering charitable donations. Indeed, it has been taken up in this context already, such as in Silk's (2004) general conceptualisation of North-South individual donations through charities, Korf's (2007) specific focus on relationships of humanitarian aid funded through various channels, including private donations, Eyben's (2006) and Hattori's (2003) papers on international aid as gift, and especially Stirrat and Henkel's (1997) work which draws on gift theory in anthropology with the aim of understanding the way the donation changes from the point of donation to the final point of reciprocation. Although this last paper draws on the literature on the gift in a way that echoes the everyday functioning of such individual or private donations through charitable organisations which uses the language and imaginings of 'the gift', it does not focus on particular forms of donation, which in the case of alternative giving is especially pertinent. This is because without the gift narrative surrounding alternative giving, in that forms of charity are constructed so as they can be given between known individuals on gifting occasions, it would not be able to function. The literature on the gift and gifting is certainly an appropriate arena within which to consider the implications of connections and relationships of charitable donating, and is especially

appropriate for considering this additional layer of ‘gift’ which is constructed by alternative giving as a specific fundraising device.

One of the most influential pieces of work on gift exchange is Mauss’s (1990) work *The Gift*, initially published in 1925 (Hart, 2007: 473) and translated into English in 1950. An anthropologist, Mauss was interested in what he referred to as ‘archaic’ societies, by which he meant societies with a form of exchange different to that in Western societies at the time of writing, and to the functioning of markets in Western society before the invention of money (Mauss, 1990: 4). In these societies he recognised these pre-money forms of exchange as being practices of gift-giving, and within this he identified the obligation to reciprocate the gift received with a gift in return as being the most important aspect of this mechanism (Mauss, 1990: 7). It is for this reason that Mauss’s central question was about why there was this obligation to reciprocate, which he argued came about because, by exchanging in this way, communities became bound together. However, while Mauss apparently still viewed such gift-giving primarily as a form of market exchange, with economic imperatives, it has more recently been taken to show the opposite of this. Gift exchange is argued to be different from commodity exchange because commodity exchange is about the transfer of objects of the same value in a transaction, and gift exchange is about the establishment of a relationship between people, or groups of people, to which the value of the goods is secondary (Schrift, 1997: 2). As Schrift (1997) goes on to highlight, this emphasis on relationship building, through gift-giving, is very much in the same vein as Gilligan’s (1982) ethics of care, and is in contrast to commodity exchange in the same way as an ethics of rights contrasts with an ethics of care (Schrift, 1997: 2-3).

However, despite the emphasis in Mauss's work on the economic, the notion of obligation in gift reciprocation present in his work and throughout gift theory is far more developed than in literature on ethics of care. It is this sense of obligation in gift-giving that can be used to interrogate the self-other relationships of alternative giving. In gift theory the obligation to reciprocate has been used to identify the unavoidable presence of power within gift-giving practices. The very action of giving a gift brings the gift recipient into a relationship with the giver in which they are indebted unless they give a gift in return. Here there is no such thing as a free gift, even if at first glance it appears to be (see Douglas, 1990). Derrida (1992) takes up this question of giving and reciprocation to argue that a pure gift is an aporia, an impossible possible. He argues that for a gift to be a pure gift it must be unreciprocated, but for a gift to be a gift it must also be recognised as such by the recipient, and that in this recognition of the gift as gift the recipient immediately then becomes obliged to reciprocate (Deutscher, 2005: 78). This is the aporia, that for a gift to be pure it must not be reciprocated, but in its recognition as a gift by the receiver there comes to be an imbalance between the giver and receiver unless it *is* reciprocated, and if it is not recognised by the receiver as a gift, then it is not a gift. For this reason there is no such thing as the pure gift in Derrida's view. This is a slightly differing analysis of the gift to that from Mauss, even though both agree on the impossibility of the pure gift. Mauss argues that there should be no such thing as the pure gift because the whole purpose of it is to build relationships and therefore solidarity between people, and goes so far as to argue that our society would be much better if it was built on gift relationships than commercial exchange relationships. Derrida argues though that this is something which must be constantly negotiated between individuals and it is only through recognising the aporia of the gift – that the gift will always fail in its very giving – that we are then able to think of it in these terms of negotiation (Deutscher, 2005: 82).

In the context of international development charity these rudiments of gift-giving have primarily been used to understand the place of reciprocity for international flows of money from ‘North’ to ‘South’, for the purpose of development. Stirrat and Henkel (1997) argue that the donation given by an individual in the ‘North’ intended for a ‘Southern’ beneficiary starts out as a free gift in the Maussian sense. Silk (2004) agrees with this, arguing that a donation to charity, such as through payroll giving, is close to being the sense of a free gift because there is no legal or moral binding for British donors to give such a donation.³¹ Moreover, he states that there is no expectation on the part of the donor for any expressions of gratitude from the ‘victims’ or any incentive from those fundraising for the money (Silk, 2004: 233). Silk does then concede though that there are societal reasons behind the ‘moral motivation’ to give, such as peer pressure to contribute to fundraising events at schools, or incentives to give, for example in the form of t-shirts or raffle prizes. Concerning actual power relations though, he places the power asymmetry largely in the hands of the intermediaries (the donor organisations – charities being one such of these) (also see Stirrat and Henkel, 1997). That said, this does not pay enough attention to the relationship created through the raising of funds and donation of money from individual members of the public to the charitable organisation and the role of this within the larger picture. These aspects therefore require further investigation, to present a much deeper examination of the functioning of a mechanism for individual donation, including an appreciation of the power at work in these forms of connection, which is what I aim to do with alternative giving.

³¹ Although this claim is, arguably, unfounded. British Muslims, for example, are required by religious law to give a certain amount of their wealth away which might well be through payroll giving. This is a monitored and expected form of giving with practicing Muslims.

There are several ways in which the relationships between all actors must be examined, but there are two specific ways in which these connections will be considered here. The first of these connections that I will discuss is the appeals made by charities ‘to those in the North on behalf of those in the South’ (Silk, 2004: 233), which, although only mentioned briefly by Silk, are essential to the notion of a relationship. The second connection that must be discussed is that of the response of ‘those in the North’ to the appeal from the charity, whatever this response might be. These connections are made more complex through alternative giving and I will move on to discuss this following my initial discussion of charity connection more broadly.

2.3.3 Appeals by Charities and the Face of the Other

Individuals do not automatically know that charities are there; they must work hard to maintain a presence in the consciousness of their potential donors. Existing work by those examining gift relationships in donations to international development have failed to adequately take this into account. However, an analysis of how charities communicate with individuals is absolutely essential to understanding how forms of charity fundraising govern subjects. These kinds of governing cannot easily be theorised in the gift theory framework though and this in part also signals the problem of theorising charity giving more generally in this gift framework. In professionalised charities the budget for such appeals and information essentially equates to a marketing and communications budget, for which charities aim to use the smallest percentage of their overall income possible. These percentage figures are shown to be important through their use by impartial reviewers of charity, such as on the website ‘Intelligent Giving’, as an indicator of the efficiency of charities. Intelligent Giving quotes the amount spent by each charity they review on charitable activity, explaining, for example that the charity Practical Action spends 85% on

their charitable work, and that the other percentage (15%) ‘usually goes into raising more income. A little covers legal requirements’.³² An expenditure of between 20 and 25 percent on activities not directly working with beneficiaries is generally held to be acceptable with, for example, charity Send a Cow reporting that 25% of their expenditure in 2007-2008 was on income generation (Send a Cow, 2008: 19). These income generation activities are not insignificant in terms of monetary cost though, and moreover are essential to the charity because these are how they secure incoming funds. The material that is produced from the spending of this marketing or income generation budget then is the point at which the charity attempts to engage the public.

There is a range of means and tactics that charities use to engage the public and these vary according to any pre-existing relationship the charity has with the person and the degree to which they are determined to be the kind of person who would be receptive to certain types of materials. The aim of all these materials, in whatever form they come, is to bring the cause being fundraised for to the consciousness of the individual. In this section I want to argue that Levinas’ concept of ‘the face’ is useful for understanding such materials. By face, Popke (2003) explains, Levinas means not the whole of a person, or ‘character’, in a particular social context, but the immediacy of this face’s demand on the self, and in that this demand comes to be on the self, this face is the ‘Other’. For Levinas, the other is fully outside of the self, and brings the self to their own consciousness. This bringing of the self to their own consciousness is what Levinas refers to as ethics as first philosophy (Levinas, 1989: 79-87), in that this is the basis of being through the experience of ‘an “I” which is not myself’ (Moran, 2000: 348). It seems that Levinas is uncertain as to whether the ‘face’ can only be the human face in close proximity to the self, answering his own question posed of

³² <http://www.intelligentgiving.com/charity/247257>

‘can things take on a face?’ with ‘The analysis conducted thus far is not enough to give an answer’ (Levinas, 2006a: 9). This does then raise the question of whether the material from charities can be discussed in this setting. Using this theory to discuss what essentially amounts to marketing materials is certainly complicated and potentially problematic because of the extremely planned and deliberate way in which these materials come about. The main point about the face though is that it is conceived by Levinas to be a seeing of the nakedness, vulnerability and mortality of the other (human being) (Levinas, 2006b: 144), and so I think there are several ways that this can be thought through here in thinking about alternative giving.

Charity materials could be thought of as being the ‘other’ in two different ways. The first way is by thinking of the ‘other’ as the collective of the marketing material, by which I mean not an individual, but the overall representation created of those who would potentially benefit from the charity. The second way of thinking of this ‘other’ is of it as the beneficiaries depicted in a photographic image; as the actual human beings who are physically distant but individually represented in the visual material. I do not think that it is possible, or important, here to make a decision about which of these is ‘the other’ in the material; it is quite possible that it is both or either of them, and that this varies from person to person. Thinking of these in terms of ‘the face’ places emphasis on the demand for a response from the self when confronted by the face of the other (whether collective or represented), even if this response is to do nothing. Throughout Levinas’ work, ‘response’ is closely aligned with ‘responsibility’: ‘My *response* is at the same time my *responsibility*’ (Moran, 2000: 349, emphasis in original). ‘Responsibility’ does have overtones of being a calculated activity when taken in the context of the use of the term in literature on responsibility and action at a distance, chosen to be done in light of knowledge of a link

between the individual assuming responsibility and that being assumed responsibility for (Barnett and Land, 2007: 1067-1068). However, in making this connection to ‘response’, the emphasis shifts to the reply that an individual makes, whatever this may be.

Implied but not present in this philosophy of the face, writes Casey (2001), is a conception of how this first moment of the self noticing the other operates, a moment that he calls the ‘glance’. Glance is absolutely essential because without this taking place then ‘nothing will happen, nothing will ensue’ (Casey, 2001: 2); the individual will not be made aware of the charity or of the particular way in which the charity is trying to raise money. The mistake that Levinas makes, according to Casey, is to deny significance of phenomenology in this moment of encounter, and therefore to reject this encounter with the face as a moment of perception. Casey argues that Levinas rejects this because he wants to move away from the importance of knowledge (totality) to the moment of being aware of the other, to ‘ethical witnessing’ as being central to the ethical first philosophy ‘revelation’, and this is something which Levinas wants to position as prior to knowledge (Casey, 2001: 3). In getting away from the idea of knowledge of the other being perceived by the self in this moment of the glance, Levinas hopes to get at the uncontextual, precognitive nakedness of the other. Conversely, Casey views perception as of fundamental importance to the glance as the moment of bringing to consciousness. This is not a fully realised and comprehensive perception, but an ‘impure and nonsimple perception of (after Leibniz) *apperception*, i.e. a subtle perception, that precedes and in any case undoes the otherwise inveterate tendency of full-blown perception to objectivity’ (Casey, 2001: 4). In thinking through the mechanics of the glance in this more thorough way, the instant of becoming conscious of the other, in whatever form it takes, is given the importance that it deserves, for it is in this moment that

further action becomes possible. The connection has been initiated, regardless of what will happen next.

The question that results from bringing the role of the face, and of the glance to this, into focus is: ‘what happens next?’. This is also an important question for considering why, in Levinas’ philosophy, the response by the self to the face of the other might be to take no action, but equally that it also might be to take action of various descriptions. The self and the other are both contextual beings, situated within a society, operating with the guidance and imposition of pre-existing ethical sensibilities and social understandings. In the previous chapter, the ‘other’ of charity promotional materials has already been discussed as constituting a form of governing of individuals, and this certainly needs to be taken into account in response to the question of what happens next. Similarly, the governing by individuals of themselves is also relevant in responding to this question.

Barnett and Land (2007) argue that the degree to which individuals are *receptive* to the needs of the expressions of others determines the way in which the individual will respond. Drawing on Coles, Diprose, and Young, Barnett and Land (2007) make a case for thinking about the way in which receptivity and response to (the) other(s) is worked up with ‘generosity’. In this, generosity is ‘by definition, a partial virtue that cannot be universalised, precisely because of its emplacement within the concrete encounters with others, however mediated these may be...[It] is a finite, partial virtue because it is a mundane, ordinary, and everyday practice always undertaken in the company of others’ (Barnett and Land, 2007: 1073). The encapsulating of the importance of partiality within generosity is essential for understanding charity giving because there is no way in which an individual can respond with generosity to every ‘face’ of the other of charity that they

encounter. Therefore, the working up, or shaping and construction of these promotional materials for the governing of the way in which this other is encountered, is vital.

In the particular context of charity fundraising then a response of generosity towards the charity fundraising material would typically result in the giving of money from the individual to the charity, money which would then be used by the charity. This is a relatively straightforward configuration of donor-charity-beneficiary relationships. However, with alternative giving, as previously explained, the relationship is far more complex. Because of this complexity the next and final section in this chapter is about the ethics of complex connections.

2.4 Ethics of Complex Connections: Material Culture's Ethical Potential

In the introductory chapter of this thesis I outlined the way in which alternative giving operates and the different subject positions that are involved. Striking here is the additional, second subject in the configuration of alternative giving compared with other forms of charity donation which muddies the donor position. Further, and as a result of this additional position, there is also the element of the tangible object which appears to have the potential to alter the position of both charity and beneficiary in the mediation because of the degree of control it appears to give to the donor(s). In what ways then might the theory already discussed here be used to help disentangle what is going on in such a configuration? In what ways does this configuration challenge the conceptualisations discussed? And, how might these more broadly apply to practices of giving/receiving and donating/receiving more generally?

I will firstly consider what the change in the donation element of giving in mechanisms such as alternative giving might mean. The basic premise of this sort of giving is that there is one giver who purchases the gift and therefore whose money goes to the charity, but as it is a gift for a different person then in effect it is this other person, the receiver-donor who donates the money, in lieu of getting a present of their own. There are other types of giving to charity which are a giving-in-kind, such as donating to a particular charity rather than giving flowers at a funeral on the request of those arranging the funeral, or with the website 'JustGiving', which enable individuals to ask for money to be given to a particular charity on a particular occasion, rather than receiving a present.³³ However, this is not the same as the giving-in-kind of alternative giving. With funeral flowers or JustGiving it is the recipient who has requested the replacement charity donation. Further, the recipient does not receive anything in place of the gift other than an acknowledgement of the donation to their chosen charity. The primary difference with alternative giving is that an alternative gift may well not be given simply because it was requested, and additionally is represented to the recipient through gift materials such as cards, which outline a specific item that the donation has purchased and how it will be used.

In that the impetus to give to charity comes from a different person in the giving-in-kind relationship with alternative giving, there come to be some interesting questions in relation to ethics. With Levinas' first philosophy of ethics then the relationship of responsibility that I discussed was caused by the glance of the self to the face of the other. If it is the gift giver who decides to give an alternative gift though, then it is that individual who has decided to respond generously to the face of the other perceived in the charity promotional materials, rather than the individual who receives it in lieu of a more standard gift who has

³³ www.justgiving.com

had this glancing change to their responsive field. It is only when they are given an alternative gift in the form of a representation that they come to encounter this face of the other. As with the discussion of all gifts, a personal gift such as this is not a neutral entity but an expression and recreation of a 'range of social values' (Carrier, 1993: 55). However, Carrier develops this further in relation to the notion of this as personal, writing that such a gift is:

'a vehicle of affection that expresses private sentiment that is personal and probably familial...on the one hand it is a commodity purchased for money in an impersonal transaction, and in the other it is a gift given to express affection in a personal relationship'

(Carrier, 1993: 55)

In that an alternative gift is explicitly concerned with ethical action at the point of purchase though, then the alternative gift is not so much of an impersonal transaction as Carrier states; it cannot be so for this is the very value of the alternative gift to the recipient. The alternative gift recipient receives the possibility of an ethical sense of connection (the possibility of an encounter with the face of the other), and this takes place through the material representation of one aspect of the work of the charity.

In light of identifying the significance of the material representation for the possibility of the ethical relationship as gift I turn to the field of material culture to develop an understanding of materiality which allows for this. As Campbell (1998) and Miller (2001) have highlighted, one prominent debate in academic literature on consumption is based around a general anxiety about societal (and personal) over-materialism and overindulgence. Literature in this area certainly is evident, such as Wachtel's (1998) utopian vision of replacing individualistic materialism with new networks of interaction, critiques on the hyper-capitalistic consumer space of the 'mall' (Crewe and Gregson, 1998;

Goss, 1993), and Goodland's (1998) argument for reducing meat consumption. As a counterpoint to such debates though, Miller (2005) argues that materiality is both central to how we understand ourselves and also 'the driving force behind humanity's attempts to transform the world in order to make it accord with beliefs as to how the world should be' (Miller, 2005: 2). This is not to deny academic concerns about the impacts of consumption; the acute relevance of this for the care of those in the South by the North has been highlighted in an analysis of the degrading affects on the environment of the South due to consumption of agricultural products from the South by the North (Shanahan and Carlsson-Kanyama, 2005). However, material culture studies maintain that the researching of material worlds should not be avoided for fear of fetishism but should be studied so as to enhance an understanding of cultural life, with the purpose of appreciating consumption not merely as an act of purchase, but of consumers as social and cultural beings (Miller, 1995, 1998).

There is certainly work within Geography that has taken the materiality of items seriously with the purpose of getting at the possibility of consumption activity beyond the point of purchase being about far more than the governing by marketing (for example, Cook et al., 2004; Cook *et al.*, 2007; Cook and Harrison, 2003, 2007; Jackson, 2000, 2002). Further, work in geography has also challenged the very binary which materiality(/immateriality) implies, identifying the material substance from which different forms of relationship might emerge (McCormack, 2003) and drawing on Bennett (2001) to argue for an enchanted materialism (Anderson and Wylie, 2009). The purpose of the latter of these papers is to theoretically develop an understanding that aspects of the immaterial, such as affects, are 'of matter' (Anderson and Wylie, 2009: 332; also see Latham and McCormack, 2004). Thus, from a material cultures perspective, the material elements of alternative giving are

able to be valued beyond simply being a symbol of a gift having been purchased to being significant in terms of the specificity of the material item itself. Moreover, with respect to the literature that attends to the inseparability of material from immaterial, alternative gift material can also be considered for the role it plays in the co-production of affect. This enables such gifts to be thought beyond the notion of power relations of gifting practices, to open up the possibility of questioning the significance of the material in the alternative gifting practices which might involve love and care, leaving room for a sense of what the alternative gift does to be considered as important.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have aimed to develop, through existing literatures in geography on ethics and those beyond geography, a notion of ethics as situated, partial and as emerging through practices which involve material elements. The purpose of doing this has been to highlight a way of thinking of ethics that is not about grand reflection but based on ordinary actions which involve ‘people with busy lives, torn loyalties and multiple commitments, and scarce resources to do what they can’ (Barnett *et al.*, 2008). In so doing I have built a conceptual basis from which to examine the practices of alternative giving which enables subjects to be considered as being already deeply enmeshed in actions which can be thought of as ethical. Particularly significant for alternative giving is the centrality of materiality to practice. It is through materiality that the complexity of connections in alternative giving is made sense of by those involved and how the form of action is constructed as ethical. Further, it is through these material elements that the distant ‘other’ is brought to the awareness of both giver and receiver, and so the construction of this face and the response to it is significant for appreciating the way in which alternative giving functions. This means that it is vital in

this thesis to attend to the way in which the material forms of alternative giving are interacted with in these gift relationships.

Several questions emerge as a result of understanding ethics in these subjective and practice-based notions of relationships which will be addressed most directly in Chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis:

- 1) What practices are involved in constructing the distant other in alternative giving?
- 2) How is alternative giving promoted as an ethical form of practice?
- 3) In what ways do those who give and receive alternative gifts discuss their involvement in this form of ethical practice and their relationship to the distant others of alternative giving, particularly in light of theories which discuss this as a going beyond the self?
- 4) What role do the material elements of alternative giving play in this involvement?
- 5) How are the dual notions of giving, around which alternative giving is constructed, negotiated by those involved and what is the place of ethics within this negotiation?

A further methodological question emerges following this of how to research these more emotional and affective aspects of giving, which will inform the next chapter's discussion of the research methodology employed for the thesis.

Chapter 3

Researching Alternative Giving

‘In tandem, reflexivity and dialogics recast research as a process rather than just as a product, and also as a mechanism in which human response is conditional and human circumstances are contingent. Two very significant conclusions follow (England, 1994). First, research is transformed by the inputs of those who were previously constructed as the ‘researched’. Secondly, the researcher is an integral part of the research setting...[G]iven a more reflexive and dialogic approach, the interview becomes an unfolding performance – a dramaturgic event – with ‘a developing plot in which topics, roles and format are fashioned in the give and take of the interview’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997 p. 123).’

(Cloke *et al.*, 2000: 136-7)

Any form of qualitative research undoubtedly demands both reflexivity of the researcher and a dialogue with the research matter which influences the research itself (Cloke *et al.* 2000) and this is certainly the case with the empirical basis of this thesis. Given that the form of charity on which I carried out this research is bound up with practices of care, ethics and responsibility for others, there seems to be so much that is potentially at stake in research in this arena, not only for the researched but also for the researcher, as they engage with each other. As such, the methodology outlined in this chapter is concerned not only with the pragmatics of the empirical research methods that have been combined to produce material in response to the research questions, but also with reflecting on the effects my interaction with the field and subsequent ‘professional, personal and emotional’ feelings had on my ongoing research and interpretation of the ‘data’ produced (Cloke *et al.*, 2000: 134). While I do not wish to imply that my research was so profoundly affecting, as, for example, the immediacy of Cloke *et al.*’s (2000) personal engagement’s with individuals who were homeless, simply gaining a deeper insight into the lives of the beneficiaries through the charities and their employees who told me about them had an influence on my perception of the issues and outcomes of the research. Therefore, throughout this

methodology I will discuss the influence of listening and talking to those involved on these issues and outcomes. Moreover, these aspects have also had a significant impact on the resulting methodology, for my research varies quite considerably to that originally planned prior to the commencement of the project. In order to reflect on some of these elements which are not representable in the ‘data’ of the interview transcripts, for example, I kept a research diary which, although still not going beyond text (Crang, 2005), has allowed me to get at some of the more fleeting but nonetheless significant positions that I adopted over the course of the research (Crang, 2003).

3.1 Negotiating the Research Field

At the start of this research I planned to carry out a methodology akin to a ‘follow the thing’ ethnography (Cook et al., 2004, Cook et al., 2006; Cook and Harrison, 2007), which has emerged out of Actor Network Theory (ANT) in science studies (Cloke *et al.*, 2004). This would have involved tracing and researching one of the most prominent of alternative giving’s gifts – a goat – from charity to giver, beneficiary, recipient, and anywhere else that it seemed to come from and go. As the course of the research continued though, it became clearer that the beneficiary group, although receiving of the work carried out with money from alternative giving, were far more significant in their representation in marketing materials than they were for a direct link specifically to alternative giving. After several attempts to access the beneficiary group through charities though, it became clear that access to this group was rarely permitted, even for their own fundraising staff, and perceived to be specifically relevant for research into alternative giving in the way that it appeared from the surface. Even the charities involved in alternative giving did not seem to recognise an obvious reason for my interest in alternative giving’s beneficiaries. A vast number of charities created no or only a vague financial connection between the gift bought

and those received, and those that did still were unable to consider this to be a huge part of alternative giving in and of itself.

Furthermore, there were a huge number of ethical issues that I felt I had to address in deliberating whether or not to take up the one offer that I had of a visit to a beneficiary country of one of the charities participating in my research. As this was going to be organised by a charity as a showcase of their work this was only scheduled to be one-week long and for which the itinerary detailed a great deal of travelling between different sites and only a small amount of interaction with people whom the charity works for the benefit of. An extract from my research diary begins to describe some of my feelings about this:

“An email back from Concern Universal saying they would be ‘delighted’ if I were to sign up to the trip to Nigeria. I am very excited at the prospect of going as I really think it would give me an experience of development beyond the fundraising brochures and marketing. I would encounter it differently. But then the pessimism creeps in: is this just an exercise in development tourism? How would I feel about fundraising the money?”

(Research Diary Extract)

My reasons for wanting to go were that I was very keen to begin to understand better the lives of those who receive an item that is marketed in the device of alternative giving, the meaning of that item for them and the way it is integrated (or not) into the rest of their life, in order to reflect back upon the representations of these people and places in alternative giving marketing and fulfilment materials. Conversely though I felt strongly that it was not my place to descend upon their world (in what I perceived to be a painfully colonial manner given it seemed it was the charity who would be permitting this rather than the individuals themselves) with the overt power imbalance this entailed, and that, ultimately, it would provide me with little scope for doing more than scratch the surface of these worlds, and so

aligning my research very uncomfortably closely with ‘development tourism’ (Black, 2003: 99).

Additionally, this trip also required participants to commit to raising £1,500 for the charity on returning. It was around this that a series of conflicting issues arose in my mind. I was concerned that the commitment to fundraising set up a false relationship between the attempts that I would make at this and the reason I was doing so; the real reason would be because of a necessity to do so based on my research-related desire to visit, rather than because of a committed sense of care for the other, and so my reliance on the generosity of others in giving to my fundraising efforts would be laden with this sense of falsity. The result of this ethical self-questioning and lack of other opportunities to undertake such a trip is that this thesis is purely based in the donor country, and has led to seeking understanding of alternative giving as a commodity-based culture of fundraising which is based around spectacle rather than direct, albeit more complex, connection between donor and beneficiary forged through the alternative gift.

What follows then is an outline of the methods I have used to better understand the way in which alternative giving operates and is interacted with. This has involved constructing a methodology which enables research into the following aspects of this field (Massey, 2003):

- a) The contexts of alternative giving: charitable, societal and governmental
- b) the marketing and fulfilment materials produced by charities
- c) the work within the charities that goes into producing these alternative giving materials
- d) the practices of purchasing, giving and receiving alternative gifts

e) the discourse surrounding alternative giving in the mainstream media

Research Question (See Introduction)	Area of Field	Method
In what institutional, societal and governmental contexts has alternative giving, as a distinct fundraising device, emerged and how is alternative giving manifest in the social milieu?	a) e)	- Interviews with charity employees - Gathering the existing literature for analysis - Searching the national media for articles on alternative giving and related issues for time period concerned for discourse analysis - Searching the specialist sector press for articles on alternative giving and related issues for the time period concerned for discourse analysis - Focus groups
What processes of mediation are carried out by charities in their construction of 'development' through alternative giving and what are the implications of these for an imagined geography of development's people and places?	b) c)	- Interviews with charity employees - Collection of marketing and fulfilment material for textual and visual analysis - Focus groups
In what ways does alternative giving govern the ethical subject?	d)	- Interviews with charity employees - Collection of marketing and fulfilment material for textual and visual analysis - Interviews with givers and receivers of alternative gifts
What is the place of ethics in the practices of giving and receiving alternative gifts?	d)	- Interviews with givers and receivers of alternative gifts
What is the afterlife of an alternative gift for the recipient given the gift's material form and what are the implications of this?	d)	- Interviews with givers and receivers of alternative gifts

Figure 3.1: Overview of the methods used to address each research question

There are some areas of overlap between the methods I have used to research these aspects of alternative giving. For example, semi-structured in-depth interview have been used throughout the research both into the production work of the charities and charitable contexts, and into the giving and receiving practices of alternative giving. However, but I

still go through my use of these in each of the contexts because of difference in the way in which they have been used. Figure 3.1 illustrates the methods used and how these relate to the research questions being asked. The method I discuss first is the semi-structured interview. I then move on to discuss focus groups and finally the analysis of visual and textual materials.

3.2 Interviews and Focus Groups

Before discussing the specific details of interviewing within charities and interviewing givers and receivers, there are several generic practical issues which I will outline first. Where agreed by the interviewee spoken interviews, carried out both face-to-face and on the telephone, were audio-recorded and then transcribed to ensure a richness of detail and information. Additionally, audio recording also means there is no preoccupation of writing. As Valentine (1997: 121) emphasises, half of the skill in interviewing is listening as this enables the interviewer to make on-going decisions about the pace of questioning, the suitability of questions and to notice and take opportunities to probe in more detail. This meant that although I had a pre-written structure of questions which I had ordered in a way that seemed likely to flow (Cloke *et al.*, 2004: 153-155) and cover the themes I had identified, greater focus on the interview meant I could pay more attention to the interview itself and therefore be more flexible about the direction the interview took, which emerged as being inevitable, but is also desirable, for any in-depth interview (Hoggart *et al.*, 2001).

Ethically, there are several points around which researching by interview must be thoroughly considered. At their most basic, these ethics are described by Fontana and Frey (2003) as being to: ensure informed consent is gained through carefully and truthfully informing the interviewee about the research project; allow the interviewee privacy of

identity if so desired; and protect the interviewee from any physical, emotional or other harm that results from the interview. My primary source of officially anchoring the research ethically was with the use of consent forms which, in line with protocol issued by the University of Exeter, outlined the research and uses of research, indicated any known risks to the participant, and asked the participant to indicate the extent to which they would like to be identified in the research output (see Appendix 1 for an example of the consent form used). Consideration of these ethical aspects should not, and did not, only take place prior to carrying out the research according to the consent form though (Miller and Bell, 2002). Throughout the writing of the thesis I have been aware of the impact that certain aspects could potentially have on those from whom the interview material comes, and so an awareness of impact on the researched has guided my research through to these later stages of research. This is evidenced in my decision to make one interviewee anonymous, even though she had not specifically requested to be so.

3.2.1 Interviews with Representatives of Charities

Over the course of my research I identified twenty-two charities operating alternative gift schemes with international development gifts (see Appendix 2). Although some of these charities sell humanitarian aid gifts also, I only included those with gifts relating to longer-term planned forms of development in countries outside of the UK, and so excluded, for example, the British Red Cross' 'Pass the Parcel' which was solely about emergency provision. All but one of the charities identified for inclusion works in international development themselves. The exception, Charities Advisory Trust, is a largely grant-making charity which operates a catalogue selling alternative gifts for a range of charities, including some international development charities. I sought out the charities in a variety of ways: some of these charities were already known to me, so I simply had to find out

more information from their website; with internet searches; through the independent charity review website ‘intelligentgiving.org’,³⁴ and by examining articles in the press, especially in the three months leading up to Christmas. One perhaps obvious place to look, the Charity Commission website, was of little help because of the limitations of their charity database search engine.³⁵ Because this is a very new form of fundraising – several new alternative gift catalogues emerged over the course of my research – I carried out a search approximately every 6 months.

A greater challenge than identifying alternative giving international development charities was obtaining an interview with the individual(s) with the most ‘privileged knowledge’ of alternative giving (Rice, 2010: 71). It has been noted in past research that charities are reluctant to collaborate with students and academics doing research unless the charity perceives it to be beneficial to a campaign they are involved with (Land, 2005: 58). Oxfam UK³⁶ and World Vision UK³⁷ are just two of several charities who advertise on their website that they are not able to give any form of assistance for student projects, dissertations or theses. In that those involved with producing alternative gift fundraising were all professionals employed by a charity, these interviews were essentially corporate,

³⁴ The purpose of this site has had mixed reviews, especially from charitable organisations, but the very useful aspect of this website is that it is entirely dedicated to organisations that fundraise in the public realm, and for which it has a large database.

³⁵ The key problem is the very simplistic search-engine; it is only possible to search by registered number, charity name or keyword. Of these, only the keyword search is of any use because the other two entail searching for a specific organisation, this search is very limited though. Firstly because the main piece of information on each record is a charity’s ‘objects’ (all registered charities must state their ‘object’ which is ‘the term...use[d] to describe and identify the purpose for the which the charity has been set up’ (Charity Commission, Unpublished)) which are not detailed enough for the purpose of this research. Secondly, because most searches produce over 500 records but the maximum accessible is 500, which are always first 500 with that keyword by alphabetised name order, and there is no option to search within results. More specific word searches do not even produce obvious charities like Oxfam UK. This, combined with the sheer number of registered charities (over 190,000 records for individual charities (Charity Commission, 2007)) means the register of charities is of limited use.

³⁶ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/faq/other.html>

³⁷ <https://www.worldvision.org.uk/server/show/nav.248>

and some elites,³⁸ so for this reason I approached the charities in the way suggested for these two kinds of position (Ostrander, 1993; Rice, 2010; Welch *et al.*, 2002). Primarily, this centred on gaining their trust in my professionalism by presenting my research and myself in a clear and knowledgeable manner, by emphasising my affiliation to the University of Exeter and highlighting the institutional professional research code of ethics that this research is bound to, and by identifying and communicating the purpose of my interview and their participation in the research. I first presented this information in a letter personally addressed to them with an accompanying single-sided outline of the research and their involvement (see Appendix 3), and following this phoned them to try to arrange an interview.

This was simply the starting point because, as Cloke *et al.* (2000) observed, albeit in a very different setting, the interview itself was also a tool through which to gain trust and better access. This was either where the interviewee had only originally allocated me a short time, say ten minutes, but then agreed to extend this time once this had passed and they had appreciated my questions to be valid and pertinent, or where one interviewee acted as a gatekeeper and was willing to then refer me to a different, generally more senior, person within the charity who had other knowledge about alternative giving, as was the case with ActionAid, for example. In the case of several charities, especially three of the larger and more prominent charities, my access was helped by using existing contacts with the charities, either personal or academic, to both identify the individual I needed to interview and to recommend me to them, either directly or through their contact within the charity. In

³⁸ For the purpose of their research, Welch *et al.* (2002: 613) describe an elite as ‘an informant (usually male) who occupies a senior or middle management position; has functional responsibility in an area which enjoys high status in accordance with corporate values; has considerable industry experience and frequently also long tenure with the company; possesses a broad network of personal relationships; and has considerable international exposure’.

total I obtained interviews in fifteen of the original twenty-two charities identified, and in some cases carried out interviews with several, differently placed people within the charity according to their perception of the individuals most involved in the production of their alternative gift scheme (see Appendix 4). Included in these interviews were those with Oxfam, World Vision UK and other charities stating their inability to participate in research, in light of which it appears that my recruitment strategy has been a relative success, particularly with the key role of Oxfam and World Vision UK in the development of alternative giving in the UK.

The purpose of interviewing within charities was to find out: the history of alternative giving in the charity; why the charity decided to sell alternative gifts; how the charity had created the alternative giving materials, how these had evolved and who was involved with this; who their target audience were and why; what their sales were like and why this might be; and what they considered to be positive and negative aspects of alternative giving as a form of fundraising. Due to the wide variety of charity sizes and structures there is variation between charities in where this person is located in a particular department and what else they are responsible for. For example, in one of the largest charities researched this person was the 'Product Development Executive' because, she explained to me, their alternative gift catalogue was a recent addition to their fundraising portfolio and so it was her responsibility to develop it before passing it over to a longer-term management team ('Kate', 'Aid International'). Few charities are large enough to have such a specific development role though, and so in many charities alternative giving is created and/or managed by a more general fundraising executive or similar (see Appendix 4 for charity interviewees and job titles). These variations in the location of alternative giving within

charities signals the vast difference in resources that different charities are able to allocate to their alternative giving device and the scale on which it is operated.

In that charity interviewees were in either corporate or elite positions, there is an apparent power imbalance between that and my position as student interviewer; their privileged knowledge of alternative giving in their charity and my desire to find out about this placed them in an overt position of power over me. However, the notion of power must be appreciated as produced in the details of interaction in the interview situations themselves; as Elwood and Martin (2000: 650) identify, 'the interview site provides a material space for the enactment and constitution of power relations'. Therefore, I will reflect on these material enactments and constitutions of power in the carrying out of the interviews.

One way in which power was enacted was in the location of the interviews. Where carried out in person, the interview location was wholly chosen by the charity representative, in part due to the widespread geographical location of the charities and my lack of local knowledge about these places, but also because of the generosity of the interviewee in giving me the time to speak to them in the first place. This meant that I was reliant on the interviewee for framing the relation of power from the start. Locations varied, with interviews being carried out in the interviewees' offices, general meeting rooms of charities, charities' refreshment areas, and nearby cafés. Those taking place within the charity building, particularly in an office, meant that the interviewee was situated in their familiar, professional environment in which I was the stranger, the guest. As such, I certainly felt a greater need to demonstrate an ease of interaction suitable for the professional charity environment, for example with simple gestures such as handshakes, and by dressing appropriately, but also by demonstrating a knowledge of charity operations

so as to show that I was not ‘out of place’ in the charity setting, and so display my own professional credentials to balance the power (Elwood and Martin, 2000).

Some of these aspects simply required me to have thoroughly researched the charity, largely through their website and by reading their annual reports. Extracts from my interview diary reveal that in many of the interview situations I felt like I had to really impress the interviewee, either with the questions being asked by my research to show that their time was worthwhile in being used for talking to me, or by demonstrating that I had a genuine interest in, and care for, the work of their charity, and that they could trust me not to misuse what they said and risk jeopardising their charity income:

“Phew, relieved that one’s over. Think [they] asked me more questions than I asked them, and not especially easy ones either. Clearly someone with a huge knowledge and passion about charity fundraising and organisations, but really felt like they were keen to make sure I wasn’t some kind of ill-informed, time-wasting ‘outsider’”

(Research Diary Extract)

“At the start I couldn’t decide if he was being guarded/didn’t want to give too much away, or was just off-hand and didn’t think much of my questions! Seemed to engage a bit more with my questions later in the interview and after the interview genuinely seemed interested in the end product of my research, so think I might have got him to come round, whatever the problem was at the beginning.”

(Research Diary Extract)

Others aspects of professional display, such as dressing appropriately, were less easy to predict. As two diary extracts demonstrate, even the premises and dress type of two large, London-based charities varied hugely from each other:

“Definitely felt like I was in a creative but corporate, ‘monied’ part of London with solicitors’ offices, media headquarters and design studios all in the same road. It’s got that feel to it with a semi-pedestrianised street, old buildings made contemporary with lots of glass and brushed steel, and purposeful, cool people around, wearing designer clothes and sitting in cafes with their laptops or having meetings. When I’d managed to find the charity I was surprised at how much the reception area echoed this, it was clearly intentionally designed,

with minimalist furniture, suited receptionists (Very glad I wasn't just wearing my usual student attire!), security access, and a waiting area with 2 leather sofas and flat-screens showing BBC news24. 'Kate' came and met me here – really friendly and welcoming but a bit intimidating in the surroundings.”

(Research Diary Extract)

“I arrived at the charity a little early – a very scruffy 1960's-ish concrete tower block from the outside and not much smarter inside – v. different to Aid International's office! A relaxed feel to the offices though, with most people wearing jeans and trainers – even the receptionist. This helped me feel much more at ease, if perhaps a bit overdressed. I was happy with this though because it made me feel more 'researcher' than 'student'”

(Research Diary Extract)³⁹

It was impossible to tell what the charity would be like in terms of dress-code until I got there though, and so for that reason in part, and because it made a real difference to my confidence in carrying out the interviews, I wore smart, office-appropriate, clothes. My own position was reinforced as being valid and deserving of engagement, both to those I was interviewing and to myself.

There were practical issues which I was not able to address too, due to the choice of location being the interviewee's. This particularly emerged in relation to noise, which was principally an issue because it risked jeopardising the audio recording. Some interviewees seemed aware of this issue and sought to rectify the problem by moving the interview to a different, quieter, location. However, there were several times this was not the case. One of the café locations particularly had a large amount of background clatter, but I felt that it was better to cope with this than be awkward about it and risk losing a fragile sense of relationship that I had built with this interviewee in the short space of time of walking from the charity headoffice to the café.

³⁹ This charity has since relocated within London, which might have brought a different sense of the charity with it.

Locating the interviews in the known territory of the interviewee was not all negative though; it meant that the interviewee was in surroundings they were familiar with and therefore more at ease in and, furthermore, gave me the opportunity to better understand the charity itself. Many of these interviews entailed me travelling to the location of the charity head office and this, especially given the huge contrast between charity headoffices I visited, led me to appreciate more about the culture and scale of the charity and the impact of this on their functioning and priorities (see Elwood and Martin, 2000). For example, the difference between the vast, stylish corporate offices of, for example, Oxfam and 'Aid International' in Oxford and London respectively, compared with the somewhat scruffier and cramped offices of Feed the Children and Concern Universal, the former based on an industrial estate with un-signposted stairs leading to an open plan office, and the latter being hidden down an alleyway, above a Quaker meeting house:

“Allowed myself twenty-minutes to find the charity which I thought would be plenty of time but turned out to be necessary due to the fact it was hidden down an alleyway, above the Quaker meeting house. This was not, as Debbie later explained, because they were connected to them, but rather because they let them rent the premises at low cost. A not very glamorous staircase led up to some equally not-glamorous offices”

(Research Diary Extract)

These vast differences in accommodation helped me appreciate, for example, the disparity between large and small charities in the very materiality of their existence and in the significance placed by the charity on the presentation of their headoffice. For many of the larger charities a great deal more had clearly been invested in the bricks and mortar of the head office, in the sophistication of their office design and, in the case of 'Aid International', in the actual location of the head office, compared with the smaller charities who simply aimed to survive and therefore to take the cheapest accommodation available.

Several of the interviews took place over the phone and for these I certainly missed out on this institutional insight and context.

As Dawson (1998: 1467) identifies, public trust for charities is key to obtaining donations, so any research that reflects on organisations in a less than positive light has the potential to damage their income due to decreased public trust. This was one of the key ethical concerns of my research interviews with charities. In line with my discussion of interview ethics above, I gained consent for interview from all charities interviewees, with all but one permitting full use of their name and charity affiliation, and all but one permitting audio recording. Other than my ongoing awareness of my use of the material produced in these interviews though, the main way in which this potentially problematic situation was controlled was by the interviewees themselves. Given the relatively senior position of those interviewed and discussion by some in the interview of what they would not be able to tell me about with much specificity (notably detailed sales figures), I was confident of their ability to distinguish material that would be suitable for public knowledge, and therefore that they would tell me, and that which would not be suitable and so would not tell me. That said, I have aimed to be particularly sensitive in the chapters where I critique some of the activities of charities, taking care to frame this within the context of societal expectations and to highlight the desire I felt was communicated to me by the vast majority of these interviewees to positively benefit those with whom the charity worked as this is especially important to recognise when considering the intentions of their actions.

3.2.2 Interviews and Focus Groups: Giving and Receiving Alternative Gifts

The second group of people with whom I carried out research were those who were either involved in giving or receiving alternative gifts, or those who considered that they could

have been in this group, i.e. a general lay audience. For this purpose I used three different methods: an email containing questions about giving and receiving alternative gifts; spoken interviews with givers and receivers of alternative gifts; and focus groups with both givers and receivers of alternative gifts, and those who were willing to discuss the idea of it but had not given or received one. I have grouped givers and receivers together in my discussion of research with them, partly because the issues associated with these interviews are the same, but also because in quite a few cases these people were actually the same (they had both given an alternative gift and received one) (see Appendix 5).

a) Interviews with Givers and Receivers of Alternative Gifts

My initial research into the giving and receiving of alternative gifts was carried out by email. I considered that email might be an easy way to access a relatively broad group of people and, especially given the strong presence of alternative giving on the internet (see Chapter 5), considered this to be a suitable medium. Primarily, this research was done as a pilot scheme, with the purpose of seeing what kinds of answers I might get to different questions and about the suitability of email for asking them. However, although this provided me with some useful responses which I have used in this thesis, it seemed unable to generate any depth of information about how it related to the broader life of the giver or receiver. The answers given were generally short, concise and ‘composed’; they were a bit too tidy. Therefore I carried out further, spoken, interviews.

Ideally I would have recruited a certain number of alternative gift givers and receivers for the spoken interviews through the charities themselves. However, I knew from the outset of the research that the data protection law would deny me access to the contact details of these people and it became clear early on that requesting charities to work on my behalf in

recruiting them was not going to be possible. For this reason I instead used the tactic of ‘snowballing’ to recruit interviewees, spreading details of my research project and request for participants through various different social networks I had initial contacts with (Valentine, 1997). This included religious, professional, educational and sports and arts networks, some local to the South West of England, others national and supported by internet social networking. The effect of this was that interviewees self-selected their participation, but also, given the distances involved, meant the majority of interviews were carried out by telephone (see Appendix 5). Additionally, there was one charity employee who was not involved in producing alternative gifts who also talked to me about her involvement in giving and receiving, and one interviewee who participated due to her use of charity gifts as prizes in the school in which she taught.

Unlike a more ethnographic study where there may be a discreet number of people to be interviewed, such as the with Skelton’s research of a village in Montserrat (Skelton, 2001), there were thousands of potential interviewees for this element of the research methodology. Guides to interviewing methods (for example: Barbour and Schostak, 2005; Fielding and Thomas, 2001; Fontana and Frey, 2003) seem reticent to guide as to the appropriate number of interviews and so, in line with the guidance from Valentine (1997) that the sample of interviewees is intended to be illustrative rather than representative, I continued until these interviews appeared to provide no new details about the giving and receiving of alternative gifts.

In the end the number of interviewees here totalled 28 people. Of these, 17 of these participated in spoken, audio recorded interviews, with two of these involving more than one of the interviewees present – one a husband and wife, and the other a small family

group – at the choice of the interviewees. The spoken, audio recorded interviews were much longer than the email interviews and contained far richer material, and so were used in the written analysis to a much greater extent.

b) Focus Groups

In addition to interviews with those involved in giving and receiving alternative gifts, I carried out focus groups with the aim of understanding more about the general impression alternative giving made on its potential audience and the perceptions of different alternative gift catalogues and fulfilment materials. As such, these groups consisted of individuals who may not have even encountered alternative giving prior to the group discussion, but who were comfortable, in theory at least, with the idea of engaging with charities in some capacity (whether this was through donating in some way or through volunteering).

Although guidelines on carrying out focus groups have been written, there is a flexibility about what these entail, depending on the purpose of the research (Goss, 1996). For example, some consider a ‘group’ to consist of between three and ten people (Kitchin and Tate, 2000), and others six to twelve people (Pratt, 2000). Of greater importance for carrying out research with focus groups though is to plan the focus group around the aims of the research and to conduct them in a manner which facilitates the most involvement from participants around the discussion themes or questions (Cloke *et al.*, 2004). Although Morgan (1997) recommends carrying out between three and five groups per project, the extensive and rich discussion (all groups lasted over 90 minutes), parallels of discussion between the groups, and the better suitability of interviews for probing issues in more depth (Cloke *et al.*, 2004), led me to carry out three focus groups. Two of these groups contained five participants, and the other four. The initial purpose of carrying out a focus group with

one of these was because all the participants had been involved with setting up a local Christmas shop selling fairtrade items and alternative gifts which they had created by liaising with local charities. In the end I did not use much of this shop-specific material in the thesis, but around this was a general discussion of the participant's personal involvement with alternative giving and so I have drawn on this.

Given that one of the purposes of implementing the focus group method in this research was to find out more about the feelings of the participants toward the actual marketing and fulfilment materials, the place from which interaction with alternative giving and receiving begins, I started each group session by passing around a variety of alternative giving marketing and fulfilment materials to be looked at. As with Burgess's (1996) study of fear in the forest, this provided a common focus around which the group discussion could take place and, furthermore, introduced those who weren't familiar with alternative giving to it. Not only did these groups enable the materials to be focused on but they also enabled opinions, and justifications for these, to be discussed between participants (Barnett *et al.*,2008). These processes of opinion-formation and justification are part of the everyday practices of these people in their negotiation of particular ethical norms and useful to examine in light of the research questions around how individuals interact with alternative giving.

One of the major practical difficulties in a focus group, more than in an interview, is ensuring that the discussion stays on topic, and getting 'the balance between encouraging spontaneity and adhering to the research agenda' (Barbour and Schostak, 2005: 44). This was, in part, made more difficult by choosing groups of individuals who knew each other prior to the research because this meant they had a shared history, other than alternative

giving, around which discussion could meander. My choice of participants known to each other was with the hope of encouraging a less stilted discussion, and this certainly seemed to work. As with the interviewing process, informed consent was gained from all participants through provision of a form to them which outlined their participation and emphasising that they did not have to share anything they were not comfortable with, a factor that is particularly significant for the focus group setting with its multiple participants where, although anonymity in research could be guaranteed, the sharing of discussion outside the group by other participants was requested but could not be guaranteed. At the end participants of both groups indicated that they had enjoyed the discussion, something they would not normally have the opportunity of, and also enjoyed finding out about alternative giving where they were not previously aware of it, or finding out about different charities involved where they were aware of it. For this reason, I feel satisfied that the outcome of these groups did not only contribute to the findings of this research, but also gave something back to these participants – highlighted by Cloke *et al.* (2004) to be important in such research endeavours.

3.3 Textual and Visual Analysis

The second component of my methodology involving the charities themselves was analysing textual materials which involve alternative giving. This includes both the marketing materials of paper and online alternative gift catalogues and press advertisements, and the fulfilment materials which constitute the gift representation to the recipient. These elements comprise the way in which the work of the charity is communicated to the wider UK audience and are understood here as subjective constructions of the people and places, or of ‘worlds’ (Crang, 1997), through which an audience can imagine landscapes of particular places (Scarles, 2004) and which are highly

significant in the production of meanings of these (Bartam, 2003). I have also examined documents which have enabled more to be understood about the wider societal, institutional and governmental context of alternative giving. With this in mind I set out my analysis of these texts and images not around one specific method for textual and visual interpretation for the whole of these, such as, for example, critical discourse analysis or semiology (Rose, 2007), but have sought to develop themes for analysis which emerge from several of these methods most relevant for the analysis I made of each form of material in light of the questions I was asking of them.

The themes I have developed have been based on three areas of interest in the marketing and fulfilment materials associated with alternative giving: the institutional context within which they have been created and the purpose and decision-making process that has led to the final product; the ‘apparatus’ of display (Rose, 2007), particularly in the context of the interest of this research in the framing of alternative giving as commodity; and the way in which development and the beneficiaries of development charity and its places are represented in the content of the alternative giving materials, and the wider context of this. Additionally, I have drawn on textual materials in the press about alternative giving, and also documents produced by charities, particularly annual reporting documents, and by government departments associated with charity and international development. The purpose of drawing on these materials has been to analyse the wider societal, institutional and governmental contexts within which alternative giving has arisen. With these in mind, the type of analysis I have used for researching each of these themes is summarised in figure 3.2 and are explained in more detail below.

Theme of research	Materials analysed	Analysis used or method drawn on
a) Production of alternative giving marketing and fulfilment materials	Interview transcripts with charity employees involved with the production of alternative giving marketing and fulfilment materials.	Coding of transcripts
b) Apparatus of display	Alternative giving paper and web catalogues. Ethnographic materials on shop displays.	Discourse analysis (Rose, 2007)
c) Content and context of alternative giving materials.	Text and images used to market alternative giving.	Content and discourse analysis (Rose, 2007)
d) Societal, charity and government contexts	Press articles on charity and alternative giving; charity annual reports and accounts; government policy documents, white papers and department information.	Coding of documents and textual materials.

Figure 3.2: Outline of the textual and visual analysis carried out

a) Production of Materials

In her analysis of tourist brochures, Scarles (2004: 44) argues that images and marketing literature embody complex mediating powers of the producing agents. These do not act in isolation though, but are shaped by the discourse from which they operate within and, significantly, set the parameters of interaction by the audience with the worlds they produce and the places they represent. For the purpose of understanding the mediation involved by the charities in the construction of development in alternative giving materials, I used the interviews with charity employees to ask questions about: the process of production, the sources of textual and photographic materials used in this and the roles of those involved; the decisions that were taken, who by and for what reasons; and the creative vision and intentions which guided the process and reasons for these intentions.

b) Apparatus of Display

Rose discusses the analysis of the apparatus of display in terms of discourse analysis (Rose, 2007) and presents the example of an analysis of the display of objects in a museum. The themes that Rose (2007) uses that are relevant for my research are: an analysis of the technologies of display and of the tactile technologies used; a smaller scale analysis of the kinds of images that were used (photos, drawings etc), and of the type of text used (description of items, personal narratives, personal recommendations etc); of how images are composed (individual items, presented as part of a scene etc); and of the layout of the catalogues and how the items relate to each other within this. In one sense these apparatus of display in alternative giving are relatively finite, in that there were a limited number of charities that I identified as being relevant to this research. However, these spaces are not entirely easy to grasp, consisting of static spaces such as paper catalogues, fluid spaces such as websites and shop displays, and fleeting spaces such as market-style stalls. Although I discussed some of the fleeting spaces with charity interviewees, I was not able to go to any of these in person because it was not possible to find out about any beforehand. Therefore, my focus of analysis was on the static and fluid display spaces of alternative giving.

The static spaces presented less of a problem because paper catalogues could be sent off for, printed from the web (some charities simply put up a PDF of their catalogue on the internet) or collected from charity shops. The fluid spaces, however, required some monitoring. This was particularly the case with websites, and involved taking screenshots of the pages at different times and writing an ethnography-style diary of using the website, exploring it with different questions about how the material was displayed, how it was divided up into different sections and the forms of interaction that were encouraged and enabled. Over the course of the research the only shop that I identified as displaying

alternative gifts was Oxfam. For the purpose of analysis I went into several shops and took photos of the displays used to produce material for analysis.

c) Analysis of Content and Context

In contrast to the content analysis developed by Lutz and Collins (1993) in their extensive research into the visualisation of the non-Western world in National Geographic Magazine, the content analysis of alternative giving materials that I carried out was to note features that were present, rather than to count the number of times that they appeared (also see Stevens 2005). Given the similarity of interest between my research and that of Lutz and Collins (1993) in themes of power and the representation of the 'non-West' by the West, I drew on their list of codings, outlined in Rose (2007), to develop categories for my own analysis. The codings I therefore used were: facial expressions; gender of adults depicted; age of those depicted; activity of the main characters; surroundings in image; urban/rural setting; wealth indicators; dress style and colours; and technology type present. I then drew on work on other forms of spectacularisation of the 'South' which are present in the 'North', such as fairtrade marketing (for example, Goodman, 2004; Varul, 2008), to contextualise my reading of the representations of alternative giving.

d) Societal, Charity and Governmental Contexts

The purpose of this area of textual analysis was to consider the wider contexts of alternative giving and therefore to better understand the reasons for its emergence and the form it has taken. Despite their seemingly eclectic grouping together here, all are what Macdonald (2001) classes as documents; they are documents of the history of alternative giving, and charity fundraising more broadly, during the time of its introduction and growth. For this reason I searched national newspaper archives, specialist professional charity news

publication archives – specifically the third sector and professional fundraiser publications, the annual reports and other publications from charities, and government policy documents and white papers for mention of alternative giving or any of the various terms it has been given, and for discussion of policy relating to changes in the fundraising landscape. The main difference between documents has been between the opinion based articles published in the media which have often taken either a pro or anti alternative giving stance, and the documents produced by charities and government which are intended to be impartial and simply report the ‘facts’. The impartiality of the latter is certainly questionable though because, although intended to present a realistic picture of the charity or government policy, both can still function as forms of self-promotion and propaganda, and so should also be read in this light. Macdonald (2001) warns researchers of the problems of such bias on opinion that may be hard to detect, but for the purpose of my research this is not such a problem because I am treating the documents as part of the discourse of fundraising during the period, and therefore as still significant in signalling the reasons for the development of alternative giving.

3.4 Critical Reflection on Research Methodology

Throughout this chapter, the sense in which the methodology has developed through my negotiation with and in the field of research is apparent. This is evident in various of the elements discussed: in the decision I made to focus solely on the ‘Northern’ spaces of alternative giving; in the carefully considered approach to charities initially appearing hostile to research participation; in the different methods I used to research public perceptions and practices of alternative giving and receiving; and in my adaptation of discourse and content analysis for fluid spaces of alternative gift display. In this final section of this chapter I am going to offer a reflection on several aspects of the

methodology carried out, to further highlight the importance of interaction with the field to the methodological choice for the production of material for analysis, and to consider how the research could be developed further.

Because my research into alternative giving emerged out of an interest in the landscape of charity in the UK, I narrowed the research field to alternative giving as a distinct form of fundraising. Therefore, the questions I asked were about the production and practice of alternative giving as a coherent fundraising device rather than aiming to chart the emergence of production of it within one charity. This meant that the research I carried out about the production of alternative giving in charities was purely interview-based. However, part way through these interviews I wrote a diary extract reflecting on this:

“There are certain aspects of alternative giving that I am finding quite difficult to ‘get at’. At the moment I feel that so much of what people are telling me just provides a very small and abstract window onto their work; there is probably so much that is tied into what they do that is either so mundane or so unthought that they don’t tell me about it. For example, it is really hard to tell how involved/influenced by umbrella bodies they are.”

(Research Diary Extract)

In reflecting on my interviews I realised that there was so much more to the production of alternative giving in a charity that was to be ‘known’, but that this was unlikely to emerge without an extended ethnographic spell within one charity, observing and working with those involved in producing the alternative gift catalogue. There were two key reasons why I did not take this idea further though. Firstly, this would have changed the emphasis of the research from the interface between charity and donating individuals to the interface between charities and other organisations. Secondly, this kind of access would have required extensive negotiation with charities to persuade of the value and purpose of such research and ultimately might not have been possible. Interviews with charity

representatives provided ample material for analysis in this thesis, but future research would be able to probe further into fundraising production with ethnographic research.

Interviewing was also the method that I used for researching practices of alternative giving and receiving. Again, there were aspects of these practices that I have attempted to understand as significant but which are difficult to be spoken about. These are the more ineffable elements of alternative giving, the notion charity as being a response to a face and the significance of affective registers to this. Further, there is an extent to which criticism of alternative gifts are difficult by those who have received them. I anticipate that this is the case because there is a sense in which there is a cultural obligation to receive the gift well which, in alternative giving, is combined with a discourse of charity giving as good. This setting makes it very difficult for recipients to express dissatisfaction of receiving an alternative gift and is, therefore, an impediment on researching practices of receiving. An ethnographic or diary-based approach might address some of these issues; however this is not a viable option for alternative giving due to the fleeting and secretive nature of gift-giving – as a researcher I would not have known when or where these gifts would be given, or who would be receiving them. For these reasons I continued with interviewing, but addressed the issue by both asking questions of the interviewees in a way which might prompt them to speak about some of these aspects of alternative gift practice, and by analysing interview transcripts with an awareness of these.

Chapter 4

The Place of Alternative Giving within Charities

4.1 Introduction: Genealogy

‘Genealogy refers not only to a discontinuity which destroys the illusion of a linear development, but also to a deeper continuity which is the product of a sequence of transformations: ‘the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us’.

(Visker, 1995: 16)

In this chapter I am going to present some of the events and shifts that have taken place over time from the beginnings of alternative giving in the UK to Christmas 2009. Although I present this primarily in chronological order I do not wish for this to be seen as an inevitable progression from one event to another. Instead, I approach the development of alternative giving specifically with the perspective of it as genealogy, which implies an element of ‘accident’ about what took place – that at any of the moments I discuss, the outcomes could have been different to those which did take place.

Genealogy was a term used by Foucault, taken from Nietzsche (Foucault, 1984), to mean that rather than there being an overarching, transcendental rationality guiding the way in which a truth or belief has developed, there is instead only a succession of contingent events and happenings which result in the object (or subject). What follows here can only be a partial genealogy of alternative giving, firstly because I will start at the point at which it came to the UK in an already recognisable form, and secondly because there are many parts already shrouded in myth and no longer known, not to mention the minute,

unrecounted, unrecalled, unremembered or simply unknown aspects which have contributed to the shape of alternative giving today.

Having outlined the beginnings of alternative giving, I will then go on to consider the differences in how alternative giving has been integrated by particular charities into their organisation. I discuss this in specific relation to the three key types of funding model that have emerged in the alternative giving mechanism, and which impact upon the sense of connection made between donor and beneficiary.

4.2 Beginnings...Transfer of Knowledge

‘World Vision ‘must have gifts’ began in the UK in October 2000.⁴⁰ We were instrumental in getting the idea going in the UK.’

(World Vision UK)⁴¹

‘I haven’t been here the whole time, what I do know is the following. We started our gift catalogue in October 2000.’

(David Thompson, World Vision UK)

‘2001 was our first catalogue. There is...um...a little bit of confusion within the industry as to who was first, was it us or World Vision...who introduced the first gifts catalogue to the UK market um...I’ve only worked in the industry for a couple of years and, as I understand it, they both launched in 2001 and it’s an idea that wasn’t within the UK market before.’

(Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow)

‘2001: [...] Send a Cow launches UK's first livestock-based gift catalogue for Christmas.’

(Send a Cow Uganda)⁴²

The last three months of the year 2000 are cited here as being a significant moment for alternative giving in that this is when it first appeared in a UK context. There is some

⁴⁰ Originally called ‘alternative gifts’, ‘Must have gifts’ is the current name of World Vision UK’s alternative gift catalogue scheme. See: <http://www.musthavegifts.org/Worldvision>

⁴¹ <http://www.musthavegifts.org/Worldvision/Info/About.aspx>

⁴² <http://www.sendacowuganda.org/history.htm>

discrepancy between the two accounts above with the Send a Cow representative indicating that it was the year 2001 that both the World Vision UK and the Send a Cow alternative gifts were launched. Although the website of Send a Cow in Uganda confers the year of 2001 as the first year of an alternative gift catalogue for Send a Cow UK, the more official and public confirmation from World Vision UK, that they began theirs in 2000 perhaps makes this information most reliable. That said, World Vision UK also recognise though that Send a Cow began their alternative gift catalogue around the same time as them:

‘I can’t put my hand on my heart and claim ‘yes, we were the absolute dead-on first’ because I can’t be sure that Send a Cow here in the UK weren’t doing it before us.’

(David Thompson, World Vision UK)

In many ways though determining precisely whether alternative giving began in 2000 or 2001 is insignificant for the account that I wish to tell here. Significant rather is that these two charities can be viewed as the frontrunners to the development of alternative giving as a well recognised and prominent method of charity fundraising in the UK. World Vision UK and Send a Cow can be thought of as pioneers because they can be seen as instrumental in bringing the concept of alternative giving to the UK. Although they did not begin in the same year, each charity claims an independent source of knowledge of such catalogues, and so presents a different type of knowledge transfer.

In the accounts given by representatives of each of these two charities, the events which led to their first alternative gift scheme are portrayed as being independent of the other charity:

‘[W]e basically started because we had an idea from a major donor who came back from the US, and World Vision in the US were running a very small scale similar project um, to sort of, they were trying something out. Um, in America the...cultural idea of buying something or giving something in someone else’s name is somewhat more well established than it is here, and you actually find little plaques given by so-and-so on behalf of, you know, honour of so-and-so, and that kind of ‘giving in honour of’ was kind of a US cultural phenomenon

that existed. [A]nd a major donor...sort of came back with a similar sort of catalogue from either World Vision US or from...a similar charity in the US and said ‘...you should definitely do this in the UK, why aren’t you doing it?’ and a guy called Neil Warwick who used to work here said ‘why not?’. So...they did a very quick job of putting the first catalogue together, and people took to it, and so it just started to build - slowly over the first three years.’

(David Thompson, World Vision UK)

‘It’s an idea that...wasn’t um...within the UK market before. We have a partner organisation called Heifer who are a US based charity [...]. As you may know, Send a Cow only works in development in Africa, but Heifer work globally, and as I understand it the catalogue was an idea that they tested in the American market.’

(Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow)

Both David Thompson of World Vision UK and Richard Cottrell of Send a Cow explain how it was through a relationship that the individual charity had with a charity in the USA that the idea of an alternative gift scheme came to being for that charity. The nature of these partnerships is apparently different though. World Vision UK shares its heritage with World Vision US, owing its existence to this partnership organisation. World Vision US began in the 1950s and it was only in 1982 that World Vision UK was begun by this organisation. Although predominantly independent of each other, World Vision International ensures there is a common mission and are common values between each national office.⁴³ Alternatively, Send a Cow have a professional rather than familial partnership with Heifer International, the charity cited as being responsible for their initial foray into alternative giving. The relationship between these two charities is predominantly due to the partnership they have in the ‘field’, through working together on projects, such as their joint role in the start of two projects in Zambia and Tanzania (Send a Cow, 2005: 5). It is possible for knowledge transfer to take place internationally through different and not necessarily official passages. As the quote from David Thompson (above) implies, it

⁴³ For a description of this, see:
<http://www.wvi.org/wvi/wviweb.nsf/maindocs/39F905AE21E265C1882573750075074B?opendocument>

was a conversation with one person, a major donor of World Vision UK, which led to the start of alternative giving in that charity. Even though a charity must legally be an entity in its own right in order to operate in the UK, their activities are certainly influenced more informally by what is taking place in charities elsewhere in the world.

The utilisation of an idea from one charity by another is well known in both the commercial and public sectors as knowledge transfer (Ozga and Jones, 2006). One of the most prominent themes associated with knowledge transfer in the literature about practices of it is the high level of trust that is required between the partners involved (Choi and Kim, 2008; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). Literature on knowledge transfer such as this cannot be applied directly to alternative giving because it is about the business rather than charity sector and so in theory there is not the same degree of competition between charities as there are businesses with the emphasis in charity on a public good. The knowledge transfer described by the charities above though still took place between charities which were already related in one form or another. However, the relatively informal nature of this knowledge transfer implies that trust was not of huge import to the transfer taking place; rather, it seems that perhaps the relationship simply made the transfer possible – without it there would have been far less communication taking place and so less opportunity for this to occur. In this sense then it seems possible to deduce that there are advantages of innovation information sharing with charities collaborating internationally which has the potential to put them ‘forward’ of other charities within their own country, here with fundraising.

It appears that there were three years between these beginnings of alternative giving and the mass promotion, media coverage and expansion of alternative giving with the uptake of the

idea by other charities. In this time, as it is quoted above, alternative giving in World Vision UK grew slowly but steadily, and appears to have been the case for Send a Cow where it is explained that, although there had been growth in the first few years, 2004-05 was a watershed for growth and it really expanded (Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow).⁴⁴ This indicates that alternative giving was still relatively unknown from 2000-2003/4, but that knowledge of it was slowly spreading through the supporters of each charity and through their own efforts to inform individuals of this form of giving. Despite efforts to find out more about these years of alternative giving it has not been possible due to changes of staff, the informal and organic rather than strictly structured nature of alternative giving's beginnings, and the lack of media coverage about it. For the years of 2000 to 2003 I have only managed to locate one piece, in the Guardian, which mentions alternative giving, although not by any name, as a potential new trend. It states:

'In the US and Australia, it has become common for charities to supply Christmas gift cards showing that "A gift has been made in your name towards ... maintaining a school/providing medicine/digging a well, etc" and the concept is now beginning to appear in Britain.

Trocaire, a sister charity to Cafod in Ireland, this week launched its Global Gift Campaign, where it gives individual donors Christmas cards with a gift certificate enclosed, detailing where the money has been spent, to post on to friends and relatives.'

(Guardian, 2000)

Intriguingly this article does not mention World Vision UK, only an Irish charity (and therefore not included in this study), but given that David Thompson mentioned that the first catalogue was a 'quick job' (David Thompson, World Vision UK), it perhaps had not been unveiled to the public at this stage, or if it had, had not been noticed by this particular author.

⁴⁴ With annual reports from this time being unavailable it means that this more anecdotal evidence is the only source of such information.

The quote cited above from the Guardian is from a broader article which is pertinent to a second dimension which seems to have been important for the success, albeit slow, of alternative giving in the UK at the beginning, and later. This is for a relatively mainstream desire for more consideration in consumption practices, more ethical forms of consumption, outlining possible ‘alternatives...to the annual spending binge in the high streets and shopping malls of Britain’ (Guardian, 2000). The negative connotations of the word ‘binge’ are used to highlight a view that the quantity and type of consumption at Christmas is an unnecessary excess and over-indulgence. Alternative giving is just one idea among many alternatives to the Christmas binge which are suggested in the article, with others including ‘natural’ gifts such as trees or ‘eco-friendly’ cosmetics and organic foods. This discourse is also to be found in other news articles, one of which asks: ‘Tired of giving your father yet another box of golf balls? Convinced your partner doesn't really need a fifth bottle of perfume?’ (Guardian, 2001), and then suggests buying someone a gift experience such as ballooning trip. Although this is somewhat different to the ethical emphasis in the Guardian (2000) article on purchasing items which are more caring in the way they are produced and impact upon the wider world, the later article (Guardian, 2001) is arguably writing within this discourse in saying that a material gift might be easy to buy but doesn’t necessarily produce the most satisfaction and happiness and that this can be better found in lived experiences rather than material objects.

Parallel to this everyday discourse of considering ethics in consumption purchases is a more subversive, anti-capitalist movement. One example of this is ‘Buy Nothing Day’, organised by a campaigning group to take place two weeks prior to Christmas 2002 which aimed to questions the ethics of shopping. Again, this draws on the idea that the mass

purchase of commodities for the purpose of Christmas is a meaningless and wasteful activity:

‘It is a scene familiar every November and December. Shop assistants stand bored, dulled by a muzak loop of Christmas carols as parents queue to hand over credit cards for vitally important Bay Blades, Grand Theft Auto Vice City and the latest Harry Potter paraphernalia.

December 25 is closing in, and retailers and advertisers are in fifth gear pushing a guilt-led culture where only conspicuous consumption can discharge a desire to show affection to family, friends and loved ones.

But there is a grass-roots fightback against the spending frenzy that has hijacked Christmas. A group of shopping-mall subversives who first rebelled against vapid consumerism 11 years ago in Vancouver, Canada, are spreading their message around the globe.’

(Guardian, 2002)

The sense of these consumer activities as ‘dulling’ portrays the situation as dystopian and drone-like, with no real meaningful basis, but simply as a situation created by marketers through which individuals have been brain-washed to consume. As Littler (2005) argues, anti-consumerism discourse has shifted from being situated only in grassroots movements, such as this ‘Buy Nothing Day’ campaign group, to becoming a visible and popular one due to bestselling literature such as Klein’s (2000) *No Logo*.

That all three of these articles associate unthinking materialist consumption with the Christmas season is significant (Mansvelt, 2008). As Miller (1993) writes, there is a colloquial account of this which claims that the heart of Christmas has been lost ‘in the relentless exploitation of its possibilities by a combination of individual materialism and capitalist profit taking’ and is part of the broader academic critique of consumption outlined in Chapter 2 (for example, Goodland, 1998; Wachtel, 1998). Evidence of the popular shift to more ethical modes of consumption are also charted in such literatures (for example, Barnett *et al.*, 2005a on fairtrade and Clarke *et al.*, 2008). Although there are two strands

of debate here – anti-materialism and ethical consumption – both function to the benefit of alternative giving and provide a societal context and consumption discourse within which it can gain symbolic purchase over and above it being a charitable donation. These anti-materialism and ethical consumption discourses enable alternative giving to be meaningful as a combatant against materialistic and unethical consumption also. It is within this discourse that the emergence of alternative giving is situated by the national press, and which I argue also played an important role in growth of alternative giving, in the presentation of it as an alternative to the less-than-moral consumption practices.

Between the beginnings of alternative giving within World Vision UK and Send a Cow, and an exponential increase in the number of charities with alternative gift catalogues, alongside mass media promotion which I move on to discuss following this, there was another development which is significant in the development of alternative giving in the UK. This was the Good Gifts catalogue, created by the Charities Advisory Trust. I discuss this in part because the way this differs from other alternative gift catalogues should be noted, and in part because the history that the Charities Advisory Trust presents of the role this catalogue played in the general development of alternative giving is intriguing. The Charities Advisory Trust describes its purpose as being ‘to provide impartial information on all aspects of trading and income generation for charities’,⁴⁵ and so rather than simply raising money to fund its own projects, it predominantly raises money as a third party for other charities. This is well illustrated through the way in which it’s Good Gifts catalogue is set up, with it offering a range of gifts for many different charities. For example, the money from the gift of a ‘Super Goat’ goes to the charity ‘Goats for Peace’ in 2009

⁴⁵ <http://www.charitiesadvisorytrust.org.uk/about/>

(although previously this went to charity Africa Now and, before this, to Oxfam), and the money from the sale of the gift of a music therapy session goes to the charity Jessie's Fund.

What is interesting is the way in which Good Gifts is described by the Charities Advisory Trust:

‘In autumn 2003, we launched the Good Gifts Catalogue, a radical concept in giving, employing charitable donations to buy imaginative gifts like 'goats for peace' and acres of threatened rain forest. The soaring success of the idea has not only generated many millions of pounds, but also a slew of imitations.’

(Charities Advisory Trust)⁴⁶

Surprising in this description is the notion that this was, in fact, the first charity alternative gift catalogue (in the UK and elsewhere), and the sense that it appeared from within the charity rather than being a transfer of knowledge. Unlike World Vision UK and Send a Cow who seem readily willing to present it as an idea from elsewhere, the Charities Advisory Trust keenly promote the idea as their own, and as one that has been the sole source of many other ‘imitations’. While not wishing to disagree that they have had a role in the development of alternative giving – that Oxfam sold a goat through Good Gifts in 2003, one year before Oxfam began their own catalogue (Paul Vanags, Oxfam) might indicate some influence – it seems a somewhat parochial view to self-identify as being *the* initiating source and innovator of it.

An explanation from Oxfam as to their reason for beginning their own catalogue particularly highlights the extent to which this opinion from the Charities Advisory Trust is somewhat overblown:

‘The catalyst we um, err, our fundraising director at the time had come from World Vision, who had pioneered the use of these schemes, either in the US and/or the UK – I don't know the exact detail um, because I wasn't in the sector

⁴⁶ <http://www.charitiesadvisorytrust.org.uk/about/>

at the time. But, it was effectively transported over with someone who'd had previous experience of them basically.'

(Paul Vanags, Oxfam)

Although Oxfam were involved with Good Gifts briefly, the real impetus for them to begin their own catalogue actually came from a new member of management staff, who carried with them the knowledge and skills necessary for producing an alternative gift catalogue. This seems to be indicative of the way in which alternative giving has developed in the UK, that rather than one single, blanket cause, there were many, varied and perhaps independent events that were taking place which led to the rise of alternative giving, and independent and varied reasons as to why alternative giving began in different charities.

The understanding that I am advocating here, of alternative giving being developed in a variety of places and through a variety of beginnings, is well illustrated in a point made by Daniel Charles of Christian Aid during the interview I undertook with him. In this he recognises the desire by different catalogues to be recognised as the 'first' in his consideration of the influences on the start of alternative giving in Christian Aid and the way in which it evolved:

'It actually started as something called 'Just Gifts' [in 2004] and it was rolled out as a test and I kind of had just joined Christian Aid when that was being done, so it wasn't quite when they first started virtual Giving that I was there, but my understanding is...they'd tested some similar things before and it was only in hind sight that we'd realised they were so similar. So that's quite funny in...that it's like there's no such thing as a new idea...I'm sure if you look in every charity they've probably done it in some form or another...or *almost* done it...We did a Christmas mailing and it was wrapped up gifts, so it was like a water well wrapped up that you could be given this, so there was that. And there was something that one of our area offices did that was like a little certificate for giving to Christian Aid at Christmas...they are things that remind me of it. So I think it's from that test in one of the area offices that evolved into a catalogue to, um, the virtual giving, and that was...the year...when Oxfam *went* for it...I think World Vision had been doing it for sometime, and I know that when we talked to our Ireland offices they said that people like Trocaire had been doing it for some time in Ireland and, you know, they're kind of

leaders in this area, but as I say, because it's been done in different ways, in different places, I think that everyone wants to argue that they were the first to do it...I don't think we were, but as I say there were things you could see there.'

(Daniel Charles, Christian Aid)

As with other aspects I have discussed, this again is a subjective view and history given with the distance of time – the earliest mention to be found in Christian Aid's annual reports are of 'Just Gifts' in 2004 (Christian Aid, 2005: 16) – but nonetheless indicates the degree to which alternative giving has no one pure pedigree, and that there were a variety of contributing factors which made it a thinkable and doable fundraising concept. Aspects of alternative giving, such as formatting a selection of gifts into a catalogue, perhaps came later and helped enable alternative giving become such a distinctive concept, but the packaging of charity giving into a unit of a well or into a certificate that could then be given as a gift might be seen as less polished solutions than alternative giving, trialled by Christian Aid to address a fundraising opportunity. As outlined above, one reason for this opportunity being presented was due to the dissatisfaction with Christmas consumerism and giving.

The consolidation of alternative giving as a concept appears to have taken place in a relatively short space of time. For example, David Thompson (World Vision UK) described their alternative giving sales growth trajectory as really taking off in 2004, in coincidence with the timing of the launch of Oxfam's own catalogue Oxfam Unwrapped, and the launch of those of several other charities, such as Christian Aid's first gift catalogue, Just Gifts. Also at this time there was an explosion of coverage by the national media, predominantly the national press, as it fairly quickly seemed to have become a form of fundraising that could be discussed as a named concept. For example, the launch of

Oxfam's alternative gift catalogue was referred to in national newspaper, the Observer (2004). The shift that took place in this year, and continuing into 2005, is well recognised by charities, such as Send a Cow, involved in the alternative giving market:

'From our point of view um...2004, 2005 was a bit of a watershed within the catalogue... um...the first couple of years had shown fantastic growth, and...other charities had noted this...and wanted a piece of the catalogue pie...Oxfam Unwrapped launched, and a couple of other catalogues launched as well and...the first year was just phenomenal, because the marketing spend that Oxfam can put...behind this kind of thing is just amazing, err, and I suppose we rode on their coat tails a little bit. Whilst everyone went 'oh, gosh, they're going to take away all of our donors and people are going to see Oxfam, recognised brand, everyone knows it' um...the first couple of years journalists started writing about us in the most bizarre ways, sort of, Oxfam-Send a Cow project was quite a common term – the two had become suddenly intrinsically linked and...the year that they launched we showed growth um...and not at a small scale so we were kind of like 'oh great, everything's good.'

(Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow)

It seems from this that the introduction of an alternative gift catalogue to the market by Oxfam was one event which helped precipitate a great deal of change, the influence of which here being attributed to the size and extensive public recognition of Oxfam as a charity and therefore the amount of investment they were able to make on the marketing of such a catalogue. It is notable from the amount of coverage the Oxfam catalogue received in the media that their activity is perceived to be newsworthy by the national press.

That Send a Cow attribute a significant growth in their sales to Oxfam's national media presence indicates the degree to which alternative giving is worth more to charities when it is presented to the public as a named concept by a nationally (or indeed internationally) recognised charity brand, of which Oxfam are one of the most prominent (Stride and Lee, 2007). The role of leading the alternative gift market is one that Oxfam themselves recognise, as was evident in my interview with Paul Vanags of Oxfam:

Paul: What we aspire to do, what we try and do, is lead the market in terms of our, um, delivering the concept of the virtual gift um...

Louise: So what you do is beneficial to charity generally, rather than just Oxfam as well, in terms of everything out of that market?

Paul: Yeah, I mean that's what we want to be doing um...not everyone can always follow us because they're not the same scale and they don't have the same budgets that we have.

(Paul Vanags, Oxfam)

But while here it seems that Paul Vanags discusses how they aim to lead the market in terms of the activities within the individual charities, the evidence relating to the growth of alternative giving more widely suggests that Oxfam are more instrumental than this even. The size and recognition of this one charity has led to a much greater success of alternative giving throughout the sector and so highlights the extent to which there is an element of positive symbiosis in alternative giving. Oxfam began their catalogue due to the transfer of knowledge from another charity, but equally the popularity of alternative giving would not necessarily have taken place were it not for Oxfam's strength of public relation. Despite the market-based structure of alternative giving, there is clearly an extent to which charities are involved in mutually supporting alternative giving to obtain benefits beyond their own. Even if these are not necessarily intended, they do not appear to be regretted by the charities themselves.

This theme of the greater influence of alternative giving as a publicly recognised concept and the interrelatedness of charities around this understanding of it can also be observed in the reasons given by other charities for starting their own alternative gift catalogue. Of the charities I interviewed who were later to start an alternative gift catalogue, possibly in what might be called a third wave of alternative gift catalogue launches, one reason given for their adoption was the requests made for it from their own supporters, as is identified in the

discussion by Alison Liney at ActionAid about their reasons for beginning an alternative gift catalogue:

‘The reason we started was really because it was something that our supporters were asking for, and obviously we felt that...um, because so many organisations were doing it, we kind of *had* to do it almost because otherwise people were gonna buy gifts from other organisations and we were going to lose out...I mean we wanted to do it but it was also in some ways forced upon us by supporters asking if it was something that we were thinking of doing...We have a very large but very loyal database and we have supporters who have been with us for forty, thirty, forty year’s and I think that they felt that people were thinking, you know, I’d really like to be able to do that with my charity ActionAid and, and they wanted to know if we were doing it, and we often have people phoning up asking if they can give in various ways...um... certainly Gifts in Action was kind of forced because, not forced, but...it was brought up, highlighted, because supporters were asking for it’

(Alison Liney, ActionAid)

Having been made a publically recognisable concept of fundraising in 2004 and 2005 it then became something that individuals wanted to be able to do, with some of those being individuals who already support a particular charity in other ways and so wanting to do this with ‘their charity’. Interestingly though this indicates the limit to which charities seem happy to mutually support each other in this kind of fundraising; even though it seems that these individuals requesting alternative giving at ActionAid would have purchased an alternative gift anyway, ActionAid did not want to loose out on income to a different charity. It seems that charities still view each other as competition in respect of not wanting to loose out on alternative gift sales to another charity. It would appear alternative giving fundraising echoes the findings of Bennett’s (2003) discussion of charities practices, which suggests that charities use competitor analysis in terms of partially operating with the competitive practices of businesses, and partially identifying their parallel good.

Similarly, Tearfund also had individuals asking about whether they had a gift catalogue too, but importantly this was not the sole reason for starting one:

‘Before [the catalogue launch] we used to get a lot of people saying ‘are you doing this’ and we didn’t...and I’m not really entirely sure why. But then we, a couple of years ago, we got a new director and he really wanted to see kind of our income grow and to be able to produce products...that would really engage with supporters and potential supporters.’

(Sharon King, Tearfund)

In addition to the desire to obtain the money being spent on alternative gifts by their own supporters, Tearfund directors hoped to attract new supporters and it was anticipated that alternative giving would be a suitable tool for producing this kind of engagement. Both of these third-wave reasons for beginning an alternative giving catalogue, the reasons of competition and a desire to engage with supporters, hint at some of the key reasons why charities have adopted alternative giving, something I’ll move on to discuss now.

4.3 Why Charities Choose to Adopt Alternative Giving

The most obvious theme to discuss in relation to the reasons for charities to adopt alternative giving is fundraising. Ultimately without funds charities are unable to operate or carryout the work that they do, but within this there is a great deal of nuance about fundraising, including with alternative giving. Differences centre on how important alternative giving is to a charity, from whom it is predominantly looking to raise money and how it operates alongside other fundraising methods in terms of the broad fundraising strategy of the charity. I will now address each of these aspects of difference in turn.

The degree to which alternative giving is immediately important for raising funds for a charity varies vastly from one charity to another. In referring to it as having immediate importance I mean that the funds coming from alternative giving are significant to the income of a charity. Charities will argue that any income, however small, is important to them, but there are disparities between charities as to what proportion of their income is

constituted by money raised from alternative giving. For example, a representative from ‘Aid International’ suggested that their income from alternative giving was a relatively minor part of their overall income compared to charities FARM-Africa and Send a Cow for whom she said that ‘their primary source of income is their virtual gifts’ (‘Kate’, ‘Aid International’).

In many instances it is relatively difficult to untangle the specific income of alternative giving for a charity, with the majority being somewhat coy about how much is raised in this way. Furthermore, no charity is legally obliged to report on the income from every specific type of fundraising or income. As is stated in the Charity Commission’s document on guidelines for reporting the activities of the charity, including fundraising, to the public for the purpose of accountability:

‘In particular, the report should contain [...]: Where significant fundraising activities are undertaken, details of the performance achieved against fundraising objectives set, commenting on any material expenditure which might enhance future income generation, and explaining the effect on the current period’s fundraising return [...and] the annual report should provide the following additional financial review information [...]: Principal funding sources.’

(Charity Commission, 2009: 22)

This means that although charities are obliged to report on their most significant forms of fundraising or funding, they are not obliged to provide an income report for alternative giving each year unless this is judged to be a significant fundraising activity or a principal source of funding. Having examined the reports and accounts for all of the charities for the years available from the charity commission it is notable that reporting on alternative giving is variable and patchy.⁴⁷ However, I will draw on the reporting that has taken place to

⁴⁷ As stated in a personal communication from the charity commission ‘It is our policy to retain such documents for a period of six years’ (Jonathan Brown, Charity Commission, Personal Communication December 2009). Therefore, because of the time at which I attempted to obtain these documents the earliest

enhance the largely vague comments made about funds raised from alternative giving by those in charities who I interviewed.

Returning to the comment made by ‘Kate’ from ‘Aid International’, the importance of alternative giving to the charity Send a Cow can certainly be seen in their annual reporting and accounts, although it appears from this that to describe it as their absolute primary source of income is something of an overstatement. From the annual trustee’s report and accounts the only year that alternative giving received an individual statement of income was for their financial year 2003-2004. In these accounts ‘catalogue income’ was reported to be ‘£668,612’ which compares to an income of £1,216,302 from ‘general donations’ (Send a Cow, 2004: 15), and which together constituted the majority of Send a Cow’s income for that financial year which totalled £2,474,997 (Send a Cow, 2004). In that general donations could be from a wide number of sources and fundraising initiatives, their alternative gift catalogue for this year could then be said to be their primary income source, but it is also probable that general donations largely refers to regular direct debits from individuals, and so in this sense it would not be counted as such. There are no such figures for alternative giving in subsequent years but there are comments in some of the annual reports, for example stating in the 2005-6 annual report and accounts that ‘[t]he main sources of income continued to be from the general public through our supporter base and our Christmas catalogue’ (Send a Cow, 2006: 8). Indeed, in an interview with Richard Cottrell from Send a Cow, the importance of the success of the catalogue, as he refers to it, is vast for the charity as a whole:

‘[W]ithin the first five year period of us having the catalogue, 2001 to 2006...that grew from half a million pounds in the first year to...five

was for the financial year 2003-2004, despite attempts to obtain reports and accounts for the years prior to this from individual charities.

million...in the fifth year so, so an *extra-ordinary* growth within the charity...not all due to the catalogue because...err...once the catalogue started delivering a certain amount of income then the charity could expand and we're now, as I say thirty-strong, now...as opposed to 2001 I think there was...six or seven people so um...quite a considerable growth which means that we can investigate other avenues, other more traditional um fundraising avenues, but also um, some sort of grants and trusts and corporates and that kind of thing, getting funding from different areas so the five million pounds in 2006 um...about half of its from the catalogue...the other half is from other areas but we wouldn't have been able to develop those other areas had the catalogue not been so successful for us.'

(Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow)

These figures, statement and comment do highlight the real significance of alternative giving to the income of Send a Cow in that for several years alternative giving was a key source of funding to the charity. The immediate funding from alternative giving has enabled the charity to grow significantly in a short space of time and, although not changing the objectives of the charity, certainly changed the scope for action and capacity of the charity as well as the shape of it in terms of the roles individuals carry out within it and the way in which it functions as can be seen through the substantial increase in the staff the charity employs.

Further evidence for changes within the charity as an organisation can be seen in its annual reports. In the report for 2004-5 it was explained that:

'2004/05 was the fourth consecutive period of rapid growth; SAC's income rose significantly to £4.6 million for the 15 months since April 2004 compared to £2.5 million for the prior 12 month period [...]

SAC's funds are used for sustainable livestock and organic farming programmes in Africa. These require longer term support, typically over three to seven years. The Trustees therefore have deemed it appropriate to set aside from current income designated reserves of £1.1m to secure continuation of programmes already started. Further expansion of SAC's work in Africa will be funded from future income

During the period emphasis was placed on maintaining and expanding SAC's capacity to implement quality livestock and organic farming programmes in Africa. Significant changes have been: [...]

- An expansion of SAC's work in Rwanda, Lesotho and Kenya, the latter in conjunction with Heifer International
- The start up of projects in two new countries, Zambia and Tanzania, in partnership with Heifer International, utilizing their management capacity within these countries
- The setting up of a new pilot project in Ethiopia and, with a view to further extension of this work, the recruitment of core staff for a SAC Ethiopia office

As the work of SAC expands, the range and nature of assistance offered is being diversified to suit the varying needs of different local communities. The principle of sustainable organic farming is central to all our work and recipient farmers are given training not only in farming practices but also in social, community and simple business skills. New fields of activity include fish farming, water harvesting and rabbit production.'

(Send a Cow, 2005: 5)

Additional income, a large amount from alternative giving, enabled a number of things to take place within Send a Cow. Firstly, it enabled them to have a much larger reserve fund than previously, a feature which strengthens and stabilises the charity, insuring against the effects of any loss of income in the future and therefore providing a cushion against the effects of this on the beneficiaries of the charity. Secondly, it meant that the charity was able to expand the work they carried out in countries in which they already were present – identified here as in Rwanda, Lesotho and Kenya. Thirdly, the charity was able to extend into countries they had not previously worked in – Zambia, Tanzania and Ethiopia. The report explains that although the principles of the charity have not changed there is significant evidence of an increased amount of programme work, with new and bigger programmes, and also new fields of farming activity.

The significance of the funds coming directly from alternative giving for a charity such as Send a Cow contrasts markedly with the immediate impact of these funds on the capacity

of other charities. This is not to say that these funds are not significant or is not an additional income stream which will enable additional charity to reach beneficiaries, but rather that to the charity as an organisation it will not especially change the size and shape of it or the way in which it functions. Organisationally there is a much smaller impact. This is also a difficult judgement to make on the impact or not of the funds from alternative giving on a charity generally through an annual report with little mention being made of the actual amounts involved in alternative giving, so for this part I will predominantly focus on interview materials. Because of the way in which it was pitched in the interview with ‘Aid International’ I will draw on this charity as one example of this second type of charity organisation-alternative giving relationship.

The comparison that the representative from ‘Aid International’ made between their charity and Send a Cow and FARM-Africa came about because of a final question I asked as to whether it would be possible to go to see the outcomes of their alternative gift catalogue with the beneficiaries of it. The reasoning of her response that she thought it would be extremely unlikely that I would be able to go was that the funds raised from alternative giving were simply not significant enough to negotiate a visit with a programme:

‘if virtual gifts were *huge* here...um, then you know country programmes would have more reason to accept visits and things, but as it is, it’s hard getting case studies out of them, let alone wanting them to be accepting visits from anyone else, um, I think you might have more luck with [...] someone who makes more money and so therefore you’d have stronger powers of negotiation with a programme perhaps.’

(‘Kate’, ‘Aid International’)

Earlier in the interview Kate described how the gifts they sold through their alternative gift catalogue were led by the programmes. Here the programmes are asked how many of which items, such as textbooks, they could use and from that the gifts are created and

money from them allocated to these programmes for these specific items. This brings more understanding to the above comment which explains that programmes simply do not get enough of their funding from alternative giving to make it possible to negotiate a visit. That the alternative gifts go to already existing programmes indicates the extent to which alternative giving at 'Aid International' is channelled through already existing routes of work rather than reshaping the very places where the charity can work as was seen in Send a Cow. The scale of 'Aid International' as a charity prior to the development of an alternative giving scheme meant that the funds from alternative giving were able to be channelled along already existing routes of expenditure. Kate goes on to say that 'alternative giving has certainly brought in income [for us]' ('Kate', 'Aid International'), and according to their annual report one year, not a great deal less than that raised by Send a Cow in a year of trading. However, because of the size of the charity already, funds from alternative giving in 'Aid International' supplement other sources of funding and are less significant to the overall shape and structure of the organisation.

ActionAid is a second charity where alternative giving, although obviously still providing money that enables work to be done by the charity, is one of multiple income streams. This was made clear by the head of the administration team responsible for alternative giving, amongst other types of fundraising, in their supporter services department:

'Yeah, we do lots of different kinds of fundraising ...there's loads of different things I could tell you about um, I mean mainly probably forty to fifty percent of our money actually comes from Child Sponsorship so that's a regular giving by direct debit of about fifteen pounds...or plus fifteen pounds, and we work in I think thirty to forty different countries [doing child sponsorship] and as I say the money there is... spent within the development area where the child lives...that's not what I work with. I work with all the other forms of fundraising...Obviously you can just give to ActionAid, you can give to ActionAid by direct debit...and that's general fund money which is spent throughout the organisation. We have a product called lotto-aid which you can do a lottery...a weekly lottery um...you can support our advocacy and

campaigning work...financially with a regular gift um...we do...overseas treks...coffee mornings...marathons and running events um...Gifts in Action...um...wedding packs which is a pack you can gift for weddings...priority projects which are various projects that have been chosen as priority needs through the organisation, where you can give one-off donations or fundraise money for that um...all kinds of...community events, because we have quite a lot of community groups across the country um...we do raffles, we do...child poverty day which is a special day to focus on, on children who live in poverty, we ask people to raise money on that particular day for that event, which is a lot of resources and materials sent out for that um... there's a lot of different fundraising products.'

(Alison Liney, ActionAid)

The extent to which alternative giving is just one form of fundraising out of a wide variety used by ActionAid is especially apparent here. Alternative giving is important to ActionAid in that it is able to raise the funds from its supporters who would like to purchase an alternative gift generally and so prevents these from doing so from another charity, but ultimately it seems that there are a range of 'options' from which supporters can choose their preference. This is interesting for it demonstrates the extent to which some charities present themselves as being a facilitator for fundraising, offering supporters materials and facilities in order to carryout a particular form of fundraising (be this sponsorship forms, trekking agencies, or resources about particular social issues). So although important for raising money, it does not appear to be viewed by the charity as more significant than their range of other fundraising options because, instead, child sponsorship is particular significant and particularly associated with ActionAid.

There is a second way in which alternative is significant to a charity financially, which is that it has the potential to initiate what I will refer to here as secondary giving. By secondary giving I mean giving that does not take place through a particular form of fundraising but through some other form of giving, but that would not have taken place were it not for that initial form of fundraising prompting it in some way. With alternative

giving then secondary giving is that which is not in the form of an alternative gift purchase but occurs because of alternative giving. Obviously this is a very important consideration when assessing the success of alternative giving because it adds value to the form of fundraising. Two key ways in which alternative giving stimulates secondary giving can be identified. Firstly, the charity alternative gift catalogue presents a new genre of engagement with individuals, with these people initially being attracted to purchase an alternative gift and then, following this, continue to support the charity through giving more money in other ways. Secondly, certain characteristics of alternative giving mean that it is, or has been, a PR outlet the media have taken notice of and talked about which, although not always positive, has raised the profile of not just alternative giving but of the charity too. In this way alternative giving brings the work of the charity to the attention of individuals who would not necessarily have heard of the charity or given any thought to charitable giving generally. Neither of these effects of alternative giving are as easy to measure as direct income, but both are essential to consider in assessing the outcomes and benefits of alternative giving for a charity.

I will start by addressing the first of these characteristics of giving relating to alternative giving. Despite several charities identifying that the reason they began an alternative gift catalogue was because of requests from existing donors for one, as discussed above, there seems to be a general feeling within charities that a proportion of people purchasing an alternative gift are not people who have given to the charity before:

‘Looking at Christmas 2006 we found...quite a large proportion of new donors coming into the charity who’d never interacted with Help the Aged before, on a donation level at least um. And of those people that came in through Cows n Things, the new donors, we know that a large proportion went on to give to other areas of our work as well as Cows n Things So it was really positive for us...to see that actually we’re recruiting these donors on the alternative gift scheme and they’re staying with us as Help the Aged donors; it’s not just a one-

off hit, if you like, of people donating[...]I think we expected our existing donors to give the best return, if you like, because they're already committed to Help the Aged, um, but we also, as you rightly said, we went out hoping that we would be able to attract new audiences in, into our donor base which, as I say, we successfully did, and it also allowed us to expand our online fundraising, um which, at the stage of Christmas 2006 we hadn't done. We hadn't made massive forays into online, um, and we launched the website and from [that] I think...three-quarters, or more, of the donors that came through the website were new to Help the Aged...so that was really positive for us...and we found that donors coming through online were roughly twenty-years younger than our more traditional donors, which you would kind of expect. I think we maybe expected it to be even younger but, but it was roughly twenty years, so...with an average age of maybe forty-five or fifty.'

(Stephen Greenberg, Help the Aged)

This quote from Stephen Greenberg from Help the Aged identifies that there are individuals who have given to the charity through alternative giving who have not previously been a recognised supporter of Help the Aged. He explains how the charity first engaged with these individuals through alternative giving but that these people have since gone on to support the charity in other ways. In charities this residual effect of one type of fundraising on the giving of each individual is important. As with customers for businesses, givers to a charity each have what is known as a 'lifetime value', this being the total value of the relationship between the individual and the charity (Sargeant *et al.*, 2001: 407), also explained to be the amount of money that a donor will give in total to any one charity. This means that for the new givers through alternative giving there is the potential for them to become of increased worth to the charity through giving to the charity again, whereas for the existing supporters of a charity this will simply be in addition to what they already give. Notable also is the discussion by Stephen Greenberg of the lower age range of the alternative giving donors compared with the average age of their existing donors. The significance of this is that alternative giving presents one possible solution to the problem of how to reach younger donors, responding to the fear within charities of an ageing supporter base. A constant supply of new and younger donors is necessary to maintain, and

where possible grow, the income of a charity, as current supports are unable to keep giving or die-off.

One explanation given for alternative giving attracting such new donors was that it is a more flexible form of fundraising than some with which older generations might be more likely to engage:

David: it's engaged new people that we wouldn't have engaged with before...I think it's attracting new people who wouldn't necessarily give, into giving, because [...] it's making it more accessible to many, um, and it's also making it more flexible to them...And there's a lot of people who don't really want to make a massive commitment to a charity and give a regular donation...but this is one way they can give when they feel they've got money to do so[...]

Louise: have you found that people who have started making contact with World Vision through the alternative gifts have become more regular donors

David: um, *some*. I mean for us, they, they generally tend to go on and buy more virtual, you know, more alternative gifts, and I think for them, that's what they kind of ...interact with. But there are other cases of people who came in through the gift catalogue who have suddenly gone and said 'oh I'd love to get more involved'. For example...currently we run a thing called school aid and the guy who... was heading up the national association of headteachers at the time bought a gift from our alternative gift catalogue. He then spawned the idea of school aid, got a load of schools involved in raising money for, for loads of different projects around the. There've been all sorts of little success stories that have come along on the way because of the gift catalogue so, so yeah, it's quite good from that point of view. It's not just kind of like money and more money, and money and money and money, it's been good for other things as well.

(David Thompson, World Vision UK)

David Thompson suggests here that it is a particular group of people who buy alternative gifts because they are unable to make a regular commitment to a charity but alternative giving enables them to give at times when they have the money to do so. This implies that alternative giving is a pragmatic solution to a pragmatic problem, something I return to in detail in Chapter 6. Further, it is outlined here that World Vision have tracked the type of interaction that alternative gift purchasers have with the charity following this, suggesting

that the kind of relationship that ensues is obviously of interest to them. The reasons for this were discussed more explicitly in other charity interviews.

It seems that regular donor relationships, such as with direct debits, are most preferable to charities. Paul McQuaid discussed how this enables Practical Action to plan further into the future:

‘Then there’s our warm supporter base...People who’ve donated in the past and we try and establish an ongoing relationship with them and, um, communicate with them about the sort of the appeals we have and our sort of support on a regular basis. So, regular in so much as ‘you supported us once, will you support us again?’, or actually, regular in terms of ‘would you like to support us every month’, err, which I suppose is our, our goal. If we can get people committing over a long period of time that’s great because then there’s a greater degree of confidence about where our money’s coming from and we can plan ahead.’

(Paul McQuaid, Practical Action)

Any individual who had purchased an alternative gift from a charity would then be considered a warm supporter after their purchase. It is explained that an ongoing relationship between the charity and giver emerges as a focus for the fundraising team to achieve, with the initial contact, such as with alternative giving, enabling this to be attempted. One of the key facilitators is the provision in alternative giving of contact details for these people which can be placed on the charity’s central database and used to communicate with them further with the aim of building up the relationship and ultimately of increasing the lifetime value of the donor (Masters, 2000). This is a significant benefit of alternative giving over other forms of fundraising which do not enable ongoing communication with people individually. As Daniel Charles of Christian Aid stated:

‘We do get a lot of people supporting us through the church [who] we may not know by name, as in we don’t have them on our fundraising database, [...but] they have given say every year through their church.’

(Daniel Charles, Christian Aid)

These forms of fundraising, such as in churches, are evidently highly valued by charities such as Christian Aid, but they mean that they are limited to close knit communities which choose to support the charity. In being able to build contact lists such as through alternative giving charities are able to communicate with a much broader set of people, some who might be from within these communities, but others who might not be part of such place-based charitable communities.

With this potential though comes a problem of how to turn the initial contact through alternative giving into a longer-term relationship and engagement. David Thompson (above) discusses how their alternative gift purchasers mainly go on to purchase another gift, not give regularly, with further involvement being described as a 'little success story'. Oxfam too have these problems and this has led to their experimentation with other forms of engagement with these people:

Paul: The vast majority of unwrapped buyers have never done anything before with Oxfam so [...] that's one of the positive things about the unwrapped scheme is new people contacting Oxfam. They're a different...err, consumer segment to, or a different sort of segment to our typical buyer, so um, they tend to be wealthy, urban, professionals um, quite a broad age span...they buy into it because of its consumer orientation and because of its fun and lighthearted appeal; it's not what we call the usual classic Oxfam supporter profile.

Louise: And have you seen continued engagement from those people or is it a one off

Paul: It's one off, and that's part of the challenge [...]...I mean in the main, it's one-off. Clearly there are core Oxfam supporters who buy unwrapped [...] and there are people who buy unwrapped who move onto um, sort of higher forms of support for us. The majority of people who have bought into unwrapped have only bought into unwrapped and they've not gone on to do other things with Oxfam, so they tend to be what we call the transactors. They're people who are shoppers; they're people who are interested in that one-off exchange as opposed to a long term, ongoing relationship.

Louise: Have you seen them buy from unwrapped year after year, or has it been different people

Paul: It tends to be different people each year...it's a seasonal Christmas gift, and it's, if you look through any Christmas gifting, it's massively novelty

driven um, whether you're selling Christmas crackers or Christmas presents or children's toys...These are markets which are incredibly fickle and novelty driven, and every year completely reinvent themselves from scratch, and that's what we have to do to compete in the market.

Louise: And in what ways are you trying to engage these people further?

Paul: [...] we have in the past tried conversion campaigns, to try and get them to...give a regular financial gift by direct debit, or a single gift for one, like in Kashmir, for an emergency, and we've had...*mixed* success with those things. So we've had odd pockets ummmm, with odd groups of people that we can segment on our database that are quite responsive...The vast majority, it's fair to say, aren't particularly responsive...We've now got an online shop with sells donated and fairtrade good, so like a normal Oxfam shop but online, um, and, we find people who have previously bought unwrapped much more responsive to...twenty percent off fairtrade clothing on the Oxfam online shop, kind of message than...why don't you support our charity by giving us a regular financial gift. So...they're a very different segment, except that the efforts we're making to engage them, I think it's fair to say that we are, we recognise that we need to give them a much deeper and better experience on unwrapped in the first instance, before, we try and...pull them through into deeper forms of support.

(Paul Vanags, Oxfam)

The purchasers of Oxfam's 'Unwrapped' gifts are here described as a very different 'type' of people to those who have otherwise given money to Oxfam, but that these purchasers are difficult to engage with again because of their approach to the charity. Part of the benefit of alternative gift catalogues, the effects of which are noted here, is that they are able to attract consumers, that is, people whose subjectivity is formed within a neoliberal society and are driven more strongly than perhaps previously, by the desire to consume. Alternative giving enables consumption to be translated into the context of charity, but equally this appears to have negative connotations in that consumption does not encourage commitment. The consumer is always on the look-out for the next new thing, the next novelty – as is discussed here – and therefore there is a pressure on a charity to deliver this to this segment of people in order to maintain their attention and continue this giving relationship. This is one of the challenges of alternative giving then, for charities to continue to reinvent alternative giving so that it remains an attractive novelty. In this sense then it seems

entirely juxtaposed to the notion presented earlier in the chapter that it presents a challenge to the consumerism of Christmas, with the spectacle of alternative giving being highly significant to its success (as will be discussed in Chapter 5).

Public relations (PR) is the second key way in which a charity might broadly benefit from producing an alternative gift catalogue. This is certainly true for the period at the start of the huge expansion of alternative giving – during 2004 and 2005 there were a number of newsprint articles written about alternative giving, as discussed earlier. The desire for PR opportunities by charities indicates another instance in which the public and private are intertwined with charities, with the public benefit of charities leaning on the ability to inspire interest in the private news publications. They must become capable of producing news that is able to sell newspapers. The greater use of public relations by charities in an attempt to engage with the public has been recognised (see Bode: 218), and the use of charity partnerships by businesses to build a particular, ethical picture of their business is also noted (see Robinson, 2006), but it should be highlighted the degree to which alternative giving does this.

Alternative giving has been attractive to the media not simply because it is yet another new way of giving to charity, but arguably because of its unique characteristics. Most prominently it is that alternative giving is a consumer-oriented form of giving to charity because it offers for sale what is essentially a commodity, but also important is the way in which it explains the work it does to the public through this. Few of the articles in the media about alternative giving have simply described it as a method of fundraising but instead have focused on the intrigue of it as an alternative to giving a more ‘standard’ and ‘dull’ Christmas gift. The pinnacle of this type of alignment of alternative giving with

consumption through gift purchase has been the inclusion of alternative gifts alongside commodities in the gift suggestions of particular parts of the media, including the guardian's Christmas gift guide in their Saturday magazine in 2008 (Guardian Magazine, 2008). In this sense then alternative giving appeals to consumers rather than to givers.

Finally in this section, I am going to highlight what emerges as an overarching reason for charities to develop an alternative gift catalogue. It seems there is a significant theme which is underlying the desire by charities to maintain presence in the public view and ultimately to raise funds from them. This was discussed by one charity representative:

'I think the most specific benefits of obtaining money from the public for World Vision in total are it funds our projects, number one, um, it, it's often the first step of engagement with the issues of poverty and the issues that people do need help...And I think really it does, it's does, you know, you can't just sort of narrow your focus and say 'now we're just only gonna provide, provide development projects funded by government grants or EU grants', or whatever else, I think from us, from our point of view we know we need to keep a balance between fundraising sources um, and ...raising money from the public's just one of those sources – whether it's from grants, major donors, charitable trusts, government bodies, um. Whether it's through um, child sponsorship through the public, or whether it's through alternative giving through the public...There's so many different ways and really you have to kind of look at it from that point of view'

(David Thompson, World Vision UK)

Although there is the general sense in this interview with David Thompson that all funds are good for the charity, it is interesting that he particularly identifies the benefit of money from the public in comparison to that from a government grant. The implication is that government grants restrict spending to particular areas, but the charity has ambitions beyond the kinds of projects that are permitted by such grants. Therefore, it is not simply that public funds enable to charities to carry out *more* projects, but that it allows charities to carry out *different* projects, and so going beyond the objectives of government for the way in which the UK or EU should be involved in international development.

Having discussed the reasons why charities adopt alternative giving as a means of fundraising, in the next section I will now move on to discuss the differences between charities in the way in which the relationship between donor/recipient and beneficiary is constructed through the device of alternative giving.

4.4 The Donor/Recipient-Beneficiary Relationship Constructed in Alternative Giving

The notion that the relationship a charity has with individuals is important has already been highlighted in this chapter, but I now want to expand further on this in the specific context of alternative giving, and what this means for this relationship, by looking at permutations of the device. This is certainly a point that arises in this form of fundraising because of the audiences that it targets. Potential for conflict is certainly an issue that arises with alternative giving because it is a form of fundraising that is targeted at both the current supporters of a charity, some of whom might be very long-term supporters of the charity, as well as at what is hoped will become new supporters of the charity, audiences who may have very different general characteristics and expectations of the charity. As noted above, alternative giving represents a departure from more traditional fundraising in the hope of attracting a consumer-giver rather than a giver, and it is with this shift in mind-set that there becomes potential for tension. Charities do not want to alienate their existing and committed supporters, but equally sense there is a need to present the charity in this more consumer oriented way if they are to continue to have an income from individuals.

A second strain on the (consumer) giver-charity relationship, which arises from alternative giving, is set around the organisation of the structure of alternative giving. The majority of

alternative gift catalogues appear, at a glance, to be identical in organisation of structure, with a certain amount of money going to buy a particular item. This is the basic face of the alternative gift catalogue that is promoted in the essential notion of alternative giving – that the purchase is of a representation of a specific item – but also reinforced through marketing slogans such as ‘I bought my friends rainwater collection’ (Oxfam, 2008: 17). Instead though I have identified three main ways in which the spending resulting from alternative giving is structured.

4.4.1 Restricted Spending Model

The first mode of spending from alternative giving that I am going to discuss is the ‘restricted’ model. This is the basis of how charities World Vision UK, ‘Aid International’, Muslim Hands, Plan UK and UNICEF UK present their spending as being structured. Essentially this is where the money from a particular gift purchased is actually spent on that item. Even within this though there appears to be variation, with the money either channeled to a project that involves this specific item, or channeled in such a way that it specifically purchases the item within a project. World Vision UK organise their spending in the former way, as David Thompson (World Vision UK) outlined:

‘The projects come out, then...we just look at the number of people who are going to benefit and how many things they need, divide the sum total of the project by that to get ourselves a US dollar price, and add a little bit on to make sure we cover our costs with, you know, marketing and fundraising costs and then we arrive at a pound price and know that actually, that’s how much it costs....When the money is received in here it’s allocated to the gift catalogue fund...Every gift has got a marker, so it’s got a code so we know exactly how much has been bought for what project, then we go through a funding review committee...[who] basically decide how much of the gift catalogue money can be allocated to their projects, and they do that pretty much...within a month of the close of the Christmas catalogue or the close of the spring, spring/summer catalogue...[T]hey allocate the money across to the projects and then the money is dispatched out to World Vision offices through our money wire and it’s wired out to their bank accounts and they get on and start implementing the projects.’

World Vision UK essentially sell a proportion of a pre-identified project, each 'chunk' being calculated as to how much it costs per item sold. Because of this the money covers other costs of the project too which are associated with the cost of providing the item itself, such as transportation and distribution costs, although charities are often keen to emphasise that items are sourced from as near to the destination as possible. The way of organising that World Vision UK uses differs to that of 'Aid International', even though it could also be said to fall within the 'restricted' model.

The process that 'Aid International' go through to organise the income of their catalogue appears to be an example of the latter type of restricted model – that where the money is used within programmes and projects to purchase that specific item. This is either to replace money which would have been spent on those particular items or in addition to the items which have been bought, where there is the capacity. As 'Kate' of 'Aid International' stated:

'I had to go to...the programme directors, of the different countries and say 'we have this idea [of alternative giving]...is this something you need' and there was a, pretty much a unanimous 'this would be great because there are definite bits of our programmes that we need funded, so if you can fund for us school books and yaks and things like that then that's wonderful'. Soooo, I had to go to all the programmes and say 'so what are these items you need and what's the *maximum* amount that you can handle for a year?'. So when I've got all those numbers I can crunch them together and that gives me a kind of stock list, if you like, like I'm Sainsbury's...It's quite tricky making sure the money goes to actually, the country programmes, and once it gets to country programmes that it's *actually* spent on what it's supposed to be but...what I have for [alternative giving], is...a different earmark for each one of the gifts...Every quarter, I count up how much is in my, kind of, earmarked pot for, say, Chickens, or Plumpy Nut or...teacher training, and then I know which countries need what anyway, because I've had those conversations and I've got those spreadsheets, and then I, what I do is [transfer] the money out to all the country programmes, to a specific code which is set up, so, in that, so, for instance Zimbabwe have requested twelve different items, so they'll have twelve different codes, one for each of them, so they know that the money that goes to that code, they have to spend it on that item, so it's, it's not actually brain surgery at all, it's just breaking down internal processes to make it work, to make sure that the money

actually is spent on that, and because we have an internal audit team, and we're audited externally, once a year as well, they can make sure that that audit trail is complete, and the country programmes know the rules, they know the score that they have to spend the money in that way, and have, you know...have to have the invoices to prove that that's how it was spent.'

(‘Kate’, ‘Aid International’)

From this description it appears that ‘Aid International’s’ alternative gift money is very specifically used to purchase the item that has been purchased by the donor, in pre-existing programmes that can use the items, with each programme being asked very specifically about how many of each item they could use. In many ways this seems to be quite a different set-up from World Vision UK, with it being less centred on projects and more on specific items which may go to a number of different projects, but ultimately one of the main features of this type of model is the degree of planning that must go into the process of putting the catalogue together. There must already be designated outputs for the gift money months before the gifts go on sale because, although the majority of sales take place just prior to Christmas, they are put together months beforehand.

4.4.2 Generalist Spending Model

Second, at the opposite end of the spending model spectrum there is the model that I will refer to as generalist, which charities ActionAid, Send a Cow, Practical Action, Help the Aged, Concern Universal, FARM-Africa and Self Help Africa currently operate with. In this model the money spent on individual gifts goes directly to the unrestricted funds of the charity. These are funds which can be spent in any way the charity deems most suitable, within the bounds of the objects of the charity and therefore might be on many different things than the item purchased. This model has been strongly criticised by some of the media coverage of alternative giving, with accusations being that some charities were directing alternative giving income to unrestricted funds and were trying to hide this from

the public (Guardian, 2006a; Daily Telegraph, 2006). As one comment in the Daily Telegraph stated:

‘[T]hat's like paying for an iPod and getting a radio. “We don't think most people would be happy with that and, in fact, 69 per cent of people polled by ICM for the Charities' Advisory Trust said they felt 'misled' by the clever wording which only reveals itself in the small print.” [Quoting Adam Rothwell from Intelligent Giving].’

(Daily Telegraph, 2006)

The accusation made here is that this type of spending mechanism is unethical because it is misleading to the donor. What is interesting is that the analogy used to highlight the situation is a consumer one, likening the purchase of an alternative gift to that of an ‘ordinary’ consumer purchase. Even though there is no dispute here about whether the money went to the work of the charity, the argument draws on the notion of consumer rights to claim this mechanism is unethical and, in discussing charities as using ‘clever wording’ and only revealing the actual spending mechanism in the small print, aligns them as being as dishonest as businesses. Both the accuracy of these claims and, where upheld, the charity’s intentions behind this have been well disputed by the charities concerned, but this does highlight a potential tension inherent within alternative giving when used for general fundraising in that the whole premise of the mechanism operates on the basis of there being a sense of connection from donor to beneficiary through particular items.

The explanations that general model charities provide about how the money is spent are largely quite similar. Most of the charities do put this information into a different section of their catalogue rather than mentioning it with each gift or on the catalogue front cover or homepage. Under a section on the Send a Cow catalogue site entitled ‘How it Works’ it states:

‘Proceeds from these gifts, less the cost of producing the catalogue, are spent on our livestock and training programmes in Africa.

To make best use of your donations, we give livestock and training according to need, taking into account local conditions and the wishes of the recipients where possible. We guarantee to use your donation in the most effective way to help farmers throughout the seven countries in which we work.’

(Send a Cow)⁴⁸

And other alternative gift catalogues similarly state:

‘Your donation will go wherever it is needed most, to help Concern Universal improve the lives of people living in very poor communities.’

(Concern Universal)⁴⁹

‘[T]he money you spend will go towards a whole range of programmes to help poor communities overcome poverty. By supporting Gifts in Action, you can trust us to use your gifts where the need is greatest.’

(ActionAid)⁵⁰

All of these statements emphasise where the money will be spent – focusing particularly on the idea that ‘need’ is how they allocate the money and therefore this is the most appropriate way of doing it. Although this states the way in which the charity will use the money though, it does not outline categorically that it will not spend the money directly on that item. The question arises here of why this seems to matter so much for the person purchasing the gift item.

One of the charities involved in this model of giving discussed how they created their statement explaining their unrestricted use of alternative giving income, stating:

‘It’s really difficult to get the right form of words um.....the amount of copywriters that work on this...We have an internal communications team of two very strong copywriters, who don’t actually write the catalogue er, but it’s a...this two paragraph structure here is such an integral...part of our communications, because we want to be clear, we want people to know that it’s going into a general fund, but we don’t want to put them off...so we

⁴⁸ <http://www.sendacowgifts.org.uk/howitworks>

⁴⁹ http://www.concernuniversal.org/index.php?/what_you_can_do/give_love~gifts_that_keep_on_giving

⁵⁰ <http://www.giftsinaction.org.uk/>

believe...and the growth in income over the past few years...would suggest that we've done that quite successfully.'

(Richard Cottrell, *Send a Cow*)

In this discussion it is described how complex it is to explain a generalist income model to potential purchasers; they want the message to be clear without discouraging people to buy. Described here is that this needs to be very carefully phrased, indicating that it is a very fine line to draw between being clear but not ruining the effect of the concept of alternative giving – perhaps what is meant by the use of the phrase ‘put them off’ – and so hints that this is an ethical dilemma for the charities themselves, reconciled in the thrashing out of the minutiae of details in the production process of the catalogue. Here the real issue seems to be the place of the material in the fundraising mechanism; generalist alternative giving charities are using the materiality of particular objects to attract donors but this is, in effect, a kind of pretend object. In this sense alternative giving, for these charities, can be understood as a spectacle, giving meaning to the donation over and above it being that through the sense of the material which is created in the specific framing of the gifts through the catalogue as being material objects. If these objects are understood as used by purchasers as a meaningful aspect of their subjectivity and as constituting some form of connection with the beneficiary (see Chapter 6) then the issue becomes more complex. It is not about being given the wrong object as suggested in the *Daily Telegraph* (2006), but instead is about a far more wide-reaching implication of this object for the subject (Miller, 2009), and therefore is not necessarily really (just) about consumer rights. It is essential that purchasers realise the contextual frame (Miller, 2005) in which they are purchasing the gift, and therefore consent to pretending the object is real rather than being a means through which they can realise a distant connection.

4.4.3 Restricted vs. Generalist? How Charities Decide

One of the main concerns of charities regarding their decision over whether to operate a restricted or generalist spending mechanism appears to be about the relationship between the charity and donor. In discussion with charity interviewees about this, purchasers take on the role of stakeholder and it becomes about ensuring the stakeholder is satisfied with this relationship. This applies not just to individual charities but to the sector as a whole, where public trust has become both a contemporary issue and a key problem (Gaskin, 1999). The main difference between these two spending models I have outlined is the degree of connection they create, but this has precipitated a division between the charities involved in alternative giving as to the place of transparency and responsibility within them. Those charities operating a restricted mechanism argue that this is essential for the supporter perception of their trustworthiness. As one stated:

‘We felt that it was really important when people bought a goat with ‘Aid International’, they knew that their money was actually going to be spent on goats [...]. Transparency is such an important issue, and trust. If our supporters don’t trust us, you know, we fail to exist and we pride ourselves on being really trustworthy. As an organisation one of our key values is that we keep our promises and so, yeah, that’s how we came up with the income model.’

(‘Kate’, ‘Aid International’)

‘Kate’ explains that the charity operates this model in order to demonstrate to their supporters that they can be trusted. There is a clear sense in the reference to the values of the organisation that, for this charity, it is about the maintenance of an ‘Aid International’ brand, that they practice responsibility to these donors, and that they are not willing to risk jeopardising this in the long-term for alternative giving. This supports the notion of individual donors as stakeholders in that it is to these people they are demonstrating their responsibility.

Charities with the generalist model do not argue that the donor is not important though. Instead they reason that their relationship with their donors is strong enough to enable them to have a generalist model. As one charity stated:

‘People have questioned it, why we do it, but because I think we were able to... We weren’t pretending, we weren’t *hiding* the fact that, um, that it was general funds money. I think people have been quite happy about that, and because most of the people buying the gifts are existing supporters and therefore... hopefully trust the way that ActionAid spends the money, I think they probably felt that they could... um... *trust* us to spend the money in an appropriate fashion with the gifts... so... yeah, it didn’t really cause any problems.’

(Alison Liney, ActionAid)

Trust is still a significant theme here, but differently ActionAid perceive their values to be widely enough felt for a visible audit trail for their supporters not to be necessary. The reason for this spending model is then framed for the purchaser in terms of the responsibility of the charity to the beneficiary. Whereas ‘Aid International’ appear to be using alternative giving to reinforce trustworthiness by demonstrating their willingness to connect the donation to a specific item for the donor, ActionAid explain their model in terms of it demonstrating the high degree of care that they have for beneficiaries.

One of the key reasons why generalist charities do not wish to commit to using the money raised from the catalogue in such a specific way is because of concerns about how to cope with particular volumes of items sold. As Stephen Greenberg of Help the Aged explained:

‘We don’t commit to volumes you know, so, um, we could have more of one item bought by donors than what we actually supply to older people... I think, what’s the most prudent way to use [the funds], um, is in the way that older people need them rather than us dictating how we use them.’

(Stephen Greenberg, Help the Aged)

The problem of over-selling particular items is shown to be a concern of one of the restricted charities too, as one stated:

‘What you didn’t want is [to be] in this situation...[where] I managed to have a great year and I’ve raised two-hundred thousand pounds that has to be spent on textbooks, because that’s the promise we’ve given to the public, and then find that actually the programmes only need twenty thousand, so I’ve got too much and...because we have to be audited so it’s important that we make sure we keep our promises.’

(‘Kate’, ‘Aid International’)

This is why restricted charities have a safety mechanism in place. For ‘Aid International’ this is simpler because their alternative giving is solely internet based and therefore in ‘real time’. This means that they can mark items as being ‘sold out’ when have sold as many as they can use, preventing individuals from purchasing any more of that item. World Vision UK operate a postal catalogue as well as an internet catalogue which means that they do not have this option and therefore operate a different ‘safety mechanism’, stating on their website that:

‘It’s our intention that the gift bought will be what they receive. In the unlikely event that we don’t get enough gifts to make a project viable we’ll reallocate the money towards other Must Have gifts and projects. The same applies if we receive too many gifts, we won’t overwhelm a project with more than they need. Any surplus funds will fund extra projects to work towards our goal that every child should have life in all its fullness.’

(World Vision UK)⁵¹

So it is explained that, in order to manage the potential problem of too many purchases of one item, World Vision UK have an opt-out clause in their explanation which allows them to use the money elsewhere if they either do not raise enough for a project, or raise too much, through the gift list.

The argument that maintains alternative gift purchase money should be spent in that exact way is deemed to be a feasible model by the restricted model charities who demonstrate through their operations that it is possible to manage spending in a way to make sure that

⁵¹ <http://www.musthavegifts.org/WorldVision/Info/HowItWorks.aspx>

they are not totally committed to the purchase of those items when no more are needed. This perspective lends a degree of cynicism to the reason given by the general model charities for operating in the way they do. But instead of viewing it in this way – that non-restricted model charities are essentially lazy and untrustworthy – a different explanation should be sought. A significant element to this debate is certainly overlooked by the restricted model protagonists, this being the specifics of the organisation’s structure in terms of the legacy of previous decisions about the organisation which continue to exist in other activities of the charity and the way in which the future of the organisation is envisaged and planned for. However, before I discuss this, I will first outline a third spending model that appears to be becoming increasingly popular with charities.

4.4.4 Restricted-Generalist Model

The third model for spending alternative gift catalogue income that some charities have decided to use is what I will refer to as restricted-generalist. This is where the money does not go towards an identical item but rather towards one which the charity classes in the same way. Charities Oxfam, Christian Aid, CAFOD and Tearfund currently operate their schemes in this way. Christian Aid is one charity who originally had a general model but then changed it to a restricted-generalist model. The reasons they give for changing to this model provide a useful explanation as to why charities, more generally, might choose to operate with such a model. As they stated:

‘Originally we did do it as just a general fund, because that’s generally how we fundraise at Christian Aid, is just general funds...Because [the general model ...] was causing quite a lot of trou...I was going to say trouble but that’s not quite the right word...negative press, and negative feeling from supporters as well. We reviewed that, as all charities did and we decided that, because of the way we work... and the way we were to report it, we couldn’t say ‘we’re going to spend half a million pounds on Turkeys this year, so therefore we need half a million pounds for turkeys...The way that our systems work, we don’t go down to the every single item that’s in a projects, we kinda give a broader costing of

areas to our partners, and that's so that if they suddenly need to spend the money because there's an emergency...they can ask us and...divert that fund straight in. But if we've said to someone that's got to be used for turkeys when we fund raise, then we have to do that. So we've tried to get a balance that works for us but...gives people the um...confidence that the money will be used in the way that they'd kind of like it to be...I always find that a bit difficult because people giving the money obviously *should* have a say in what's done, but...in the same way, you know, Christian Aid, like Oxfam and all the other charities, they are experts in their fields...So what we've tried to do is keep that balance right. We've set up funds so it goes...into that area...Goats, it goes to agriculture and livestock which covers, you know, it's farming roughly.'

(Daniel Charles, Christian Aid)

It is apparent from this that, to fully understand the reasons why not all charities feel that it is possible to operate a restricted model scheme, the specifics of the operation of the charity must be taken into consideration, both in terms of the general fundraising ethos of the charity and in terms of the way in which the relationship between fundraising and programme sections of the charity is structured. It appears with Christian Aid that, to organise their alternative giving with a restricted model, this relationship would need to be re-devised which would be a huge undertaking for the charity and would not be done for the increased benefit of the beneficiaries but simply to satisfy Western critiques of the spending model.

Further evidence of the significance of pre-existing types of fundraising in specific charities to the model enlisted by that charity for alternative giving appears in a discussion by one of the restricted model charities:

'[It's] very in-line with how we run our sponsorship programme which is, you know, when...when a sponsor is err, sponsoring a child, the money in that instance doesn't go directly to the child, but in terms of the development impact, um, they do get reports from the community level and the child level and region level...and the country level...to say, this is Plan's work in this area, this is the impact that you're helping to, to create so it's very much, I suppose, from our point of view...when you set up a new product you want it to represent your, your brand and your charity well. And the way that we tend to

operate is that, a lot to the donors that you know, choose Plan because they like the fact that they know where their money's going, they have reported impacts and um...that it feels real and, and authentic um, so we didn't decide to go down the unrestricted route, which for us, you know it just wouldn't have sat so neatly with the other stuff that we do.'

(Jane Parsons, Plan UK)

It can be seen from these two examples how important the existing nuances and ways of fundraising appear to be for the way in which the spending model of alternative giving has been developed within a charity. In the interview with the Plan representative the reason for organising alternative giving in this way is discussed as not simply an obvious way to do it in light of their other main forms of fundraising, but also important for their donors because this is how Plan's current supporters expect income to be channelled. Therefore it seems that there is a line of ethos that runs through from supporter to beneficiary, via the charity, which alternative giving must somehow find a 'best fit' with.

The decision about which alternative giving spending model to choose is not necessarily an easy one for charities though, as several charities indicated in interview. Particularly this was carefully explained by Debbie Stenner of Concern Universal:

'Two years ago when we first started and I think we sold two goats, or something... and um, because we hadn't put anything about not restricting the donations on there we had this big sort of ethical 'oh gosh, we're going to have to really do this' so, and, to cut a long story short, our international director for East Africa personally went and bought some goats, and personally transported them to this particular community in Northern Kenya, um, and gave them to, um, this err child who was orphaned to HIV/AIDS and took a photo to send to the people that had bought it, and it was at that point that we were like [both laugh]. I think at that time there was still a bit um, of internal conflict within the organisation about whether we were going to restrict the donations or not...There were some that felt strongly that, you know, that's not the way we do things – if you're saying it's the gift of a goat, it is the gift of a goat. But I think that was a very good case in point that we can't do that...Increasingly [we] have been good at getting funding from institutional donors, where you have to match the funding from them, so you know we have the opportunity to do one huge water project in Malawi but we need to find two-hundred and fifty thousand from our reserves, and our reserves are tiny...so one big impetus, is

that being able to take advantage of the funding that we can have, um, and also um, being an emergency relief organisation as well, we've got that remit that we want to be able to respond a lot more flexibly...So for those, and for all the other unrestricted arguments...it's a...sort of strategic area, um for the charity to grow the unrestricted.'

(Debbie Stenner, Concern Universal)

This explanation is emphasised in Concern Universal's annual report for 2006-7 where it is stated that 'CU has improved financial stability and flexibility, enabling the organisation to channel substantially increased funds to locally-driven development work.' (Concern Universal, 2007: 8). This commentary about the history and reasoning behind a generalist spending model illustrates very interestingly the conflicts that exist within an organisation about which type of model is better. Ultimately, with Concern Universal it seems to come down to the effect of other sources of funding and the need for unrestricted funds because of the arrangement of these sources that led to the decision to have alternative giving set up with a generalist model. The reason for this is also possibly caused by the size of Concern Universal as it is a relatively small charity compared to some of the other charities with alternative giving, with an annual income of £9.5 million in 2007-8 (Send a Cow, 2008), compared with the income of World Vision UK of £57.8 million for the same period (World Vision UK, 2008). That said, there are also many larger charities, such as ActionAid with its income of £67.8 million for the year ending 2008 (ActionAid, 2008), who also operate this generalist model. Although this is just a discussion of the reasons that one charity opted for a generalist model, importantly it highlights the complexities of funding for charities and the compromises that must be made in order to secure what is thought to be the best and most appropriate funding. An increase in unrestricted funding would contribute to the betterment of stability and flexibility financially, and the benefit of this to beneficiaries is explained, both in the annual report of Concern Universal and by Debbie Stenner, to be that it enables them to carry out more work.

It might be argued then that one of the problems with alternative giving, from this perspective, is that it is unable to communicate these differences between charities and the way in which they operate through their strategy in the literature of alternative giving. The tone of alternative giving materials will be one of the key foci of the next chapter, but here it is significant to note that information is predominantly presented in a ‘light and fun’ register, with it being felt that it is not the right place for an in-depth discussion of charities and their work. The restricted/generalist debate perhaps then highlights an important shortfall with the capacity of alternative giving, and this capacity of alternative giving in turn relies heavily on the distinction between donor-givers and consumer-givers. If the relationship between the charities and givers is in a process of change whereby a much larger proportion of funding will be coming through more consumer-oriented devices then the way in which the charity is organised internally may also need to change to reflect this change.

It is through responding to the criticisms about the use of income that the approach to producing an alternative giving scheme is becoming more professionalised, one aspect of this being the introduction of guidance notes on beneficiary giving (alternative giving) by the Institute of Fundraising, issued in various versions, the first of which I am aware of being November 2007. The production of these guidelines does not condemn the generalist model as the media have done at times, but instead urges all charities to be transparent about the model they use:

‘Key to the success of any beneficiary gift scheme is full accountability and transparency. When launching a beneficiary gifts scheme, it is vital to explain to the potential donors and recipients of beneficiary gifts, exactly how the ‘gift’ will be spent. [...]It [...] reduces the risk of any misunderstandings and the risk of damaging the reputation of not only the charity but the sector as a whole.’

(Institute of Fundraising, 2009)

This guidance readily acknowledges that a restricted model does not suit all charities and supports the use of the most suitable model to the charity, but states that they must be transparent about which model it is and therefore where the money will be used. The need for the professionalisation of alternative giving in this way is indicated in the point made about the damage that could be done by poor transparency to the sector as a whole.

4.5 Conclusion

One of the most resoundingly daunting features of alternative giving that emerges from studying its genealogy is the speed at which it has emerged, developed and been innovated from in charities. Having undergone such rapid spread throughout development charities – a matter of just five years of so – it appears to set the tone for an escalating need for innovative forms of fundraising. It raises the question as to what the next new and big thing will be for the charity fundraising field and, as a result of this, the question of how well charities will be able to adapt to this by moving on from the last thing and developing the next. The environment within individual charities needs to be such that they are able to cope with these rapid changes within their policy and administration. Certain features of alternative giving point to some of the directions that new forms of fundraising may take, with one option being that alternative giving simply becomes more extreme in these features.

As with child sponsorship, alternative giving makes the connection to the distant other appear to the donor in a personalised way. Through presenting charity in the form of a particular item it makes the fundraising more attractive to the potential donor, using the power of the material to build a sense of the spectacle. Furthermore though, this is a form of materiality that is given an ethical or virtuous tone by fitting with a popular discourse of

ethical consumption and, perversely, anti-materiality. The benefit of this to charities (beyond the immediacy of income) is that, in drawing on consumption cultures, alternative giving is able to attract different, younger audiences through extending beyond sites which have longitudinally been appealed to by charity fundraising, such as schools and churches. Alternative giving is able to appeal to wider societal sentiments and extend into these more disparate 'communities'. In making this initial connection to new donors through alternative giving charities are then able to build a database of these people with whom they can then attempt to recruit into other forms of giving. The challenge here though it seems might be to continue to produce new forms of fundraising that hold the same kind of spectacular consumer appeal as alternative giving.

In operating an alternative giving scheme though charities must contend with some significant organisational difficulties in relation to the ethics of their mechanism. Particularly, this is about the task that charities have of reconciling the need to build and maintain the trust of their donors in order to sustain support into the future and the need to ensure that donations are used in the most effective way for beneficiaries. As a result of this several different models of funding have developed and so mark the divergence of charities within the same alternative giving umbrella. The direction that individual charities have taken largely depends on the kind of donors that they understand their existing supporter base to consist of, and the previous structures of fundraising within the charity and the type of funding that is most useful to the charity. Charities must make the decision about whether funds in a restricted model are sufficiently useful and worth the exaggerated audit trail in the broader context of the charity and its funding, especially given that this type of fundraising may fade away to be replaced by the 'next big thing'.

Given this setting, in the next chapter I will move on to discuss the spectacle of alternative giving in terms of the way in which alternative giving is produced and how it constructs both the framing of alternative gifts and meanings of alternative giving. Specifically, the next chapter will examine in more detail some of the themes identified here around the ways in which alternative gifts are made into consumer items through them being positioned in particular retail spaces, the narratives through which alternative giving is situated as being ethical, and the way in which it constructs the donor-beneficiary connection through particular objects. In addition to this it will also examine the particular significance of overseas development in alternative giving and critically analyse the representations used to create an imagined geography of this which primarily draws uncritically on a broader imagining of difference.

Chapter 5

The Construction of Alternative Giving

5.1 Introduction

‘In advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional...if the image contains signs, we can be sure that in advertising these signs are full, formed with a view to the optimum reading: the advertising image is *frank*, or at least emphatic.’

(Barthes, 1998: 135)

‘The central issue then is...to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions that prompt people the speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue, briefly, is the overall “discursive fact”...I would like...to search...for instances of discursive production.’

(Foucault, 1990a: 11-12)

‘[Foucault’s approach] saw knowledge as always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice...this foregrounding of the relation between discourse, knowledge and power marked a significant development in the *constructionist* approach to representation...it rescued representation from the clutches of a purely formal theory and gave it a historical, practical and ‘worldly’ context of operation.’

(Hall, 1997: 47)

Advertising images, writes Barthes (1998), are carefully designed with the aim of producing very deliberate meanings for the audience reading them. Not only should these images and advertising materials be examined, but the way in which they are created should also be taken into consideration to understand who it is who ‘speaks’ in these discursive materials. As Foucault (1990a) identifies above, these people in their institutional embedding are responsible for such ‘discursive facts’. Further, a discourse approach to representation understands these individual images not as having natural

meaning but rather as making sense and being intelligible in specific ways because they 'take on meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse' (Hall, 2001: 73); they are part of a wider context of knowledge. The implication of this for alternative giving is that it is very deliberately constructed but is also part of a wider discursive realm which is important to the meanings that it takes on. Moreover, the importance of examining these aspects of alternative giving emerges in light of Foucault's concept of power, in terms of the power relations circulating through such advertising materials. Crucially, such discursive material is productive of practices, processes, relationships, places and subjects, and therefore is not benign. Rather, it plays a powerful role in the construction of the world and therefore in the way in which life proceeds (Hall, 1997). This chapter then aims to analyse the materials of alternative giving and how they are produced within particular historical, discursive frameworks of meaning, so as to understand the way in which power is present in the discourse of alternative giving.

One of the distinctive features of alternative giving is the commodified orientation of the form that it takes (see Chapter 1). Not only does it offer charity as an item to be purchased, but it does so through the spaces and technologies of retailing. I will start this chapter by discussing some of these spaces and the ways in which the technologies drawn on by alternative giving are potentially important to the way in which it operates. Following this I will provide a brief introduction to what the materials used in alternative giving consist of, after which I will analyse the content of these materials, the specific form that they take, visually and textually, and how this generates particular narratives and representations. This analysis will be concerned with the implications of notions of commodity fetish and the spectacle for alternative giving, particularly thinking about processes of de-fetishisation and re-fetishisation. This is an especially significant aspect to consider given that it is

indicated within the alternative giving material that the way in which alternative giving is configured enables the work of the charity to be very transparent to the donor. This analysis will also examine other meanings which might be taken from alternative giving materials, those which are perhaps less intentional than the meanings constructed in the spectacularisation of the alternative gift. In order to understand these materials it is important also to understand some of the thoughts, processes and decision-making that went into creating them to appreciate the impact of this on the materials and of the intentions of these, and for this reason I draw upon interviews with the individuals within the charities who are heavily involved in the creation of the materials. While some of the analysis of marketing materials will also apply to the fulfilment materials (see Introduction for a description of this) as images from the catalogues are sometimes used on these cards, certificates and magnets, it is the marketing and display materials that constitute the most public spaces of alternative giving – those which anyone might come into contact with throughout their everyday activities – and so will constitute the primary focus here.

In pursuit of this then, I will now move on to outline what I will call alternative giving's 'spaces of discursive construction' which refers to the technologies that constitute alternative giving and carry the meanings to its public audience. In doing so, first I will discuss the main way in which these spaces are constituted by catalogues and the implications of using this medium for charity fundraising. Following this I will then discuss the basic features of alternative gift catalogues and how they are created. Finally, I will draw attention to the differences between the technological mediums of alternative gift display spaces, largely relating to the differences between paper and web-based catalogues, but also involving the physical rather than purely textual spaces in which the gifts are displayed.

5.2 The Spaces of Discursive Construction

The marketing of alternative giving is principally carried out through what is called ‘direct marketing’ (Liao and Chen, 2004), a marketing method that charities have a well established tradition of using and which simply refers to marketing where a charity goes ‘straight to the potential donor through direct mail, press advertisements, radio and, increasingly, on television, telephone and the internet’ (Bruce, 2005: 247). There are examples where almost all of these forms of media have been used for alternative giving, but most prominently direct mail and email to individuals have been used to distribute alternative gift catalogues. Catalogues are used to promote products and are a form of ‘interactive marketing’ (Gönül *et al.*, 2000), named as such because of their dual purpose of both marketing the product to an audience and being the means through which the product can be bought. In effect, catalogues provide a space for commodity display, marketing and sale without the need for a physical shop space, although, as will be discussed later, certain charities do use such spaces for the sale of their alternative gifts.

Catalogues have been used extensively by charities for marketing more traditional ‘gift’ items such as jewellery, candles, bags, children’s toys, and greetings and Christmas cards, for example, and is one area where charities have partaken in such commercial activity, albeit with the proceeds being used to fund the work of the charity. Many of these traditional gift items have no obvious connection to the charity other than being sold by them. For example, the ‘walled garden candle’ sold by UNICEF (figure 5.1) is distinctly remote from the charity’s work with children in ‘developing’ countries, with the description of the rose scented cottage locale evoking a sense of idyllic English rurality. Some items sold in these traditional catalogues do make connections to the charity selling them, predominantly through the branding of items with the logo of the charity, such as with

UNICEF's 'premium eco bag' (figure 5.2), but also occasionally stronger connections to their work are made, as with UNICEF's matchbox 'Mini Car' (figure 5.3). This car has United Nations livery and, moreover, in stating in the text that it is a UNICEF vehicle, there is mild indication that it is a toy model of a type of car that UNICEF uses in their work. Significantly though, the emphasis for all of these items is that the primary reason for purchase is down to the physical features of the item that the purchaser receives; even the car description soon moves on to portraying the pull-back toy as 'exciting' and outlines the dimensions of it. In that the purchaser is paying for the item they receive, these are commodities.

Alternative gifts are different to these traditional catalogue gifts. As a charity marketing manager explained of their alternative gift catalogue:

'The way the system works is...we have a...catalogue...[and] within the catalogue...we have a number of different gifts um from two-thousand pounds, all the way down to five pounds. The gifts represent all of the work that...we carry out within our projects.'

(Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow)

This means that while both traditional and alternative gift catalogues are part of the fundraising efforts of charities, unlike traditional catalogue gifts alternative gift catalogues present the very tools of their international development work as surrogate gifts, with the emphasis in the gift description being on what the beneficiary will receive rather than on what the purchaser will receive. Therefore, alternative gift catalogues also advertise the specific details of the work of the charity in addition to raising funds. Additionally, the emphasis in the quote from Richard Cottrell above on the catalogue as the means of displaying alternative gifts highlights the central role that the catalogue plays for the device

Walled Garden Candle - Moroccan Rose



DESCRIPTION :

The rambling rose outside the cottage door, a flower pressed into a scrap book. Floral notes and woody base tones become the memories of the bloom on a tea rose.

Sorry, now SOLD OUT

CODE : CANMR

PRICE : **£12.00**

Figure 5.1: 'Walled Garden Candle' for sale in the UNICEF online gift catalogue 2010⁵²

UNICEF Premium Eco Bag



Dimensions : 38 x 33 x 16cm gusset

DESCRIPTION :

This re-usable bag is made with jute - a natural and bio-degradable product. With shoulder length handle. Made in India.

Bag: 75% jute, 25% cotton. Lining: low density polythene. Handle: cotton and rope. Size: 38 x 33 x 16cm.

CODE : 8EBAG2

PRICE : **£3.50**

Figure 5.2: 'UNICEF Premium Eco Bag' for sale in the UNICEF online gift catalogue 2010⁵³

UNICEF Mini Car



DESCRIPTION :

Speed into action with this all-terrain UNICEF vehicle! Exciting pull-back and go toy.

1:60 scale die-cast Mitsubishi Pajero
Length: 7cm. Friction movement.
Materials: Zinc alloy, plastic wheels and fittings. Packaging dimensions: 11 x 5 x 5cm. Made in China.

CODE : 9P3329

PRICE : **£3.95**

Figure 5.3: 'UNICEF Mini Car' for sale in the UNICEF online gift catalogue 2010⁵⁴

⁵² <http://www.unicef.org.uk/store/index.aspx?grp=13AA098C-18AF-4D80-A8E4-E1000F038A14>

⁵³ <http://www.unicef.org.uk/store/index.aspx?grp=13AA098C-18AF-4D80-A8E4-E1000F038A14>

⁵⁴ <http://www.unicef.org.uk/store/index.aspx?grp=13AA098C-18AF-4D80-A8E4-E1000F038A14>

of alternative giving, and so on the importance in this research of analysing alternative gift catalogues as one of the main public faces of alternative giving, and indeed as a significant face of international development which potentially has powerful constructive effects.

It is important to contextualise this use of catalogues to raise funds against a background of other direct marketing techniques, such as direct marketing letters, which more directly outline the need and ask for a donation. Arenas for selling are constructed with the purpose of persuading the consumer that their desire to ‘seek to make and remake the world around certain values’ (Benson and Fischer, 2007: 803) can be achieved through purchasing the commodity for sale (Crang and Jackson, 2001; Jackson, 2002). Framing the work of the charity in this arena therefore presents it in a very different light to the fundraising appeal letters of direct marketing – the emphasis is on seducing the potential donor into a purchase rather than on providing a reasoned argument as to why they should donate. This difference has been illustrated by a comparison between a retail catalogue and a charity direct mail letter:

‘Imagine returning home from work and finding two direct mail pieces in your mailbox. One is a retail catalog. The other is a charitable solicitation. Database marketing techniques probably generated both mailings. Similar algorithms probably scored you as a prospect for each of these mailings. However, your reaction to the two mailings may be very different. You might put the catalog in a place for easy browsing – you may even read the catalog for pleasure. In contrast, you may have greeted the charitable solicitation with resignation or hostility...retail catalogs may be fun...in contrast, charity direct mail suggests obligation.’

(Diamond and Noble, 2001: 3)

The problems attributed to charity direct marketing here indicate a possible reason why some charities don’t simply fundraise through direct mail appeals. Moreover though, the positive affect of the catalogue on the recipient of it – that it might be pleurably

browsed⁵⁵ – hints at one reason why charities have not simply become involved in the commercial sale of goods, as is the case with traditional gift catalogues, but have also used them to showcase their work, as is the case with alternative gift catalogues. The alternative gift catalogue offers charities the opportunity to engage potential donors with the work of the charity in a more positive and upbeat way to previous forms of direct marketing fundraising. As Paul Vanags of Oxfam stated in response to the question of how beneficial it is to communicate the charity's work in the form of a catalogue: 'I think it's *really* beneficial, so I think if Oxfam Unwrapped [Oxfam's alternative gift scheme] made no profit at all, it probably would be something we would want to do, purely from an engagement perspective'. It is this shift that I am interested to consider when examining the content of alternative giving marketing and its materials, with the notion of charities seducing through representing their work to individuals embodying a very different approach to that used previously.

The notion of seducing participants through a catalogue means that alternative giving is a mode of fundraising and marketing of the charity that draws on techniques that are used in the selling of commodities. As David Thompson of World Vision UK stated, describing their catalogue: 'It's almost the shop window of World Vision. You can see in through that window and actually see what World Vision does'. The metaphor of the alternative gift catalogue as the 'shop window' is a pertinent indication of the spaces through which this type of fundraising operates. The very concept of the catalogue, both paper and web-based, appears to be taken very literally from the retail sector, forming the most prominent of the 'display spaces' (Holloway and Hones, 2007) for the alternative gifts. Although a textual

⁵⁵ It seems here that the quote from is referring to paper catalogues rather internet catalogues – a distinction that is important for alternative giving and to which I will return later in the chapter – but the general premise, I argue, is similar for both types.

space rather than a material space of a shop floor, Holloway and Hones still readily include catalogues in their definition of a display space in that these are part of the aesthetic creation of the company (or in the case of alternative gifts, charity) producing the display space: they are ‘spaces of presentation and marketing’ (Holloway and Hones, 2007: 556). Catalogues (both paper and web) facilitate consumption activity, at least in the form of ‘window shopping’, taking place in the home (Crewe, 2000: 278; Clarke, 1997) and so are as much a part of the display space of products as physical spaces. This must not be thought of as simply a space in which gifts for sale are displayed though because, as has been indicated about practices of marketing, it is also a space for advertising/marketing and sales. This is a far more active understanding of such a space in that it positively aims to appeal to produce desire for the item in potential purchasers by creating additional meanings and connections. When translated into the specific form of alternative giving this means that charities attempt to seduce participants through the display of the tools of their work and the effects on the beneficiaries, which raises interesting ethical questions about the use of such images and writing in such an originally commercial setting.

Display spaces of alternative gifts are central to the operation of alternative giving and the construction of it as a consumer activity, but there are other aspects of charities’ marketing campaigns which are also relevant here though because of their role in these constructions, including advertisements. These adverts are largely print based, although there have been occasional television and radio adverts; however, these have been few in number due to the cost. Therefore I will now look at these catalogues in terms of their formatting.

5.2.1 The Catalogues

The catalogues being produced by different charities vary in size, presentation and layout, but there are some general themes which emerge and which give them the overall ‘feel’ of being a catalogue in the vein of a commercial retail catalogue. For the purpose of this section I am going to largely focus on the ‘Oxfam Unwrapped’ gift catalogue, although will draw comparisons and contrasts with others. The Oxfam catalogue is a good illustration of key features of such gift catalogues, but is also one of the most prolific – Oxfam claims to have over two-thirds of the whole alternative gift ‘market’ (Paul Vanags, Oxfam) – and therefore tends to dominate the sense of what an alternative gift catalogue is. Many charities try to produce a new catalogue each year, or at least an updated catalogue, and so the Oxfam catalogue (figure 5.4) that I am drawing on is that for 2008/9, the most current at the time of writing.

Both the paper and the electronic versions of the Oxfam catalogue contain a description entitled ‘how it works’, taking the reader through the process of choosing a gift, explaining what you get and about where the money used to purchase the gift goes. This is the most obvious way in which the alternative gift catalogue differs from a commercial retail catalogue – as there is not a ‘standard’ producer-purchaser relationship then the concept of alternative giving would be unintelligible without this explanation. Other than this though the features of alternative gift catalogues are very much in line with commercial retail catalogues both in their way of enabling a ‘purchase’ and in the format of the display of gifts. Both versions of the catalogues offer a way of purchasing gifts rather than a way in which to donate money. The paper version of the catalogue contains an order form, and the electronic version enables a personal account to be set up through which gifts can be selected for putting into a virtual ‘shopping basket’ to be finally purchased at a virtual

‘checkout’. Both of these components mimic the forms of purchasing mechanism in commercial paper and online catalogues.



Figure 5.4: Front cover of the 'Oxfam Unwrapped' 2008/9 paper catalogue

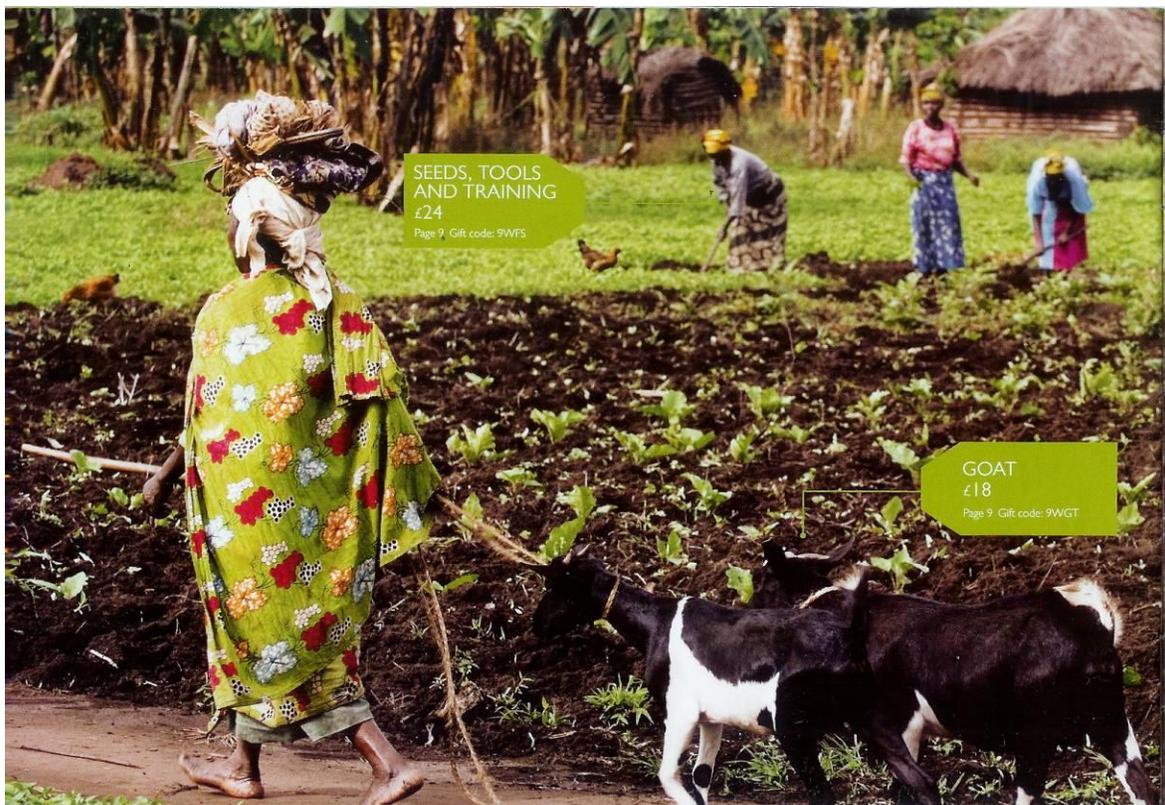


Figure 5.5a: World Vision UK’s ‘Must Have Gifts’ Christmas 2008 catalogue (page 13)



Figure 5.5b: World Vision UK’s ‘Must Have Gifts’ Christmas 2008 catalogue (page 14)



Figure 5.6: ‘Oxfam Unwrapped’ catalogue, 2008-9 (pages 24-5)

Generally, alternative giving catalogues separate out gifts from each other, placing a clear image and written details of that particular gift in isolation. There are occasionally variations on this display format through, such as World Vision UK’s Christmas 2008 ‘Must have gifts’ [alternative gift] catalogue which has an image of a scene from a locale of a World Vision project on a double page, in which it identifies different gifts in each and includes a page reference for where more information on the particular gift can be found (figures 5.5a and 5.5b). The majority of alternative gift catalogues though are formatted so that each gift item has a name, a price tag, and one main image and then a relatively short paragraph of writing explaining the gift – in the Oxfam catalogue it is largely between 40 and 50 words, but occasionally up to 60 words (figure 5.6). The gifts are often organised according to themes meaning there are sections of pages in the paper catalogue based on

one of these, with the gifts set out several to a double page spread. The idea in the electronic catalogue is largely the same, with gifts being organised into pages, but instead of there immediately being information about the gift it is by clicking on any of the gifts that the information about that particular gift is reached on a new page (see figures 5.7 and 5.8). This arguably mirrors the differences found between any paper and online versions of catalogues for any retail magazines.

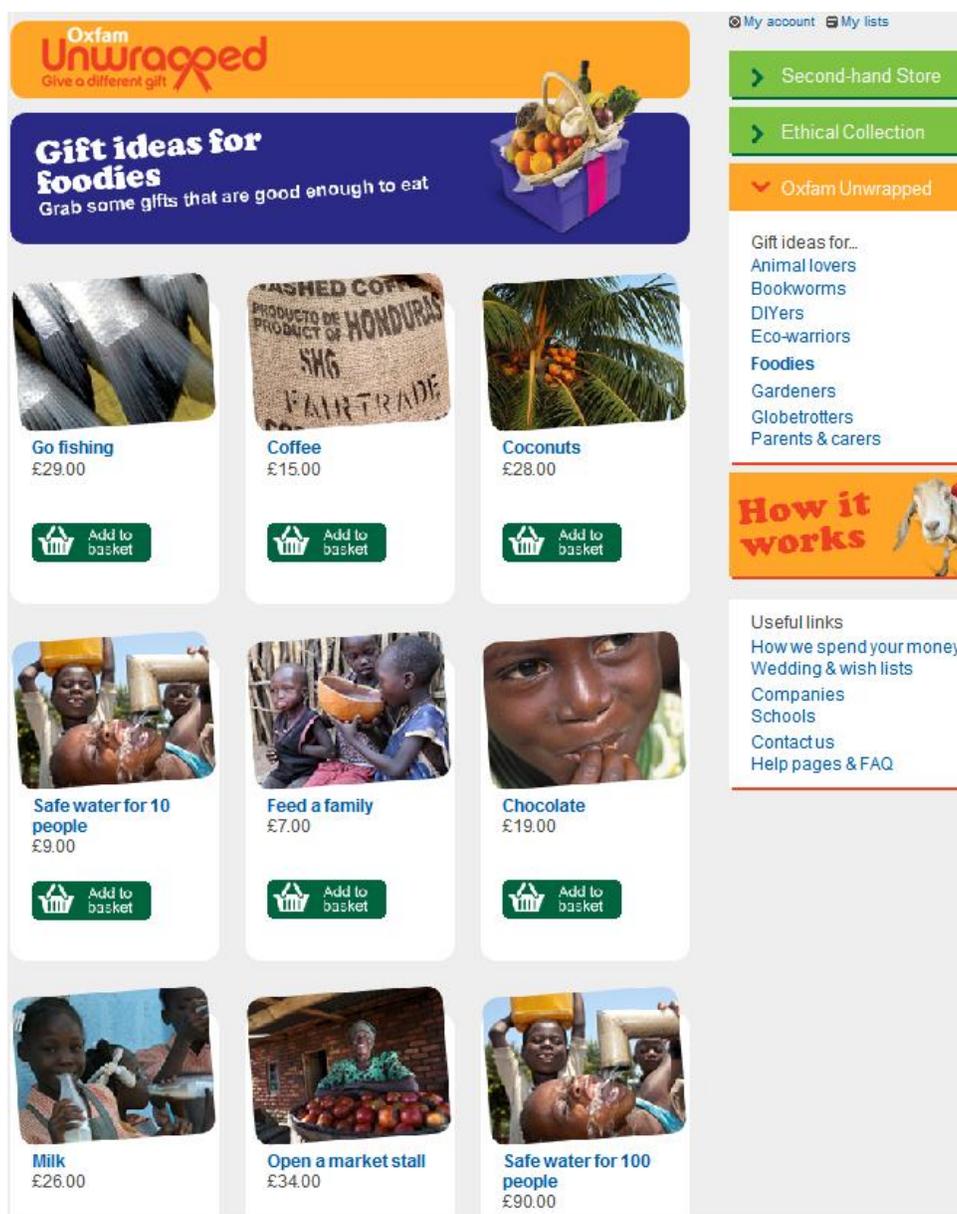


Figure 5.7: Main page for 'Foodie' section of 'Oxfam Unwrapped' website⁵⁶

⁵⁶ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/oxfam-unwrapped-foodies>

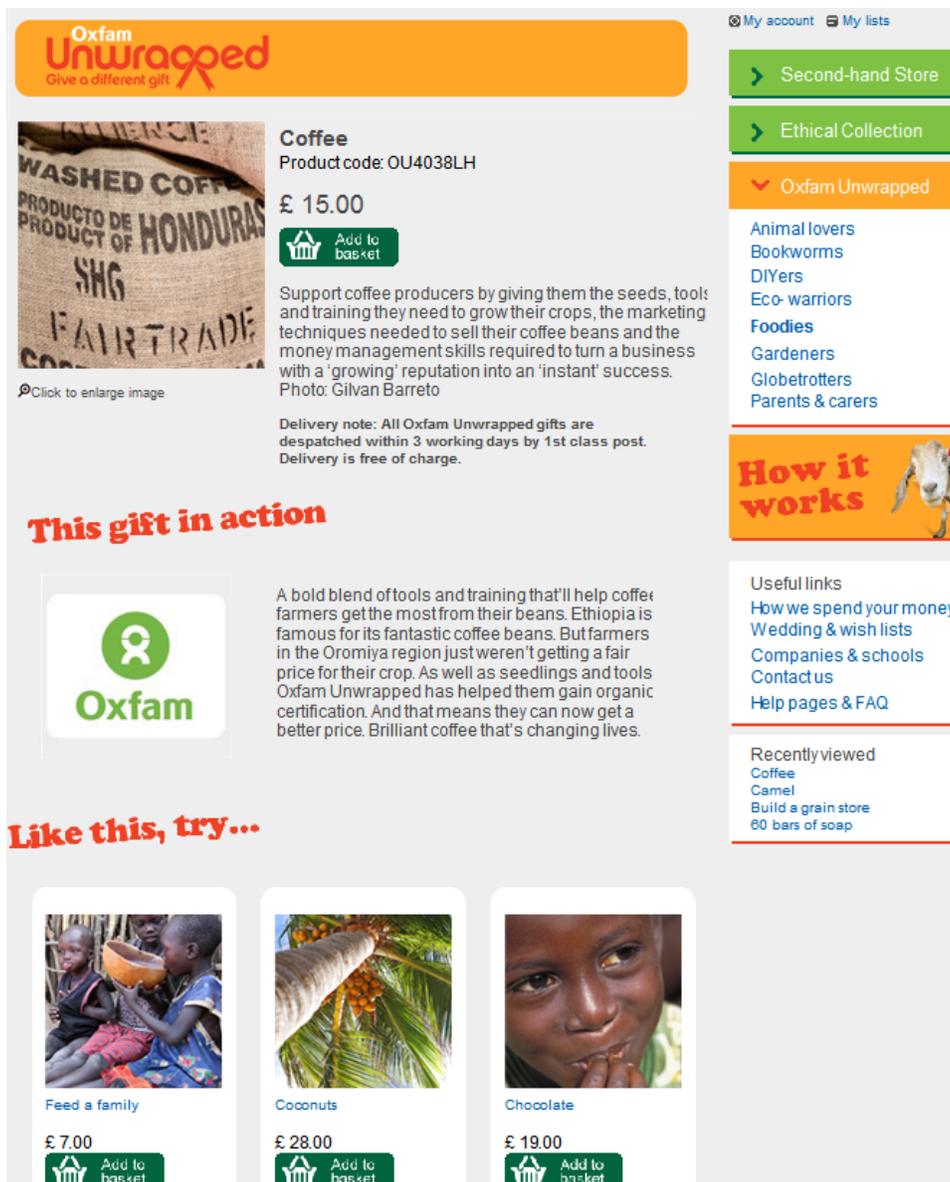


Figure 5.8: Page of gift of ‘Coffee’ from ‘Oxfam Unwrapped’ website⁵⁷

5.2.2 Producing the Catalogue ‘Feel’ with Alternative Giving

There is a particular feel to the catalogues which is by no means accidental, being carefully and meticulously sculpted by those charities able to invest money in it. I will go on to discuss elements of this ‘feel’ in the thematic sections that follow, but I want to emphasise here how this is a result of, in some cases, a lengthy and involved process. A wide variety

⁵⁷ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/oxfam-unwrapped-foodies/OU4038LH>

of individuals are involved in this production process of catalogues and of the other marketing materials that are used for marketing alternative giving, generally being managed by the individuals from the charity that I interviewed. Others involved in this process were named as those working in country offices providing reports and compiling databases; programme officers working both in country offices and in the UK; direct marketing agencies; creative agencies; editorial teams and those who manage the 'brand', or look and 'feel' of the charity; anyone involved with a charity who might have taken a photo of a beneficiary or the gift at various times; and PR teams. The impression given by charities is that this is a lengthy, evolving process of shaping raw material provided about items in project documents, reports and databases into material that's 'right' for the public in terms of the image of the charity, the 'feel' of the material, and the accuracy of what it contains:

Daniel: We've had copywriters write it, and then it gets edited so, there will be parts of copy that I've written, there'll be copy I've written, there'll be some copy our communication officers have written, because sometimes it will be quite down the line of producing it. It will be like 'this isn't working'...and actually to be going back and forward to a copywriter isn't always ideal, so sometimes we say 'right, we're gonna write this because actually we want to sign it off next time now'...so there's a bit of everything there really; a bit of some of the agency copywriter...a freelance copywriter we had in has done some, and I've kind of added bits in and other people at Christian Aid have as well...

Louise: And do you kind of run it past your...other people in Christian Aid to check that it's the right kind of image and

Daniel: Yes...our editorial team check copy, the photo team check the photos and design and also the communications officers do. So if um...for instance, the...tap stand one, the girl that's mentioned, that's her in the photo, so

Louise: ok, so trying to link the image and the text fully

Daniel: Yes. If it wasn't we wouldn't be able to give her name...They check the facts really, the communications team check that it's all right...Obviously for quotes for people, like celebs, the PR unit check those and make sure they're happy with it and they get it through the – I don't know if it's the actual celebrity themselves, or if it's their agent, I'm not sure...but, yeah, yeah. So everything is kind of, checked for those purposes, and that's...where sometimes we've had tensions because...we haven't gone into lots of detail about the project, we've tried to keep it light... so people can understand what it is

without going in depth, because it is a gift and there are times people have said ‘this isn’t telling us anything’, or...what is this mosquito net doing?

(Daniel Charles, Christian Aid)

The description here of the way in which the text is passed around between different individuals, both within the charity and in external agencies, indicates the extent to which the final text takes time and skill from professional marketing writers and is a case of trial and error in the creation of an effect and tone that is appraised as being right. That the catalogue is created so collaboratively in this way indicates how the character and overall impression of the catalogue must be created in such a way as to reflect both the particular charity and that it is a *gift* catalogue. The amount of attention to detail and precision that goes into producing these materials means that the analysis of the content of them which follows must take into consideration the very deliberate way in which they have been created, although the guiding principles for those in the charities assessing the suitability of catalogue drafts in the production process appears to be the ephemeral notion of feel and whether the reader will understand it, so from this perspective it seems that some of the deeper constructions to be analysed here are unintentional and signal instead a wider culture of meaning that these catalogues both tap into and build upon.

In contrast, it should also be noted that, unlike the high degree of control charities have over their catalogues and other alternative gift marketing materials, there is a degree to which they can’t control any shop spaces where alternative giving is present:

‘There’s also problems with...all our shops are run pretty much by volunteers, apart from a few where we have paid managers, and actually sometimes, even for the volunteers, understanding the concept behind virtual gifts can be confusing.’

(‘Kate’, ‘Aid International’)

This comment was made in response to a question about the ability of the charity's shop volunteers to explain the concept of alternative giving to potential purchasers, and so demonstrates how this space of display and construction of alternative giving is less controllable (for an analysis of charity shop staffing and issues of shop control by charities see Maddrell (2000) and Gregson *et al.* (2002)), and also how the very controlled delivery of alternative giving to the potential donor audience is highly desirable for a charity.

There is also a strong sense expressed by Daniel Charles in the previous quote above that ensuring authenticity is an essential part of producing the catalogue, indicated in the care taken by Christian Aid to ensure the names and quotes are correct. The high level of attention paid to ensuring the image details are correct is also given to the 'facts' presented in the catalogue. This is explained both in the broad description of how the written material is checked, and in the specific example of ensuring the real name of the girl in the photo was used. It seems that it is vital to charities that these catalogues are authentic, particularly in terms of how the gift and benefiting individuals are presented and how the case-study material (i.e. not a fictional story) is portrayed. Here, authenticity can be understood as important in light of a sector-wide emphasis on the need for transparency and integrity, as already discussed in Chapter 4, because of the importance of this for developing the trust of potential donors in the charity (Sargeant and Lee, 2002). Catalogue authenticity was something I found all the alternative gift catalogue managers I interviewed were keen to stress, particularly in relation to any people who were shown in photos, alongside notions of transparency and accountability with these being discussed in relation to both beneficiary and potential donor.

Interestingly though, in many cases it appeared that this was not simply to demonstrate transparency and trustworthiness to potential donors but was also discussed proudly, as a demonstration of the care of the staff of the charity for the beneficiary. There was mention in some interviews with alternative gift catalogue managers of specific photos that really embodied this sense of connection between what was being sold and the work that the charity was carrying out which involved that item:

‘Some of these photos are Brian’s [director of Feed the Children], so...he was actually face-to-face with that goat, taking that photo, so it’s all err, it’s all fresh and personal... that one was supplied by a project officer...and I think I took that one.’

(Kim Tame, Feed the Children)

‘So either we, you know, have lovely project/photos from the projects anyway – people send them through, or if we’ve developed a gift, we’ll specifically ask for one, so, um we’ve got...a photo journalist supporter...who’s a fantastic guy that, when he’s overseas on assignments for other organisations he will also take photos for us...they are all our beneficiaries, yes, not just random people with watering cans and [laughs], and we know the story behind these people...I know that ladies name, and her story, and about this girl here...because it’s a small organisation, we do know who everybody is’

(Debbie Stenner, Concern Universal)

It seemed that the ability to name the beneficiaries and know about them and how the charity has helped them was about the care that these fundraising managers had for the beneficiaries and hinted at their passion for the work that they did. They might not necessarily know the individuals personally, having not met them, but they provided a real incentive to carry out their work and to try also to engage the public with the individuals and make them care in this way also. Here, a potential ethical issue arises though: there is a tension between the desire for reality in the portrayal of beneficiaries of the charity, and the protection of identity of beneficiaries. There is a sense in which distance appears to be a protective layer in that the people and places – although real, they will remain imaginary to those engaging with the alternative gift catalogue due to this distance. Additionally, limited

information is given relatively lightly. Although real names are given, and real places recognised, there are no family names used, and country names often being the smallest scale of location, with the diary extract of the World Vision UK catalogue being an anomaly (figure 5.5b). Whether this is to be inclusive for the catalogue audience who are unlikely to have heard of any specific villages, or to maintain a degree of anonymity for the beneficiaries, this is uncertain, but it works for the benefit of the latter.

As an aside, it should be mentioned here that this language of the professional marketer and retailer is indicated to be an uneasy one in the context of alternative giving. At various times throughout the course of the interviews the way in which things have been described has hinted at this unease. World Vision UK catalogue manager describes theirs as being ‘*almost* the shop window of World Vision’ (David Thompson, World Vision), as if to indicate that it could never quite be a shop window, because despite commercial illusions, it is still a charity fundraising device. Similarly Daniel Charles of Christian Aid, in describing the potential purchasers of alternative gifts as ‘the alternative gifts market’, continues: ‘so to speak, if you want to sort of use the crass terms of commerciality on it’ (Daniel Charles, Christian Aid). Despite enlisting these terms of marketing and commerciality there is certainly a reticence and unease at doing so, perhaps due to an acute awareness of the apparently opposing values of charity and commerciality, the latter being associated with a blind drive for profit at the expense of care for those involved and transparency. A great deal of what follows in this chapter though lends support to conceiving of alternative giving in this way, certainly in the way in which it is thought and constructed as being overtly about selling and consumption. So, while this is felt to be problematic by these marketers, it is perhaps more fitting to recognise that within these

spheres there is room for care and ethics, but it is this tension that will be examined further here and in Chapter 6.

5.2.3 Differences between Display Technologies

Having outlined the main basic characteristics of both online and paper catalogues above, I next want to discuss the unique features of the different display technologies, including the differences in the forms of display and ultimately of possible interaction between them. Despite parallels in terms of the basic information presented and the tonal character of each, there are some notable differences in terms of what the technologies allow. In discussing display spaces here I will also refer to physical shop spaces as well as paper and electronic catalogues, but start by discussing the catalogue forms.

A key theme that emerged in the discussion of the technologies of alternative gift marketing was the heavy employment of the internet. Online technologies were explained to be beneficial both for the cost to the charity of using them – lower than other means – and also for the size of audience:

‘The online channel is, you know, for cheap investment you can get a good return, um, and my online activities always deliver more, and that’s/which is great. It’s opened up methods of getting to people, methods of opening up to people that we’d never have dreamed of, five, six years ago...but all that’s changed really are the methods of engagement...we do get telephone orders and we do get mail coupon orders and everything else, but that’s dramatically shrinking as people just sort of go online and buy for stuff.’

(David Thompson, World Vision)

One advantage of online technology is that it is cheap and therefore produces a ‘good return’ for the cost of the investment made. Concern about ensuring a good return on investment is a very public one for charities, with expenditure on fundraising to the return received being a key figure provided by a charity, and from which the public can assess the

charity's efficiency themselves. So this is a highly significant aspect of web display, with internet marketing being widely accepted as an inexpensive technology (Burke, 1997).

The ability of the internet to expose the alternative gift display to a larger audience is evidently connected to this though because this means there is likely to be more return on that investment. David Thompson described this characteristic of online marketing as being a 'method of getting to people', and was also discussed in other interviews with alternative giving marketers:

'I think the thing is with Present Aid is it's helped us establish a more of an online marketing, and get people to go to donate to us online, so, I think it has changed it, but it think it was something we were hoping/it's a supporter base we were hoping to tap into at some point, so I think it's helped us feel confident that we can...get to those people.'

(Daniel Charles, Christian Aid)

Here, Daniel Charles again describes it as a way to 'get' to people, but particularly emphasises it as being different people to those reached by paper-based catalogues. It is thought to be a potential supporter base that is separate from the current supporter base reached through non-web-based technologies, rather than the same supporter base which may be reached in *either* of those two ways, and therefore opens up a route to new supporters. David Thompson suggested in the previous quote above that the reason that this happens is because alternative giving places itself within an already existing practice; because individuals are growing increasingly used to purchasing 'stuff' online then the purchase of a charity gift online does not appear alien to these already existing shopping practices and so the only shift is in the nature of what they are buying and not in the way they go about doing it.

That alternative giving builds charity donation into an online consumption practice is potentially highly significant for the ability of individuals to engage with it using their pre-existing consumer skills. Additionally, because those online are understood to be a different segment of the population than those not online this display technology makes alternative giving, and charity more broadly, visible in a sphere that can be thought of as routine to this segment. There is no doubt that engagement with paper catalogues also depends on such practical knowledges, but it is especially important to understand this in terms of online catalogues because this is felt to be where the potential new supporter base resides. Catalogue managers interviewed were reluctant to pigeonhole which segments of the population this was most likely to be, although indicated that they thought it was possibly a slightly younger group to non-internet users ('Kate', 'Aid International'), but the extent to which this is differentiated is contested as a myth in the literature; those aged over 55 still have a significant presence on the internet, especially in terms of the consumer power they have (Vuori and Holmlund-Rytkönen, 2005). Generally, socio-economic status is also held to be one of the main segmenting factors between those accessing the internet and those not (Rice and Katz, 2003), but there was no mention of this by alternative gift catalogue managers interviewed other than to suggest that alternative giving more broadly is understood to be engaged with more by those who are in higher income groups.

It is important to note that, in addition to these online and paper catalogue spaces of display, charities have also displayed the alternative gift fulfilment material itself for sale in their shops if they have them, and others have chosen to create retail spaces in which to facilitate this form of sales display. Oxfam is the charity which most prominently displays gifts in their shops, with the whole range of gifts that are available in their paper catalogue also available for immediate purchase in their charity shops. Few other charities within the

field of empirical research have shops, but ‘Aid International’ is one charity which does and used this space to display their alternative gifts, although as the catalogue manager explained, not very successfully:

Kate: We sell [alternative gifts] in some of our shops, sixty of our shops [out of over a hundred and twenty]

Louise: Have the shops been very successful in selling the gifts?

Kate: Not that successful. I think part of the reason is that ... most people who...are the customers of our shops mostly go into our shops because it’s a convenient charity shop, not necessarily because it’s ‘Aid International’ and they really want to, to commit to the cause.

(‘Kate’, ‘Aid International’)

It is then interesting to note that, in relation to the question of the audience, charity shops are thought to attract a very different kind of supporter to those of either kind of catalogue, which is concurrent with research carried out into charity shops which found that customers of these shops were often there because of the bargain aspect of charity shop shopping rather than because of a particular dedication to the cause (Parsons, 2002). Oxfam appears to be the anomaly to this, where, with alternative gifts, ‘shops now account for thirty-seven percent of...sales’ (Paul Vanags, Oxfam). Arguably this is because of the combination of an established Oxfam shop presence – there are over seven-hundred in the UK – and a very prominent alternative gift catalogue – Oxfam Unwrapped is the archetype of alternative giving, being made synonymous with alternative giving both through Oxfam’s own relatively extensive advertising campaigns,⁵⁸ as well as their Oxfam Unwrapped alternative gift scheme being prolifically referenced in the press (BBC Online, 2007; Guardian, 2004; Guardian, 2006b). Soopramanien and Robertson (2007) identify that shoppers in the commercial retail sector combine the use of different display spaces in their purchasing

⁵⁸ ‘I don’t know what Oxfam have [earned] this year [from Unwrapped], but they spent a *fortune* on their marketing this year, I mean they must have spent millions.’ ‘Kate’, ‘Aid International’

decision making and practice, and it seems likely that the same is true for Oxfam and so will be considered in the analysis of alternative gift purchasers.

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Buy from FARM-Africa PRESENTS and you can choose from an amazing range of quirky and memorable gifts which represent just some of the ways that your donation can be used to make a difference to the lives of poor African farmers. There's something for everyone, so who will you treat to a camel? Or a seed starter kit? Or even fermented cow's urine?

Better still, FARM-Africa PRESENTS won't get caught in the post because they're sent by email!

Each virtual gift has a fantastic film to send your family and friends via a unique email link – with a guaranteed happy ending supplied by you. Shot at a FARM-Africa project in Tanzania, each of our four films star real people who have been helped by our work and end with your personal message. See [how it works](#) and how we use [your donations](#).

Watch out for Splash – it's amazing what a farmer can do with fermented cow's urine!

Raiders of the Lost Egg
 Chicken £10.00
[Find out more](#)

Splash
 Fermented cow's urine £20.00
[Find out more](#)

Goatbusters
 Goat £30.00
[Find out more](#)

Buying for someone who's not computer-friendly? No problem...
 If you want to buy FARM-Africa PRESENTS for someone who can't download moving images, never fear. You can email a link to a fantastic e-

Figure 5.9: 'FARM-Africa PRESENTS' homepage⁵⁹

⁵⁹ <http://www.farmafricapresents.org.uk/>



FARM-Africa PRESENTS – the gifts to watch

Buy from FARM-Africa PRESENTS and you can choose from an amazing range of quirky and memorable gifts which represent just some of the ways that your donation can be used to make a difference to the lives of poor African farmers. There's something for everyone, so who will you treat to a camel? Or a seed starter kit? Or even fermented cow's urine?

Better still, FARM-Africa PRESENTS won't get caught in the post because they're sent by email!

Each virtual gift has a fantastic film to send your family and friends via a unique email link – with a guaranteed happy ending supplied by you. Shot at a FARM-Africa project in Tanzania, each of our four films star real people who have been helped by our work and end with your personal message. See [how it works](#) and how we use [your donations](#).

Figure 5.10: Sending gifts by email⁶⁰

It is not just a simple matter of engaging a different audience through different channels though, there are also differences between these technologies, both in terms of what they enable to be displayed and in terms of the interaction their spatial qualities imply. Wrigley *et al.* (2002) describe the potential to engage consumers in more sophisticated ways with the internet than with the non-electronic equivalent. This sophistication is visible in alternative gift websites where more investment has been made in the design. 'FARM-Africa PRESENTS' is a good example of a more sophisticated site. As can be seen from the screen shot taken of the FARM-Africa PRESENTS homepage (figure 5.9), websites enable video to be used, here incorporating a simple film of a goat recipient and his goat into the webpage. Furthermore, the video is not just 'there' though; this video appears to have been programmed to open and begin playing before the rest of the page displays, which functions to draw attention to the video first. So in addition to the print and still

⁶⁰ <http://www.farmafricapresents.org.uk/>

images of paper catalogues, the internet can enable a variety of media to be used for a more complex presentation of material which allows stronger emphasis on particular aspects.

Another feature made possible by the internet that is shown by this website (figure 5.10) is the ability to send the alternative gift virtually, by email, which includes being able to email a link to a personalised film of the gift to the recipient. This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it means the alternative gift can be given immediately. Once paid for, it is instantly sent and delivered to the email inbox of the recipient. Alternative gift web catalogues emphasise this to be advantageous for individuals late with their gift shopping by enabling them to ensure their gift is received on time, even when all shops have closed and all post finished delivering. For this reason virtual alternative gifts can be understood to expand the timeframe of the traditional gift. Moreover, and secondly, the internet is thought by charities to be key to engaging individuals with alternative giving, and ultimately with the charity behind the alternative gift scheme, further. Paul Vanags talks of this in terms of the 'experience' of alternative giving and charity donation:

'We're trying to develop much more um, err, richer ways of, rather than just you buy this thing online and the money goes to Oxfam and you get a card, we're trying to find lots of different ways, particularly...on the internet digitally, to make that experience bigger, so you can see a video of your gift in the field, and you register for updates and you can um...log on to a website that registers what gifts you've received and suggest what gift your village, your virtual village, might need next...just to give a much...richer and different experience.'

(Paul Vanags, Oxfam)

The more interactive possibilities and ease of ongoing communications through the tools that the internet provides are thought by Paul Vanags to be particularly valuable for encouraging the continuation of support after an initial purchase or reception of an alternative gift. It is perhaps most useful to consider these developments in light of forms of

contemporary internet use, in particularly social networking. For example, with 28.1 million users in the UK in February 2010 (Guardian, 2010a), social networking site 'Facebook' has become a common form of social interaction, which includes the sharing of multimedia such as video and images. It seems a natural progression, therefore, that charities would attempt to build relationships with individuals by using similar technologies. Some charities have ventured into pre-existing networking sites, such as World Vision's application on Facebook which enables individuals to purchase alternative gifts there.

The 'virtual village' (see figures 5.11 and 5.12), referred to by Paul Vanags, is Oxfam's own creation, hosted on the charity's web space. It allows the user to create their own version of either of two villages, or an emergency zone, fulfilling the needs of the village as they receive alternative gifts from friends and family. While it provides a space around which an engagement with alternative giving can be sustained, it does give rise to some clear ethical issues around the notion of authenticity. Firstly, it is not obvious as to whether the two villages of 'Samutu' and 'Kidang Pao' are real places. It seems likely that they are not, being described as 'Oxfam Unwrapped Virtual Village[s]', and the virtual village concept being explained to be a 'game', but because they are explained to be located in Africa and South-East Asia,⁶¹ respectively, this builds a sense of them as real places, for which no clarity can be found on the website. Furthermore, because of the way in which Oxfam's alternative gift scheme functions, the money used to purchase the alternative gift may not even be used on the particular item represented. So although the virtual village concept is certainly interesting from an engagement perspective, there is potential for it to cause confusion and mistrust through the misleading sense of reality constructed in it.

⁶¹ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/content/unwrapped/virtualvillage.html>



Figure 5.11: ‘Oxfam Unwrapped’ Virtual Village⁶²

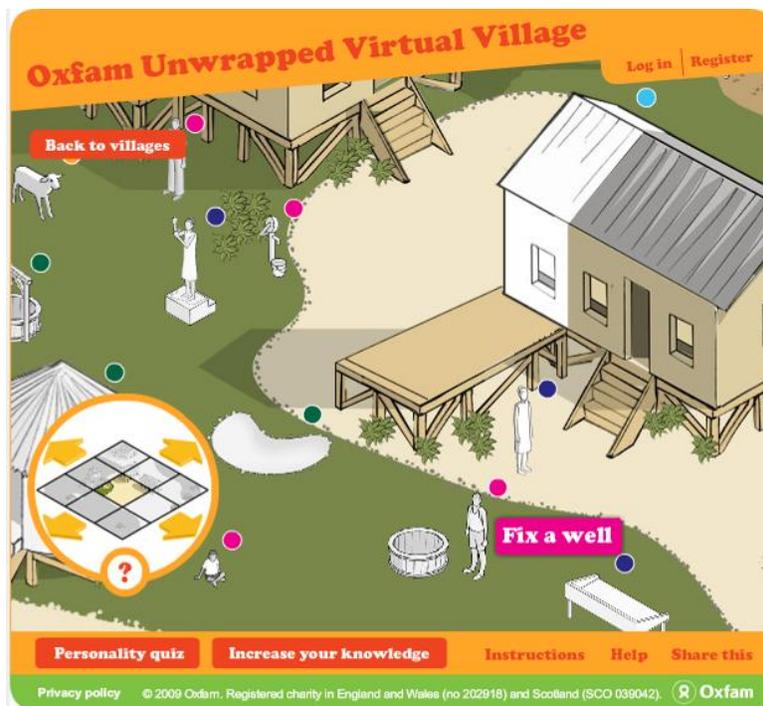


Figure 5.12: ‘Oxfam Unwrapped’ Virtual Village ‘Kidang Pao’⁶³

⁶² <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/content/unwrapped/virtualvillage.html>

There is also the potential for websites to enable the presentation of much more information about each gift than paper catalogues, including more of the back-stories associated with them, which might then be explored by the individual. Crucially, this on the basis of whether the individual chooses to access this information or not and so enables it to be there but without overly crowding the main pages and ruining the aesthetic. Ensuring there is not too much textual information on any one page of a paper or online catalogue is obviously a concern for alternative gift catalogue managers, with one negatively referring to part of an old catalogue with: ‘that page is really text-heavy’ (Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow), and therefore website technology provides a useful way to present an increased quantity of written information without compromising the appearance of it. This is relevant for the way in which additional information about the charity itself is presented too, as there can be a link from the alternative gift website to the main charity website which generally has information about the charity producing the alternative gifts and therefore means this is far more readily accessible than this amount of information about the charity would be with a paper catalogue. Again, one of the key points is that this is an interactive interface which is one of the attractions of the internet to the user (Ghose and Dou, 1998).

Finally in this section I will discuss the characteristics of the display spaces in terms of them as fixed or non-fixed and the public/private distinction between them. The question of fixed or not fixed applies to both the location of the technology and in the flexibility of the technology. One theme of this relates to the way in which they might be ‘browsed’. Figure 5.13 shows one catalogue which is organised into price categories. This is obviously a fixed form of organisation, similarly to shop displays of gifts (figure 5.14). In contrast to figure 5.7, earlier, it shows that gifts can be arranged either by gift type, price

⁶³ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/content/unwrapped/virtualvillage.html>

and, with the Oxfam Website, also by the type of person it is anticipated will enjoy receiving particular types of gifts and so is a much more flexible form of organisation. This use of categories of price and type of gift and type of recipient are very similar among many online versions of alternative gift catalogues, including those by Oxfam, ActionAid, Send a Cow and Practical Action.



Figure 5.13: Pages from Christian Aid’s ‘Present Aid’ catalogue, Spring/Summer 2009

Paul Vanags of Oxfam explained in an abstract way that it is largely understood that:

‘people are far more...goal orientated in their online behaviours, and less browsing, so people will flick through a newspaper, catalogue or book um, for a bit of idle, kind of, stimulation, when they’re online, for the majority, um, it’s about ‘I’ve got to go online to do x.’

(Paul Vanags, Oxfam)

And so the ability for website users to organise gifts on the basis of their own goals more – through different types of category depending on what they are most interested in targeting – facilitates this fluidity more than a fixed paper catalogue is able to.



Figure 5.14: Display of ‘Oxfam Unwrapped’ Gifts in Oxfam shop, Salisbury

Spatially though, paper catalogues are arguably far less fixed than online catalogues or shop displays, as they can be placed anywhere. Although the internet is becoming far more prevalent both through the introduction of wireless internet and mobile technology with 3G connection this still requires computer technology whereas, once produced, a paper catalogue is integral and does not require any additional support or technology. This is beneficial to the browsing approach that paper catalogues are attributed with soliciting, and might be said to have a ‘coffee table’ mentality. This means that they might be strategically positioned in places where people could have time to spare and therefore be tempted to idly browse through them, such as in the workplace coffee room. As such, although catalogues are traditionally thought of as a form of home shopping (Clarke, 1997; Crewe, 2000), they have the ability to transcend this theoretically imposed boundary and might be present elsewhere. That paper catalogues are also mobile means that they might

be taken away by potential purchasers, perhaps from the public to the private space in the home and picked up at a suitable moment. Shops, in contrast, provide a public display space, but electronic catalogues a private one – although accessible in public spaces it is only if an individual chooses to access it that they will and therefore is arguably a private form of access.

It seems that for many charities, the development of a form of fundraising that markets the work of the charity in the spaces of the commodity is one of the biggest advances with alternative giving. In examining the different display spaces of alternative gifts, it can be seen that different technologies and spatialities of these display spaces have implications for what, how, when and where individuals interact with alternative giving and therefore with development charities and their work. Each is significant for the different audience that it enables charities to attempt to engage, but it seems that the commodification of charity in this way has been especially pertinent for the development of an internet presence of charity that attempts to build desire to give through increasingly interactive participation.

There are, however, two main points of concern that can be identified here. Firstly, that the glossy surfaces of the commercial world only superficially build connections where there are none and therefore create the impression that the individual is doing more and causing more change than they actually are. Secondly, that this kind of technological advance only serves to widen the gap between large/professionalised charities, and small/voluntary charities. Despite the claims that the internet provides cheap return on investment, the mass engagement of individuals with such forms of charity demands that the interface with these spaces of alternative giving are to an internationally professional standard, requiring much investment in professional expertise in technical and artistic design. This potentially could

lead to an increasing monopoly of the largest charities, and a less vibrant community of charities seeking to tackle the problems associated with the need for development and, as de Waal (1997) writes, those charities able to prosper through the most successful marketing of their organisation to the public for fundraising purposes are not guaranteed to be the most effective at development. This is not to say that they are not, but more that the avenues through which a charity is able to gain most exposure and raise huge amounts of money, such as the internet, are not those which will always lead to the questions of effectiveness of delivery being raised in the minds of those engaging with charity.

5.3 The Spectacle of Alternative Giving: Entertainment, Ethics and Imagined Geographies

Having discussed the technologies and characteristics of alternative giving's display spaces, the second half of this chapter analyses the content of these display spaces and the marketing materials which are used to advertise the gift catalogues. Following an examination of the construction of alternative gifts as 'gifts', which identifies the centrality of the notion of 'promise' to alternative giving being gift-able, I argue that, nonetheless, spectacularisation of the gift in the display space is still highly evident. The spectacle of alternative giving plays out in three main ways. Firstly, by addressing development 'softly', and so approaching it through a mix of humour and 'fluffy' imagery and language to make it attractive and palatable to the 'Northern' gift audience. Secondly, through two ethical arguments present in alternative giving materials, one a religious social justice and the other an environmental justice, used in alternative giving in varying degrees to attempt to persuade the audience of alternative giving's value. Finally, the spectacle of alternative giving plays out in the imagined geographies of distance and difference, but equally of sameness, constructed through both the materiality of the gifts sold and the ways in which

the beneficiaries themselves are depicted, which I make visible in light of contemporary literatures of (post)colonial romanticised consumption. All three aspects are used within alternative giving to create layers of value, in place of a material use value for the recipient of an alternative gift.

5.3.1 The Construction of the Gift

The process of alternative giving – the way in which it is intended that individuals will interact with it – is organised around the notion of it as a gift. Throughout the catalogues and marketing it is set up in this way through the language and images used, in the way in which it is explained, and in what is provided. The very name of the type of fundraising ‘alternative giving’ and descriptions of the items for sale as ‘alternative gifts’,⁶⁴ ‘charity gifts’,⁶⁵ or quite simply ‘gifts’, immediately makes this impression of the process as one of giving a gift. The use of ‘gifts’ is made to have a dual meaning in the context of alternative giving, referring to both the giving of money to charity and of the giving of the representation of the item in the form of the fulfilment material as a social gift to a known recipient. As Oxfam Unwrapped explain, you:

‘1. Choose your gift...2. [get] a gift card [that] can be delivered straight to the recipient or directly to you so you can give your gift in person...3. your real gift goes to the people and communities who need them most.’

(Oxfam Unwrapped)⁶⁶

Therefore in this section I am going to examine the way in which each of these aspects of the process of alternative giving are constructed.

⁶⁴ As described by Plan UK on their alternative gifts homepage: <http://plangifts.org/>

⁶⁵ Described as this by Muslim Hands (http://www.muslimhands.org/en/gb/great_charity_gifts/), World Vision UK (<http://www.musthavegifts.org/>)

⁶⁶ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/oxfam-unwrapped>

The first aspect of this construction is the choosing of the gift. Choice is the emphasis in this part of the process, the essential construction of which is the very display of different gifts with different qualities and at different prices. By setting this up as a consumer process, choice is a quintessential feature, display being the technology through which the process of choosing is made possible. So the clear layout of individual gifts (as discussed earlier in terms of the basic features of these display technologies) is detrimental to this process. The presentation of the gifts thematically or through ‘gift ideas’ also attempts to assist this process of choosing. For example, next to the gift of three textbooks in the Plan UK alternative gift catalogue it is written by way of a mock gift label: ‘Happy Christmas Dad xxx You always urged me to study more!’.⁶⁷ Many of the catalogues try to assist in this way, suggesting how the gift choosing process might be done on the basis of what the known recipient might appreciate.

The sense of the items being a gift to be given to a known recipient is largely built around ‘special occasions’ – days which culturally involve the giving of gifts. It is intended that associations are prompted in the mind of the person looking at the catalogue by common cultural references that are made to such occasions in a variety of ways, both in the catalogues, and in the other forms of marketing that are carried out often very specifically targeted before these occasions. For this purpose, online gift catalogues are much more flexible, with changes able to be made relatively simply and easily, unlike paper catalogues where a whole new run would be required to be printed with any changes and so being more expensive.

⁶⁷ Plan Alternative Gifts, 2009 Catalogue, p.4.

Christmas has been discussed in terms of being a festival which is built around consumption practices and therefore as a ‘central component of the retail calendar’ (McKechnie and Tynan, 2006: 131). This certainly seems to be mirrored in the alternative giving sector. Paul Vanags of Oxfam explained how Christmas constitutes ‘seventy-five percent of our sales’, a significance showed by all but Muslim Hands of the charities I carried out interviews with. For this festival then, these charities have a specific version of the catalogue where possible. Christmas catalogues are demarcated as such by the thematic ‘decoration’ used in them. For example, the Cows ‘n’ Things catalogue uses tinsel, fairy lights and Father Christmas hats, and the Gifts in Action paper catalogue has snowflakes on the front cover, and holly leaves, berries and ‘snow-capped’ titles inside. There are direct references to Christmas in the text too, with the description on the front cover of ‘Forget New York! Do your Christmas shopping in Ghana, Guatemala, Nepal, Ethiopia...’,⁶⁸ and connections are also made between the actual items being sold at Christmas too, such as turkeys – synonymous with Christmas in Britain – being displayed on the front cover of the Present Aid Autumn/Winter 2008 catalogue.

The expense of catalogues and level of income generated at different times of year though was given as the explanation for not having more than two catalogues each year or for not creating one themed around each mass gift-giving occasion:

‘Easter and Mother’s Day have certain gifts which are intrinsically linked with them. Easter is obviously Easter eggs and Mothers Day flowers and chocolates...[so] it’s difficult for any commercial organisation or charity to try and sell...it’s products during that period because it’s already facing an uphill battle...so...we can’t justify spending a lot of money for those kind of events because we know that we’re not going to get the return that we do at Christmas.’

(Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow)

⁶⁸ Gifts In Action - ActionAid Gift Catalogue 2007.

As explained here, other gift-giving occasions have particular items which are traditionally given and therefore it is much harder, and less certainly worthwhile marketing alternative giving around them. For the charities that do produce one Christmas themed catalogue and one non-Christmas themed catalogue, there are still connections to gift-giving occasions in them to be found in the latter of these catalogues though. Christian Aid, for example, makes a reference to Easter with an image of a chick on the front cover of their Present Aid Spring/Summer 2009 catalogue. The significant gifts of Easter eggs, flowers and chocolates associated with particular occasions as cited above also provide the basis for gifts to be oriented by some charities. Prior to Mothers Day in 2008 Send a Cow produced an advertisement for mass publications with the main image as a flower. This was obviously one way of prompting alternative giving as being a Mother's Day gift possibility without the greater expense of producing a whole catalogue around the theme.

Depictions of specific gift-giving occasions are supplemented by a more general allusion to the practice of gift-giving. Again, imagery is important in establishing this construction of items as gifts, with clip-art style outlines of gift boxes with bows on the top, gift-labels and ribbons used either in conjunction with photos, or as a more integral part of the graphic design. Fundamental to the process being one of gift-giving though is the format of the fulfilment material. Despite there being variations from charity to charity of how the fulfilment material is configured, the overall construction of it is around the practice of gift-giving. This convergence is around the idea of either a gift card or gift certificate, both of which have a traceable genealogy in other forms of gifts which have been promised but not immediately, or in this case ever, delivered to the gift recipient. Forms of this gift-as-promise include vouchers for certain amounts of money produced by specific retailers which are delivered within a gift card and gift 'experiences' which are paid for and given to

the recipient in some form of certificate or card and then can be 'claimed' when the recipient decides to. The card and certificate both promise the recipient that which is stated. With alternative giving the promise is worth even more in many ways than in these instances of money voucher or gift experience. This is because the actual item will never be received or claimed by the first recipient. The promise that the charity makes is not something that can be checked up on by the individual receiving the gift, they must trust the charity for this to be the case.

It is this notion of the promise around which the final part of the process – the real item going to a distant beneficiary – is constructed. As was discussed in the previous chapter, this is a part of the process which varies a great deal between charities, but interestingly the way in which it is constructed is very similar in all of the catalogues. This is not to say that there is no mention in the catalogues of how the money is used – whether it is restricted, partly restricted or unrestricted. This is generally set out in relation to the explanation of the process in the catalogue. For example, in the ActionAid catalogue, it states: 'the money you spend will be used wherever the need is greatest to fund a wide range of ActionAid's work that will help the world's poorest communities to help themselves.', and similarly, on page 24 of the paper version of the Christmas 2007 Send a Cow catalogue it explains this in a section entitled 'so does your money really go on the gift you choose?'. However, in general, the impression is given that the specific 'gift' given will be received by the beneficiary recipient.

5.3.2 Spectacularisation 1: Skirting around the Serious

There has been made, both in the past and contemporarily, a strong connection between images of famine and the lack of, and need for, development in Africa (Watts, 1991). Mass

media coverage of particular famines, notably of the Ethiopian famine of 1984-5, has circulated shocking images of those suffering in catastrophic conditions to a huge public audience. Images have portrayed what Lutz and Collins (1993: 92) describe as an 'ugliness', showing famine 'victims' in states of starvation (Kleinman and Kleinman, 1996) and have not only been used to sell news, but also to sell charity donation. Symbiosis of media reporters and photographers with international aid and development charities has arisen in such situations where the latter have enabled the former to gain access to the 'best' reporting and images, i.e. the most shockingly affected people and places, and in return have gained the attention through such coverage on the back of which requests for funds from these charities has resulted in a huge influx of donations (de Waal, 1997: 83). The ability of such media reports to provoke the donation of funds for charities depends on their ability to shock the audience into a sense of compassion and guilt, and it is here that an issue with wholly relying on shock tactics to fundraise has arisen. Moeller (1999: 8-9) explains that reporting of famines and other 'natural' disasters in the 'developing' world has failed to summon the same degree of support as the Ethiopian famine of 1984-5 because of a 'compassion fatigue', caused by the feeling that these situations still occur, despite the in-pouring of money from the North. There is a certain degree to which disaster does still provoke donation, as one fundraiser suggested to me the South-East Asian Tsunami of December 2004 certainly appeared to result in an increase in donations (David Thompson, World Vision UK), but images of suffering can no longer be the mainstay of the fundraising of development charities. It is in light of this that the tonalities of Alternative Giving materials can begin to be understood. In contrast to the impression of suffering and pain, a great deal of alternative giving catalogues and marketing materials present development work in a different tone, using humour and the appeal of animals and small children to attempt to induce a very contrasting affective response in the audience.

Although not discussed in terms of the previous materials depicting suffering, one catalogue manager confirmed this tonality of their alternative gift catalogue in his description of it: ‘The tonalities of ours is obviously quite fun and quirky’ (Steven Greenberg, Help the Aged).



Figure 5.15: Front page of ‘Cows ‘n’ Things’ catalogue

These more positive humorous affective tonalities in alternative giving marketing are created in several ways, notably through the use of particular types of imagery and wordplay, especially in the form of puns which are often created through a linking of text and image in a certain way. From the outset Help the Aged’s catalogue, Cows ‘n’ Things, generates the sense of informality with the name of their catalogue which uses colloquial slang in reference to one of the more well-known alternative gifts.⁶⁹ Along with this title, the cover of the paper catalogue, and a starting animation on the website for this catalogue (figure 5.15) is of a cow piloting a biplane loaded up with cooking oil, a chicken and a goat, and with a beehive and chick parachuting down in the background (items sold in Cows ‘n’

⁶⁹ The charity Send a Cow were one of the first charities to have an alternative gift catalogue, and as such, along with goats, cows are a relatively easily recognised gift.

Things), onto a landscape which implies African rurality, and so giving the impression of the alternative gifts being delivered to be beneficiary.

Here, humour is created both through the anthropomorphism of animals and the use of them allegorically, the latter of these found to be one of the main sources of humour in television adverts involving animals (Lerner and Kalof, 1999). The notion of the cow piloting an aeroplane, which is indicated to the audience both through the place of the cow at the front of the plane, and by the wearing of flight goggles, creates the impression of a humanised cow. Additionally, the animals on board – chickens, goats, and chicks – are looking out of the aeroplane windows as if to be interested in where their journey is taking them, with the chickens wearing ear defenders, implying that they are protecting their ears from the noise of the plane. These are characteristics of how a human might act in this situation, with the activities undertaken by these farm animals here being ridiculous. Furthermore, the animation of these animals in this way makes them more exciting by being given more character and charm. It is not simply a cow that you might purchase from the gift catalogue, but an intelligent, likeable, ‘larger than life’ cow. The cow theme continues throughout with images of the cow delivering the gift-items in various modes of transport, including a boat and an off-road vehicle, and in these images they are decorated with tinsel and fairy lights, and the animals with ‘Father Christmas’ hats. This is the allegory of these images, that they are both the gifts and the sending of the gift, literally symbolising new arrival of the items, but also symbolising a sense of adventure for the animals (and hence for the purchaser of the gift) and a sense of rescuing the beneficiary in the barren landscape (SAS-style parachuting of chicks).



Figure 5.16: ‘Oxfam Unwrapped’ goat

Interestingly neither the charity nor the beneficiary are present in any of this imagery. The animals literally become the stars of the show in the web animation and catalogue images. This is true also of Oxfam’s ‘Unwrapped’ catalogue, where their goat has taken on character, essentially being the ‘face’ of the Unwrapped marketing campaign for many years (figure 5.16, see also figure 5.4). Using animal ‘characters’ not only enables humour to be used in a way that would be difficult with images of the beneficiary without being condescending and exploitative, but it also gives the alternative gift more personality and therefore a greater depth of appeal. Research has shown that images of animals are both uniquely positioned to readily portray particular meanings to an audience (Phillips, 1996), and provide a stronger sense of brand recognition to the audience than celebrities do (Hoggan, 1989), which gives the use of characterised animals here further purpose. The use of humour in fundraising is not unusual, for example with Comic Relief having this as the central theme, but the highly entwined way in which it is used in alternative giving is different. Whereas with Comic Relief the fun element is unrelated to the work of the charity, a separate event from the information about the reason they are raising funds,

alternative giving delivers the comic element through the depiction of the work of the charity, by basing it on the items they sell.

Despite the relatively benign use of animals for creating humour, the integrity of portraying the alternative gift items being airlifted in is questionable given the charities interviewed were keen to emphasise that they locally source the majority of items because of the benefit this has to the local economy, but especially livestock, both because of the legislative restrictions on transporting animals to and within counties, and because of the importance of using animals well adapted to the environmental conditions of the locale:

‘Everything is sourced locally. That’s *fine* apart from in some circumstances that’s difficult, like Zimbabwe where there’s, you know, inflation is...‘x’ thousand percent at the moment and so sourcing items is really difficult because the government set prices on buying certain items which means that ...they pretty much become unstockable, which means that you can no longer get the items you need ...which is part of the reason people are suffering so much in Zimbabwe at the moment – they just can’t get their hands on the stuff they need um, because import and export is just not working...So mostly that’s actually fine and you know, as an organisation...that’s committed to development we always try and support and encourage the local community and local economy and therefore it’s not about us sending, you know...Western ideas of what a textbook looks like over to Kurdistan, when they can source them themselves... it sounds awful but [even] when there’s a big emergency you, you actually find, like in Niger where there’s been a food shortage for a long time, you find actually that you can actually source things like [Plumpy Nut] more easily because there is – an economy has kind of sprung up [locally] to be able to provide it.’

(‘Kate’, ‘Aid International’)

Although the imagery used in the catalogue is clearly intended to be surreal and comic, there is still a degree to which the audience is able to buy into the possibility of an air drop of items, and an impression is created of the moving of goods from a land of plenty (such as the UK) to a barren wasteland where there is nothing, which is a highly misleading impression masking international and internal economic reasons for an imbalance of distribution of commodities and livestock with a false impression of natural resource

imbalance. As is explained by the catalogue manager (above), the real reasons for a lack of items can often be attributed to politics and economy and, just because a large number of people are not able to obtain these it does not mean that they are not available in that location where they are needed. The mis-representation in the alternative gift catalogue, for the sake of humour, means that important issues such as this are not raised for the audience, forsaken for the spectacular.

Another source of humour in alternative giving catalogues is from wordplay and puns. The importance of figurative language and literary devices has been highlighted in recent literature on advertising (Djafarova and Andersen, 2008; Ustinova and Bhatia, 2005) which discusses how rhetorical text such as puns, rhymes and alliteration is used to construct meaning beyond information (McQuarrie and Mick, 1996), as is the central argument of the concept of spectacle. Barnes and Duncan (1992: 3) explain that ‘far from being merely decorative, rhetorical devices are central to conveying meaning [because t]hey are the means by which we persuade’. One of the main rhetorical devices used within alternative giving marketing is that of the pun. In an article specifically focusing on the use of puns in advertising, McQuarrie and Mick (1992: 181) refer to a particular type of pun usage as ‘resonance’ which is, they describe, ‘a play or twist within the ad’s structure that serves to produce an echo or multiplication of meaning...[such as where] wordplay in the headline is reinforced by an accompanying illustration...a cliché or stock expression and then it is changed slightly and/or placed in an unconventional setting’. This type of wordplay is integral to some alternative giving catalogues and advertisements, with much wordplay being produced around the names of gifts and the connotations of such items to the British consumer, and also in relation to gift-giving and lifestyle in the UK.

In alternative giving, puns are primarily based on the gift items, combining text and image. The Practical Present's Alternative Gift catalogue states: 'The best range of practical gifts *baaaaa none!*' next to an image of a lamb, creating a dual meaning between the noise of a lamb, which is also an alternative gift for sale, and 'bar none' as in there are no exceptions to this. Oxfam Unwrapped also use this strategy in challenging the reader to 'Push the boat out' at the start of a description of the gift of fishing, which, in the same instance, makes reference to the purchaser being lavish in their gift purchase. Interestingly, there are more puns in the paper versions of the catalogues than in the online versions. This is true also of the use of quotes from 'satisfied customers', which again draw on the device of the pun. Oxfam especially have a strong history of using quotes in their paper alternative gift catalogues, including: "Instead of Christmas cards I bought my mates a bog. They got the message – this year they'll be spending their pennies on Unwrapped" (Oxfam Unwrapped paper catalogue Christmas 2008). The latter part of this quote references the particular British colloquialism of 'spend a penny' which refers to making use of a toilet, and so giving the double meaning of this and of purchasing a gift. In mentioning the sending of Christmas cards also, this quote refers directly to a practice that the individual browsing the catalogue might well be engaged in, therefore forging a sense of commonality between the audience and the quote, potentially making them decide that they too will change this practice of sending Christmas card to give an Oxfam Unwrapped gift instead.

In addition to the use of humour, a further way in which development work is 'softened' in alternative giving is, again with the use of animal images, through the use of warm and 'fluffy' tonalities. The 'cuteness' of furry and fluffy animals is something that is strongly played up. In relation to their gift of a 'fluffy duck', one catalogue manager described:

‘That’s a fantastic image...really cute, and actually who couldn’t sort of smile when they saw it’

(Paul McQuaid, Practical Action)

The affective capacity of certain images of animals is described here as powerful, with the potential to produce positive emotions in the audience. In the same way that Spears *et al.* (1996) explain that images of dogs in adverts are intuitively appealing, the same seems to be true for the young duck depicted in the Practical Action alternative gift catalogue. In that the duck is young, there is a vulnerability and fragility, potentially invoking a sense of wanting to protect and nurture the duck, but this is combined with a more material sense of the duck as soft and fluffy to the touch. These features of the image present an appealing image to the audience, akin to the depiction of a puppy, encouraging purchase both because of the immediate appeal, but also because this image forms the basis of the fulfillment material, making it attractive for giving as a gift. This is perhaps even more so with the combination of animals and children, considering the number of catalogues that have an image of a child holding a young goat, or caring for the goat in some way.

This especially highlights the spectacular nature of the way in which the items are presented. The appeal to the browser of the cuteness of the animals alludes to the appeal of a domestic pet, such as a cat or a dog. Unlike the domestic pet though the animals in the catalogue, as much of the written description of such gifts explains, are given to the beneficiaries for their use in the production of food and manure. Although rarely mentioned, this might well even involve the killing of the animal for food. The use of animals such as goats is largely emphasised as being for the production of milk, cheese and

manure. Out of eleven catalogues which were selling goats,⁷⁰ only one refers to the killing of goats for their meat or skins, and this is in a section separate from the actual gift entitled ‘Gift of a Goat – a Success Story’ where it is explained that ‘not only have children’s diets improved as a result of eating milk and cheese which the goats produce, but families are able to generate an income from breeding goats and selling meat, hides and manure’ (Plan UK Alternative Gifts Catalogue 2009).

There are indications that animals such as goats are used for their meat in other materials that the charity produces, for example with one leaflet, situated on the Send a Cow website very separately from their alternative gift homepage, explaining that ‘Of course, some animals are eaten. They’re generally killed on the farm, sparing them the distress of travelling to the abattoir’.⁷¹ This is also reiterated in a manual produced by Oxfam and FARM-Africa about goat farming (Peacock *et al.*, 1996) designed for development workers, where it is explained that not only is the meat a useful product from the carcass, but also blood, skins, bones and horns. In appreciating the way in which these marketing materials are produced though, it appears that this is not done out of a concerted effort to deceive but is more the product of decisions taken around the appropriateness of particular images and themes for the tonality of the materials. This indicates how particular ways of addressing the audience through the catalogue are nurtured and shaped for particular affects. Allusions to animal slaughter, abattoirs and carcasses rarely form part of this address.

⁷⁰ Oxfam Unwrapped 2008, Cows ‘n’ Things, World Vision Alternative Gifts for 2008, Great Charity Gifts, Present Aid Aut/Win 2008, Send a Cow Christmas 2007, Gifts in Action, Plan Alternative Gifts, Practical Presents 2008/9, Send a Cow Special Occasions Gift Ideas, Good Gifts Catalogue.

⁷¹ <http://www.sendacow.org.uk/ourwork/researchpapers/longreads>

The desire to largely produce only positive affective modes also appears to influence the kinds of gifts chosen to be included, not just the way in which they are presented. For example, The Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF) decided not include Uterine Prolapse in their catalogue because they thought it was too ‘grisly’ (Anna, MRDF). The centrality of the body, flesh, blood and pain to the imagining of this gift is deemed not to be appropriate for the tone of this kind of charity marketing. It is not that ‘fleshy’ gifts are discounted totally, but the majority of those included have ‘nicer’ imaginary qualities, such as the gift of a birth where the end product of a baby can be focused on rather than the more gruesome aspects of the process of giving birth. Another gift equally focused on the body and illness that was questioned as to its inclusion was deworming:

‘One thing that we did ‘um and arr’ about putting in was the deworming, we didn’t know if people would find that a bit distasteful to think about it, a bit disgusting, but actually that’s gone very well. That might partly be because that’s one of our cheaper items, or perhaps because once people have got over the shock of thinking ‘eugh, that’s disgusting’ they actually think ‘well, actually I’d hate to have worms, and if I had worms I’d want them treated so...so that’s a really good thing to do.’

(Kim Tame, Feed the Children)

As Kim explains here, the thought of deworming and reasons for needing it were thought by the charity to potentially be too disgusting to enable the inclusion of it as a gift. Ultimately they decided to include it though because it is something that individuals might be able to appreciate as a good thing to do. This certainly seems to be relatively anomalous though, with few such gifts being included.

Here I have explained the ways in which humour and positively affective images, particularly involving animals, have been used to spectacularise the items of alternative giving. Each adds layers of meaning to these items both to attract the audience and to provide a different sense of charity to that often associated with its work. Arguably the

context of the items in the charity is highly significant for the way in which the humorous and fluffy images are perceived by the audience so, although the charitable nature of them perhaps appears to be sidelined here, it is essential for the production of such affects in these ways. That the money does go to the charity is vitally important, but equally obviously not deemed to be an attractive enough in itself which is why there is the use of such marketing devices outlined. This means that the consumption element of alternative giving is spectacularised through the use of humour and fun, but equally it can be said that the charitable element has already been spectacularised in alternative giving, by the very turning of giving to charity into a consumption activity in that this gives it meaning which is in addition to that of charity. In the next section I discuss the way in which ethics is enrolled in the marketing of alternative giving, again adding extra layers of meaning so as to spectacularise the giving, but this time appealing in a different way, through making connections between the activity (rather than materiality) of purchasing an alternative gift and the ethical implications of this, to appeal to a reasoning for purchasing an alternative gift.

5.3.3 Spectacularisation 2: Ethical Modes of Address

There are two key forms of ethical narrative that are used in the spectacularisation of alternative giving, these being a religious ethic of charity, and a consumption ethic of sustainability. In that these are both ethics, they address the practices of the individual and offer them a practice that enables the individual to become a particular kind of person.

Several alternative giving charities interviewed self-identify as being religious: Christian Aid, Send a Cow, World Vision UK and Tearfund as Christian, and Muslim Hands as Muslim. Practices of charity are intrinsic to the teachings of both Christianity, where

charity, or agape, is viewed as a gift given by God (Clove *et al.*, 2005: 388), and Islam where it is one of the central pillars of the faith (Shahid Bashir, Muslim Hands). In all of the alternative gift catalogues for these charities there are indications of the religious foundation of the charity. The Muslim Hand's catalogue follows Islamic tradition in relation to the gift of Malaria Prevention that 'your gift will provide anti-malarial drugs, mosquito repellent creams, disinfectant sprays and drainage systems in order to guard the vulnerable and help save lives *insha'Allah.*' (Muslim Hands Great Charity Gifts,⁷² my emphasis). 'Insha'Allah' means 'God Willing' and is used in Islam to demonstrate a humble appreciation of the power of God's will in what takes place. Tearfund explain that they are Christians in a section at the start of the catalogue entitled 'About Tearfund' and hint at their religious ethos with the slogan 'be part of a miracle' on the front cover of their Living Gifts catalogue from 2007/8. The notion of a miracle is strongly connected to the actions of Jesus, written about in The Bible, and especially to the charitable, or agapic acts carried out by him, as a Christian audience would likely be aware. The Bible is directly quoted in Send a Cow's paper catalogues from 2007 onwards, where bible verses are used on their back covers, the Christmas catalogue's being: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in" *Matthew 25:35 (NIV)*' (Send a Cow Christmas Catalogue 2007). Again, this enables a connection to be drawn between the blueprint of Christian action, found in The Bible, and the possibility for action presented to the audience through Send a Cow's alternative gift catalogue. The indication of the religious credentials of Christian Aid is solely found in the name of the charity. Despite these uses of religious rhetoric though, there is evidence to suggest that the indications of the religious roots of charities are far

⁷² http://www.muslimhands.org/en/gb/great_charity_gifts/browse_gifts/

more subtle in alternative giving materials than they are in other fundraising and awareness materials produced by the charities.

While none of these religious charities hide the fact of their religious identity, there appears to be a relatively ‘soft’ approach to this – enough perhaps for an individual who identifies in the same way to make the connection between their own beliefs and that of the charity, but also probably not enough to dissuade those who would not identify in this way. The catalogues from World Vision UK and Christian Aid make no reference to Christian beliefs in their actual descriptions of the gifts, but in a leaflet unconnected to alternative giving, produced to raise funds at the Christian celebration of Harvest, Christian Aid provide written prayers and bible quotes.⁷³ Similarly, Tearfund put this aspect of the charity across much more strongly in other materials that they produce, quoting bible passages and encouraging prayer.⁷⁴ It seems that such explicitly Christian practices are not deemed to be appropriate to the space of alternative giving. The same can be said for Send a Cow, and their alternative giving catalogue manager explained the place of Christianity for their alternative gift catalogue:

‘it’s quite subtle....yeah, we don’t want to put...people off...we want them to recognise the Christian beliefs...mean that we’ll do...a fantastic job, in effect um, so communicating that to um....a....a more agnostic audience is difficult, and it’s something that we continue to strive on, it’s difficult to say more than that really...and...it will always be a work in progress, I think.’

(Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow)

Send a Cow ‘don’t want to put people off’ who do not identify with Christian beliefs. This demonstrates that the charity hopes alternative giving will reach a broader audience than a Christian one. Interestingly, the paper catalogue with bible quotes are largely distributed to a Christian readership, either through placement in religious publications or through mail

⁷³ Leaflet entitled: ‘5,000 Women, 5,000 Empty Acres, 50,000 Fed at Harvest’ *Christian Aid*

⁷⁴ Leaflet entitled: ‘With your help, hope can grow here...’ *Tearfund*

distribution to a Christian segment of the population (Richard Cottrell, Send a Cow), whereas the online catalogue which is more readily available to a wider audience, and a print advert placed in the non-religious Saturday magazine of national newspaper (The Guardian), have no trace of such prominent religious material.⁷⁵ Indeed, the advert in the Guardian contains no hint of the charity's religious basis. It seems that alternative giving is perceived by charities to be a promising way of engaging with individuals beyond the traditional, and likely more religious, donor base of the charity, and for this purpose they ensure that the humorous and consumer-based tone of the alternative giving material is not compromised by overly religious rhetoric. It is likely to still be in the background, and apparent to a religious audience so as not to alienate these individuals, but it does not dominate the catalogue or materials. In this respect then it might seem that alternative gift catalogues are designed for a broader audience than some of the other materials that charities produce.

An ethic of sustainable consumption is the second form of ethics which is used to address the audience of alternative giving. In this sense alternative giving can be thought of as a device for governing the consumption space in particular ways relating to articulations of what it is to consume ethically. This ethics is constructed by narratives around alternative giving, which positions the audience of these narratives as an 'us' in relation to a distant and different 'them'.

The advert for Plan UK's alternative gift range (figure 5.17) states the 'problem' around which part of the ethical reasoning is portrayed, immediately illustrating a mis-match between person and gift, with the advert playing on the ironic humour of the

⁷⁵ The Guardian Magazine, Saturday 16th February, 2008, 116.

inappropriateness of giving an older woman an exercise weight as a present. It is likely that she simply will not use it and it therefore is a waste of money and resources.



Figure 5.17: Plan UK’s ‘Alternative Gifts’ advert, Guardian, December 2007

ActionAid’s alternative gift catalogue begins with a similar message: ‘Everyone knows that finding interesting and original Christmas gifts that people will actually want can be a real challenge’ (ActionAid, 2007, emphasis in original), and an Oxfam advert asks ‘Remember what Santa brought you last Christmas? Chances are its long-forgotten and languishing at the back of a cupboard somewhere’. The reference to the past gift lying forgotten somewhere alludes to a waste of the material, and is linked by some charities explicitly, and others implicitly, to issues surrounding the disposal of excess materials. The charity Concern Universal spells this connection out in the strap-line for their alternative gifts, which is ‘don’t give landfill, give love’.⁷⁶ The implication is that the target audience of the marketing live in a society where there is very little wanted for or needed, that consuming beyond this point is unethical in the waste that it becomes, and that material objects are

⁷⁶ <http://www.concernuniversal.org/index.php?/what you can do/give love ~ gifts that keep on giving>

only ethical if they are not a waste but are needed, wanted and will be used. There is a general elision here of want and need which brings to the fore the difficulty of trying to separate out in practice superfluous consumption from necessary consumption, but the construction built through the alternative giving narrative is that there is a level at which consumption comes to be an excess, and therefore bad consumption, and that this is what the audience of alternative giving are in danger of doing.



Figure 5.18: Front cover of World Vision UK's 'Must Have Gifts' Christmas 2008

This construction of a lack of material need 'here', in places of donation, is contrasted with a positive need for the material by distant others – potential beneficiaries. Alternative gift items being displayed by charities relate to aspects of materiality that charities anticipate audiences will perceive to be necessary for life, such as clean water, food, shelter and education. This is the articulation of ethics in the narrative of alternative giving which forms a thematic, and imagined, connection, between us and them through the material. On the front cover of the World Vision UK catalogue it states in relation to its alternative gifts that 'These are the real must have gifts' (figure 5.18), and on a marketing card with the

same slogan it carries on by saying ‘How many other Christmas gifts are as essential as that’.

Oxfam’s advertisement urges individuals to ‘consider giving...something really worthwhile and helping those in need’. This is a juxtaposition of some aspects of materiality as being unethical and others as being wholly ethical. It brings to popular discourse Miller’s assertion about poverty that ‘what most of humanity desperately need is more consumption and more pharmaceuticals, more housing, more transport, more books, more computers’ (Miller, 2001: 227-8). At the same moment of constructing these ethics around materiality and consumption, in discursive narratives of alternative giving, charities enable individuals, in return, to address the ethical through their everyday practices – by purchasing, and giving, an alternative gift. For this narrative to work though, there is a large extent to which these gifts must be very simple and basic in nature, which is one of the concerns that campaigning organisation WORLDwrite have with the alternative giving and the impression that this gives of the beneficiaries and their ambitions. I discuss this next in a section about the material elements of the gifts themselves in alternative giving.

5.3.4 Spectacularisation 3a: Tangibility and Imaginings of the Material Gifts

Not yet discussed, but of vital significance to understanding the ways in which the gifts are spectacularised, is how the specific materialities of alternative gifts being offered for sale are involved in the construction of both alternative giving and overseas development work. This connects strongly to the section that follows which discusses the ways in which the beneficiaries themselves are represented in the promotional materials. Therefore, this section highlights the way in which the particular material items advertised impact upon how the catalogue and other connected representations are understood. Firstly in terms of

what is chosen to be sold and how that is organised, and secondly in terms of the images of the places and people where the items are going. This will then lead into the next section which will outline an imagined geography (Crang and Jackson, 2001; May, 1996; Valentine, 1999) of the beneficiary recipients.

Firstly, there is a particular quality of the items being sold which is perceived to be important by alternative gift catalogue creators – that the more tangible the items are the better they are received by the potential purchaser. The sense of a physical, bounded and quantifiable object was indicated by most charities as being a particular quality looked for in gifts to be considered for their alternative gift catalogue. As Paul Vanags of Oxfam explained:

‘One of the strengths and weaknesses of virtual gift schemes is that the tangible items, it’s all about tangibility really, so, things like ummm goats and toilets sell well, and advocacy and HIV/AIDS don’t sell well’

(Paul Vanags, Oxfam)

Tangibility in alternative giving is described as a strength because of the degree to which this enables charity to be situated as a consumer practice. However, this means that it restricts the kinds of work that can be fundraised for through the catalogue, with advocacy and HIV/AIDS being given as examples of less tangible, and therefore less ‘successful’ (i.e. less purchased) gifts. The importance of tangibility was reiterated in another interview where the more obviously ‘material’ aspects are discussed as being a way in which the broader work of the charity in a particular project can be ‘hung’, or used as a way to represent a much wider area of work:

‘Basically the projects are chosen by the guys, I will give them a guide of saying ‘look guys, we know these type of gifts sell within the market, um, within the alternative gifts market so to speak, if you want to sort of use the crass terms of commerciality on it, but we know that these, these have appeal, ‘have you got projects kicking around that need funding?’ and they’ll go off

and look, and if the projects come out then they say ‘yep, we’ve got this project’ or ‘we haven’t got quite that, but we’ve got something like this’ I’ll say ‘fine, what are the tangibles in it? What are the things that need, you know, that I can hang it off, or whatever, what’s the real price of this stuff’ um, and then the costs are calculated, we can’t, we basically get a US dollar price for what it’s gonna cost per item, so, we just look at the number of people who are going to benefit and how many things they need, divide the sum total of the project by that, to get ourselves a US dollar price and add a little bit on to make sure we cover our costs with, you know, marketing and fundraising costs and then we arrive at a pound price and know that actually, that’s how much it costs.’

(David Thompson, World Vision UK)

So although the gift itself is just one thing, chosen where possible for its tangibility, the price is calculated according to many other parts which make up the same project and which would not necessarily be suitable on their own merit for selling as gifts, so a particular goat project might consist of a certain number of goats, but then there would also be additional costs to do with this, such as vets fees, food, fees for transport, potentially official certification for moving livestock from one place to another, for example, which will be calculated and the costs shared by the number of goats in the project. A goat would be seen as a strong, sellable tangible, whereas few charities would want to rely on selling a ‘fees for transport’ gift in equal quantities as a goat. This though is where certain ethical issues surrounding the transparency of the gift item arises as it is not necessarily made clear what each gift specifically includes or whether gifts are project related (as discussed in Chapter 4).

The tangibility of alternative gifts is also used by some charities, especially those with larger numbers of gifts, to organise and group gifts into themes and make connections between the items and the potential for similar items to be used by individuals in the donor country. Christian Aid aims to find and situate gifts in this way:

‘We’ve tried to get a broad range of the work that we do and a broad range of costs, so to suit everyone’s pockets, for want of a terminology...we’re also trying to ensure a fit with people’s hobbies and things like that.’

(Daniel Charles, Christian Aid)

Among other reasons for selecting their range of gifts, such as ensuring a range of prices, Daniel Charles explains that they aim to include gifts that can be linked to the hobbies of potential donors and their alternative gift recipients. For making this fit with the hobbies of potential supporters then charities draw on the material aspects of the items displayed. Oxfam are one of the most prominent in their use of such connections, organising their catalogue gifts around hobbies-based sections such as ‘ideas for gardeners’, ‘ideas for foodies’, ‘ideas for animal lovers’ or ‘ideas for eco-warriors’. Within these sections the gifts being sold are connected, through their material qualities, to the hobby or character trait depicted in the section title. For example, within the ‘ideas for gardeners’ section there are gifts of ‘5 bags of seeds’, ‘plant an allotment’ and ‘tools for farming’, all of which a gardener in the UK might have experience of using themselves; they might know what a tool such as a fork or a spade used in the garden is like to use, what it feels like to hold and when dug into the ground. There is a sense in which they have a very real and tangible experience of the very material aspects of such a gift. The tangibility of the ‘animal lover’ gifts is also explained in this tangible way, as Paul Vanags of Oxfam explained:

‘There’s also the cuddly factor, so livestock does particularly well, it’s our bestselling category. Goat’s our bestselling gift.’

(Paul Vanags, Oxfam)

The description of it as a ‘cuddly factor’ indicates an association that may be being made between these relatively small, furry mammals and those, such as cats and dogs, which an ‘animal lover’ may keep at home, that these connections may be made between these kind of animals but not between other kinds of animals is emphasised by the location of others in different parts of the catalogue. The gift of ‘busy bees’, for example, is located in the

‘superwoman’ section of the Oxfam catalogue, rather than in the animal lovers sections as the same material connection of ‘cuddly’ cannot be made.

Of particular significance for alternative giving is that the gift items are for use in overseas development. This impacts on both the way in which they are perceived and the way in which the places they are going to are imagined. That the gifts are items for overseas development means that, despite the ability for connections to be drawn between those in the ‘North’ and objects used by donors, they are relatively unknown in their specific incarnations and, additionally, because of the differences in economies between the donor and beneficiary places, appear as relatively cheap to the purchaser. Stephen Greenberg explains that this means overseas development gifts are far better suited to alternative giving than domestic gifts would be:

Stephen: the UK approach is interesting but as I say it’s quite difficult to, to quantify an exact amount for an everyday item or a quirky item, people might raise an eyebrow and say ‘well I could probably get that cheaper myself’ and give it to the charity, or, you know, I think it opens you up a little bit more, um, and like I say, I think the multiplier effect, if you like, of seeing the pound go into the developing world, you can see how it, how it actually gives that effect

Louise: Yeah, so people actually feel that they’re getting more for the money that they give to you, in a way

Stephen: Yeah, yeah, it certainly looks good, if you like, value for money, which probably isn’t the right phrase, value for money, but it, they can certainly see that um, you know, if it’s sixty-pounds for a tea shop, wow, that’s next to nothing, but actually that’s what it genuinely costs you know, to set up a teas stall in India I think it was.

(Stephen Greenberg, Help the Aged)

Help the Aged are a charity that work in both the UK and overseas, but have chosen only to sell alternative gifts for their overseas work. It seems that individuals are thought to be more easily convinced to purchase items where they would not otherwise know the cost, either because they are not familiar with the relative economy of the places where the gifts are being given or because of the item being foreign to them.

In addition to there being a sense of the same demonstrated through connections being made to donors hobbies, there are some gifts where the sense of an exotic unknown is emphasised either through outlining a radically different use for an item than in the donor country, or by being an item associated with the exotic or different. For example, several charities sell what are known as ‘Grasscutters’,⁷⁷ or ‘Giant Rats’.⁷⁸ Whereas rats in the UK are generally thought of as being either a pest or a pet animal, it is explained by the charities selling them that in Ghana and Cameroon they are farmed as a delicacy. These rats will merely depict an unusual and different sort of lifestyle and place to the UK, other gifts will invoke a stronger impression of the where these places might be. Mosquito nets feature in several of the alternative gift catalogues,⁷⁹ an item which especially implicates place because there are only certain parts of the world where malarial mosquitoes are present, and therefore mosquito nets so necessary. HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, such as HIV education⁸⁰ and condoms for the prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission⁸¹ are also sold by some charities as alternative gifts, and are arguably equally related to understandings of particular places, but this time through the construction of where HIV/AIDS occurs, such as by media articles which predominantly list African countries including Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi and Lesotho as having HIV infection levels which are epidemic (Guardian, 2010b).

Furthermore, these gift items do not simply demonstrate differences to donor countries, but they also build a particular picture of what developing countries are like, arguably based on donor expectations as much as reality. The rural and technologically basic level of the

⁷⁷ Send a Cow Christmas Catalogue 2007 p. 10

⁷⁸ Concern Universal ‘Give Love’ Catalogue

⁷⁹ World Vision Alternative Gifts 2008, p. 12; Present Aid Autumn/Winter Catalogue 2008, p.8; Plan Alternative Gifts 2009, p. 4; Muslim Hands Great Charity Gifts Catalogue, p. 8.

⁸⁰ Tearfund Living Gifts Catalogue 2007/8, p.13.

⁸¹ Oxfam Unwrapped 2008, p.21

majority of alternative gifts displayed by charities have led to one advocacy group describing them as based on ‘nostalgia for mud’ (Harris, 2007). This is intended to mean that there is a romanticisation of subsistence living by the West, displayed to them in the gifts such as livestock, seeds and saplings which are invariably pitched to the audience as being given through the project to a family rather than to a symbolically more economically ambitious business or cooperative. Advocacy organisation WORLDwrite argue the latter is the real desire of Africans, and not the lack of ambition ‘Southern’ countries are portrayed as having alternative gifts.⁸² While not desiring to label either as being *the* right perspective to take, this view does highlight the extent to which there is a particular discourse of what development involves which is circulated, perpetuated, and satisfied by the kinds of alternative gifts marketed and sold, which emphasises the notion of difference and therefore distance through the materiality of alternative gifts. These kinds of gifts then are ethically questionable for the social constructions that they help sustain and encourage of donors in the ‘North’, and potentially signal an imbalance of power between donor and recipient, even if primarily caused by the expectations of beneficiaries expressed by charities through alternative gifts. I elaborate on this theme further in the next section of this chapter which examines the representation and construction of the beneficiaries of alternative giving.

5.3.5 Spectacularisation 3b: Alternative Giving’s Imagined Geographies of

Development

In this final thematic section I will consider the way in which people and places, namely those who are referred to as being the beneficiaries of the items being sold in the catalogue, are represented in the promotional materials of alternative giving and how these

⁸² <http://www.worldwrite.org.uk/keepingafricasmall/unwantedgifts.html>

representations constitute particular, constructed ways of seeing. It is highly significant that the marketing materials that I have outlined so far have all been created by charities describing themselves as being involved in ‘development’. For example, Plan UK describe their charity as being ‘a child-centered community development organisation...enabling families and communities in the worlds poorest countries to make lasting improvements to the lives of their children’;⁸³ Oxfam explain that ‘‘development’ is at the heart of what we do – and that’s helping poor people find lasting answers to chronic poverty’.⁸⁴ Many charities also do not shy away from referring to the countries in which they work as ‘developing countries’, and, with only two of the charities I have carried out research with also working in the UK to tackle poverty (the majority of charities work in the UK but only in an educational or climate change advocacy role), generally there is a clear demarcation of the type of charities they are, these being ones that work in developing countries. Contextualised as development, the beneficiaries of these charities are, therefore, primarily placed as ‘developing’. Development is not a natural category though, rather it is one that emerged after the Second World War and so is a ‘historically produced discourse’ (Escobar, 1995: 6). Significant here is that meaning is created between the images and the language of development, producing particular understandings of who, and where, the ‘developing’ are. Alternative giving marketing materials therefore play a significant role in the way in which meanings of ‘development’ are produced, working to maintain the categorical distinction despite inference in these materials to particular needs as being a shared commonality between humans, wherever they are and whoever they are. Before I discuss these points of tension in relation to alternative giving though I will outline the historical context of this discussion in relation to literatures on the colonial, the

⁸³ See: <http://www.plan-uk.org/about/aboutplan/>

⁸⁴ See: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam_in_action/what_we_do/development.html

postcolonial, difference and otherness, as these are themes which situate alternative giving marketing materials.

The places and people that are depicted in the images used in alternative giving cannot be thought of in the singular sense of their presentation in alternative gift catalogues, but must be considered in light of a long (colonial) history of depicting particular places and people as different and 'other', including in the taking of 'scientific' photos which enabled bodies and places to be visually constructed and connected in the making of empire in past geographical endeavours in colonised places (Ryan, 1998). This is an approach to these materials which treats them not as a simple portrayal of reality, but as bound up with, and to be understood within, the context of other texts and discourses (Barnes and Duncan, 1992). Binary distinctions between places such as West/East, North/South and developed/developing are well critiqued by Power (2003) as being particular, Eurocentric systems of ordering the world. As such, Power (2003: 97) argues that 'a kind of North-South geopolitics...emerged from the legacies of colonialism and the perception that 'under-developed' countries had distinct geopolitical considerations from those of western societies'. These legacies of colonialism were not purely geopolitical though, as McClintock (1995) argues, commodity cultures were essential to the creation of this sense of difference between the colonising and colonised places in the popular imagination of the coloniser population, through the sense created in the spectacle of particular everyday commodities. The imaginary has been a popular concept within geography following the seminal work of Edward Said (1995, 1998 also discussed in geography in Gregory 1994, 2000) which argues for the very real significance of imagined geographies. This concept has been taken in several directions relevant to alternative giving.

Power (2003: 6) discusses how there are sources and means through which the notion of 'developing areas', among other geographical constructions, are made sense of and argues that this is not to say that in identifying them as such constructions they are automatically wrong, but that they are necessarily partial, and inevitably 'fiction' in some ways because they are simplified and distorted – a perspective shared by Bryant and Goodman (2004: 345). It is around categories such as these that imagined geographies – the way in which places and those living in them are given meaning – are built: 'imagined geographies conjure up for us in our mind's eye a view of the world...many people will have the same or remarkably similar mental maps and imagined geographies of the world since in many cases they will have been formed using the same sources' (Power, 2003: 7). The marketing materials of alternative giving are one such source of an imagined geography of development because they represent places of development.

Imagined geographies have been discussed by May (1996) in relation to the exotic otherness imagined by certain demographics in their consumption of particular kinds of food. Whereas Said (1995, 1998) is primarily interested in these imaginings within literature, and Power (2003) within the geopolitical, May (1996) takes these ideas into the area of consumption. Although May (1996) focuses on the meanings taken and played out in the life of the consumer, he also gives critical analysis to the places from which these imaginings are, in part, referred to as being produced by. Especially relevant to alternative giving is work on the representations of distant others in fairtrade discourse, particularly in light of the emancipatory ambitions of both fairtrade and overseas development charity for a distant 'other'. As Varul (2008) writes, there is a tension in such consumption, between the attempt of fairtrade to dispose of the colonial legacy, and the post-colonial dreams on which a great deal of fairtrade images rest, which ultimately denies the ability for a 'final

decolonisation'. Glennie and Thrift (1992) argue that treating consumer learning as dominated by advertising is a narrow view, but as these readings of imagined geographies demonstrate, they are highly important for the play of power in a supposedly global society, both in the landscapes and people that are presented.

In light of this literature then, we can analyse how the sense of place(s) evoked is essential to the 'feel' of the alternative gift catalogues. This is not always immediately apparent from the cover of the catalogues, for example the Christian Aid, Oxfam and Practical Action Catalogues for 2008/9 all have cut-out images of animals on their covers which means there is no background landscape. However, within the catalogues themselves there are images of the gifts in-situ. This indicates that the charisma of the gifts themselves is seen as a more effective way of initially attracting attention than the resulting benefits of the gifts, as Paul McQuaid described of their cover 'star':

'We were struggling though for a picture of a donkey for the front, we decide/last year we had an alpaca which was really popular, it was a cute, quirky, cheeky alpaca, and so that worked and we wanted to do something more of the same this year, and in terms of the most popular gifts animals were really popular, people really do just love animals, and talking to the agency we thought, we'll change from the alpaca... and I thought... a donkey's probably more traditionally associated with Christmas, the agency came up with that sort of cheesy pun – 'a fantastic range of gifts all under one hoof' – so we needed a picture of a donkey, but...we couldn't find within our own sort of library an image...and we didn't want a picture of a tethered donkey, or a donkey that looked like it had been sort of maltreated, and obviously we try and work with people so they do look after their donkey's and so, um, our head of fundraising, because of her knowledge of err, the sector, and her contacts, she suggested we contact the Brook, err, the donkey charity, and they were great, and I just sort of said 'well can you help us, we need an image of an African donkey, happy, healthy, untethered' and they sent us a few through, found this one, cropped it out...and clearly it's/ he's the star, he's on the front cover.'

(Paul McQuaid, Practical Action)

Although Paul McQuaid explains that the image is of an African donkey, few would probably identify it as such and so not use this to make the connection between the image

and the place of the charities work, but the charity logo, also on the cover of this catalogue, does infer that it is about overseas development rather than, for example, the donkey charity where this image originated. The tagline of the logo is ‘technology challenging poverty’ and the combination of the image of the donkey and the word ‘poverty’ indicates a particular kind of work located in particular kinds of places, places associated with small-scale and subsistence farming. The implication that the donkey is part of the solution to poverty also marks a distinction between the UK – where donkeys are associated with seaside holidays and sanctuaries – and ‘less developed’ countries – where donkeys are used in agricultural production and for transport – as the Practical Action catalogue explains inside (Practical Action, 2008: 7). This sense of difference is also integral to the working of the humour in the slogan ‘Send a cow to Africa. We’ll send one to you’, which appears below an image of a cow on the front cover of the Send a Cow catalogue for Christmas 2007. This slogan creates a humorous effect by implying an absurdity of being given a cow in the UK – that a cow would be out of place in the majority of UK homes – compared with the commonsense of giving one ‘to Africa’ where there would be a real use for one. As the catalogue reassures on page 2 of the catalogue: ‘don’t worry. The animal we send you won’t be the living, breathing variety that is so desperately needed in Africa. It will be a large and colourful window sticker’.

A sense of the rural is strong in the more contextualised images also (see Varul, 2008; Wright, 2004 for a discussion of this in relation to fairtrade). Difference is portrayed through the type of rural landscapes shown, with dusty, arid environments and with buildings made from materials such as straw, wood and mud or, especially in the cases where the buildings shown are of those given as an alternative gift (such as

toilets/latrines,⁸⁵ or flood resistant homes⁸⁶) they appear as ‘basic’, being made of concrete, breeze blocks, and corrugated metal. There is no sense of luxury or comfortable furnishings – carpet, wall paper, etc. – that would be expected in the UK in the home setting.

Not all images are of a stereotypical arid African landscape in this way though – there are other ‘places of development’ represented also. A photo in the World Vision UK alternative gifts for 2008 catalogue shows a grassy, green field, some low-rise buildings that appear to be some kind of farm, and with a small hill behind on top of which are some conifer-looking trees – a landscape that could be located in the UK. This draws attention to the extent to which the people appearing in these scenes are important, for in the image discussed above it is the Bolivian child, wearing obviously non-western clothes and happily hugging a Llama, that indicates that this is not in fact in the UK. As such, in ‘Reading National Geographic’ Lutz and Collins (1993) have shown that the depiction of dress is significant for how people are imagined as different. However, and significant here, they argue that this is ‘not only true of the *National Geographic* but of other western photographic work on the third world as well’ (Lutz and Collins, 1993: 92). If wearing clothing that looks local then it might be seen as depicting a society that is stable and timeless whereas ‘western’ clothing implies that the wearer desires social change, material progress and westernisation, not just of their clothes but also of other areas of life.

The benefit of difference being depicted though clothes has the added benefit, Lutz and Collins (1993) argue, of being a matter of taste and therefore is much easier to accept and

⁸⁵ Practical Action 2008/9 catalogue p. 15; Oxfam Unwrapped catalogue 2008 p. 24.

⁸⁶ Practical Action 2008/9 catalogue p. 12

take on board than aspects of difference which may cause a conflict of interest. Equally, colour is important – orange on the shirt of a westerner might be seen as just this, whereas on the dress of, for example, a Buddhist monk, might become ‘saffron’. This can be said to be true of the Bolivian child in the World Vision UK catalogue where the red-coloured clothing he is wearing seems somehow authentically Bolivian, and similarly the women wearing brightly coloured clothing on page 3 of the same catalogue speak to a discourse of perceiving authentic, traditional African dress as being colourful and different from western clothes.

These indications of difference are arguably absolutely essential to the marketing of alternative gifts, but interestingly are not talked about in terms of trying to find photos showing difference, rather in terms of their beauty or that they might appeal to purchasers. As one marketing manager explained of a particular photograph he was discussing in relation to their approach for selecting images:

‘It’s great, it’s what we’re about and it’s a really positive image – he’s smiling, happy, and it’s just a really beautiful shot.’

(Paul McQuaid, Practical Action)

This indicates that there is a particular mind-set of those who create alternative gift catalogues about what makes a good image to use, that they select on the basis of what they believe to be a universally engaging photo and not on the basis of what demonstrates a difference to their audience. So it might be said then that the perception of difference is integral to this aesthetic and therefore is part of a development discourse from which alternative gift catalogue marketiers are speaking from. Although involved in the perpetuation of the discourse, it only makes sense – subconsciously – because this is the point from which it comes from. That these images might be understood by the broad

audience of the materials was indicated in an interview with the Plan UK alternative gift catalogue manager:

Louise: So have you had any projects that have been particularly popular with the people that have bought gifts?

Jane: um, you do get what are like, in retail speak, bestsellers, yeah, definitely. Ummmm, so, it's, again it's you know, sometimes it's quite difficult to tell what has created that, whether it's the price, or *whether it's the photograph*, or whether it's the theme, um

(Jane Parsons, Plan UK)

Photographs are certainly indicated here then to be a strong point of selling, and therefore significant in the production of appeal to an audience. They certainly are thought to be an attractive aspect of the alternative giving materials to these people,⁸⁷ but the potential for them to read the notion of difference from these images was not discussed in these terms, only in more general terms about the qualities of the images.

I have taken the notion of difference, and particularly development as indicated by difference, to be highly significant in the production of development discourse in relation to the materials of alternative giving. However, the notion of the fetish is also essential in alternative gift consumption. Goodman (2004) identifies a process of defetishisation and refetishisation in the marketing of fairtrade coffee (see also Hudson and Hudson, 2003), and it certainly seems that this is at work in alternative giving too. As discussed in Chapter 4, alternative giving operates by the construction of itself as transparent and open, functioning in fact only through this transparency of understanding as to where the gift will go as this is how the alternative gift is given meaning. Through the use of images of others, and depictions of development though these, alternative gifts become fetishised, using images which operate within a meaningful discourse to identify them as other and to give

⁸⁷ This will be discussed in terms of my research with these groups of people in the next chapter.

the gifts a point around which they are sold. On the surface these images allude to a greater degree of transparency because they depict actual beneficiaries of the gifts, but this is instead a moment of fetishisation because of the careful way in which the images are selected and the simple fact that this is not the beneficiary who will be getting the gift of the purchaser since this is a person who has already received the item. Although a beneficiary of the charity, this may well be an image that is in their photo library and used for the additional meanings that it can transmit to the audience.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the way in which alternative giving enables charity fundraising, specifically and uniquely that which is based on the very work of the charity, to become embedded in spaces of the commodity. I have examined this both in terms of retailing display spaces that alternative giving operates through and in terms of alternative gifts as charity-turned-commodity. This has been carried out by charities so as to reach new audiences and appeal to them differently to previously, with alternative giving enabling a more positive and warmer image of overseas development charity to be created. Additionally it has enabled charity to be made available to the already-existing practices of gift-giving of these individuals; in this construction of alternative gifts as gifts, gift-giving is explicitly moralised through the marketing narratives of alternative giving which situate the alternative gift as ethical and more traditional gifts as of questionable ethical value, or worse, as unethical, in the waste that is produced.

In that alternative giving deliberately connects the work of the charity to the potential donor through the commodification of items supplied by the charity to the beneficiary complex ethical terrain is created, reminiscent of that produced in the marketing of fairtrade (Varul,

2008). In alternative giving there are two key motions of discord. First, between the egalitarian aims of the charities and the use of post-colonial representations of difference which are used to market the gifts. And second, between the notion of de-fetishised charity in the transparency of connection between the donor and beneficiary, implied by the idea presented by alternative giving that the donor is purchasing a specific item, and the actual fetishisation of alternative giving in that, for the alternative gift catalogues examined, the very notion of the alternative gift is a spectacle in itself. The commodification of charity work for this purpose of fundraising has led to additional layers of meaning being created so as to make development work meaningful to a broad audience, but this compromises the very purpose of these charities through the reinforcement of imaginary geographies of development as different, rural and basic, limiting the ability for this to be imagined, and 'developed', otherwise. Additionally, the material focus of the commodity means that the alternative giving format is only able to present tangibility in the majority, and the tone of this space is unsuitable for material that is too 'serious'. Development work, as represented in alternative giving, is, therefore, only one part of the discourse and produced with the preferences of consumer (donor) audience in mind.

I have, however, only addressed the representations of alternative giving in this chapter. In the next and final empirical chapter, I turn to examine the ways in which alternative giving is engaged with in practice. I do this in order to present a (potentially) alternative story of alternative giving which both concurs with and challenges the critique which has been presented here.

Chapter 6

Practices of Alternative Giving and Receiving: Ethics Before, Between and Beyond?

6.1 Introduction

‘Through most discussions of consumer behaviour runs an unposed question: what were the sources of consumer knowledge? In the late-20th-century West, a key role is played by advertising: ‘a set of purposive procedures for producing consumption’. Advertising redefines the scope of what are considered necessities; expands definitions of ‘necessity’ when introducing new products; and attempts to change the ways in which people relate to ordinary articles by making the ordinary seem extraordinary, primarily through the use of the spectacle. In this view, advertisers control consumers by the knowledge they impart...[T]o treat consumer learning as dominated by advertising is a narrow view’

(Glennie and Thrift, 1992: 433)

‘A concentration on advertising and product design materials means that the complex material biographies of commodities and the variety of meanings which (can) get attached to them are invariably ignored’

(Cook and Harrison, 2003: 299)

The aim of this chapter is to critically interpret practices of purchasing, giving and receiving an alternative gift. In recognising alternative giving as a constructed fundraising device, the recipients discussed here are those of an alternative gift in its specificity rather than the ultimate beneficiary and so the focus is on how alternative giving’s representational materials are used in practice. Geographers engaged with the study of practice have recently argued that representations should not only be interpreted in their own right but must also be considered for the ways in which they are used, or further might be said to have a life themselves (Dewsbury *et al.*, 2002). This perspective has been particularly obvious within work on consumption that has ‘respond[ed] to the challenge of taking materiality and practice seriously’ (Gregson *et al.*, 2009: 249). Neglecting such practices of alternative giving would also be to advocate the ‘narrow’ view of consumer

learning criticised by Glennie and Thrift (1992: 433), by taking as given the governing power of alternative giving, and to ignore the meanings which get attached to it (Cook and Harrison, 2003: 299). Relatedly, the aim is not simply to understand consumer learning from a traditional viewpoint of knowledge as that which is consciously thought about, but to also lend importance to the felt, affective elements of learning that Soper (2007, 2008) argues are so crucial to understanding why more ‘ethical’ consumption practices are adopted.

From the outset it should be noted that the ‘consumers’ – the givers and receivers of alternative giving – do not simply follow the gifting model presented to them by the marketing of alternative giving. This model defines a narrow version of events, almost solely portraying them to be appropriate for occasions which involve an individual giving a family member or friend a gift. Instead they also are used innovatively in a plurality of situations, including: as school prizes; for sharing between a community such as a church, business or school, that have bought them or fundraised for one or several as a community; or simply for retaining by the purchaser. Already this demonstrates that practices are not fully or simplistically governed by alternative giving narratives. Although the primary focus of situations of giving in this chapter will be on those from one individual to another, these other gifting situations will be drawn on to gain greater purchase on alternative giving practices. Additionally, this range of improvisational uses indicates that alternative giving has an appeal beyond its specified use. It seems alternative giving is an attractive option to those who want to be involved in charitable giving more generally, raising the stakes in terms of the significance of alternative giving for the future directions of charity fundraising.

The purpose of this chapter then is to understand why alternative giving is practiced and what it means for those involved, particularly in terms of ethics because this is the very quality that supposedly sets an alternative gift apart from others. Addressed in this are questions of why alternative gifts are purchased, what happens to these gifts beyond this point and how they become significant (or not) to those involved in this, and what the place of the beneficiary/charity is in these practices. To do this I draw on interview and focus group material to analyse what is said by the givers, receivers and target audience of alternative giving and their relationship both to alternative giving and to the charity and its work. As I argued in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), the representational materials produced by the charities function to construct and reinforce a North-South dichotomy which is so deeply ingrained in the charity culture (re)produced by overseas development charities. However, by paying attention to nuances of interaction by purchasers/givers and receivers there becomes room for any other possibilities, including those where consumers are not so dominantly governed by these representations.

In the sections that follow I discuss first the activities involved with purchasing/giving an alternative gift, and then those associated with receiving one. Although these divisions are superficial because the gift is created in the giving, these roles do carry with them different types of practice to be considered. Throughout these sections the sense of the relationship of giving is ever present, but it is only in the final section that I fully explore this aspect of alternative giving.

6.2 Purchasing an Alternative Gift: Donating to Charity through the Gift

In alternative gift marketing (discussed in Chapter 5) it is primarily the gift purchaser who is targeted.⁸⁸ It is the giver who is being addressed through the material and urged: ‘Don’t give landfill, give love’.⁸⁹ The situation presented is one where the giver decides, independently of any influence from the recipient or others, to give a friend or relative an alternative gift; it is a moment of enlightenment that strikes the unwitting purchaser. This is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, because it is the ethics of *giving* rather than of receiving that are being addressed by the marketing narrative, and secondly because of the simplistic portrayal of the ethical decision-making process in such slogans. In this section I examine the laying of the ethical imperative on the giver, in asking who it is who gives an alternative gift. Following this I analyse the role of ethics in practices of alternative giving, moving away from the idea that ethical consumers become ethical in the moment of realisation produced by the ethical imperative in the marketing of such items, to a notion that dispositions are already ethical and decisions are taken in ordinary situations of everyday life (Barnett and Land, 2007). This is not to say alternative gift marketing is unnecessary and ineffective, but rather to ascribe to it a different role in alternative giving practices than is apparent from its message. In talking about who alternative gift givers are my aim is to consider how these people talk about themselves, rather than relying on assessing these people as being influenced by the ethical narratives of alternative giving.

As with other forms of ethical consumption, such as fairtrade or organic products (Barnett *et al.*, 2005a; Clarke *et al.*, 2007), the marketing of alternative giving addresses the purchaser. Unlike these other forms of ethical consumption though, alternative giving is

⁸⁸ The main exception to this is wish-list and wedding list marketing by several of the charities involved.

⁸⁹ Concern Universal:

http://www.concernuniversal.org/index.php?/what_you_can_do/give_love~gifts_that_keep_on_giving

explicitly and quintessentially a gift – its aim is to make gifting practices more ethical. Logically then it should be that givers of alternative gifts are actually giving the recipient the capacity of being charitable and so are being made into an ethical recipient, making the giver merely the facilitator of this ethical behaviour. In this instance then the purchaser would then be thought of as a-charitable, or a-ethical; it is not *their* gift to the beneficiary. Conversely, my research with alternative gift givers supports the perspective of the marketing and charities, that the gift being charitable, and therefore ethical, is highly significant to the gift purchaser as a subject:

‘The thing that made me want to [buy and give an alternative gift] in the first place was the idea that you could combine making a donation to a charity or project um, with...being able to give a gift or something, which seemed quite a good idea because if you’re looking for good gifts, or interesting gifts, or whatever, that’s quite cool to be able to actually do, sort of, kill two birds with one stone if you like [...] I guess I like giving people that kind of thing because it makes them think, or, like I said before, or because I know that they would prefer the money was spent in another way other than another bit of tat to put on the mantelpiece, or whatever, you know.’

(‘Thea’, Giver and Recipient)

Thea starts by explaining that she likes alternative giving because it means charity donation can be brought into the giving situation, indicating that she has an affinity with donating to charity herself. It is not simply that she perceives alternative gifts to be something to give to someone who gives to charity and would like to receive the gift of this. Instead there is a real emphasis as it being *her* who was drawn to the charitable aspect of them. That she thinks of alternative gifts as being ‘good’ in their own right is emphasised in the derogatory reference that she makes to the possibility of material gifts being ‘tat’. This is again indicated by an extract from an interview with Rachael, a giver and recipient:

‘If the person receiving that also knows that [it’s fairtrade, charitable] I think there’s a...there’s something, something extra comforting receiving gifts like that, that has made the person buying it think...more about where their money is actually going, and so the person receiving thinks ‘ah, she has actually thought about that present for me’ and so maybe appreciate it more.’

Rachael describes how she thinks ‘ethical’ gifts such as alternative gifts and fairtrade items are ‘extra comforting’ to receive. Of particular relevance here is how Rachael expresses her identity as a giver through a discussion of the way she would feel about receiving such ethical gifts which further supports idea that the givers of alternative gifts should not be thought of as a-charitable, rather they project their own ideas about receiving onto the gift they choose.⁹⁰

There are two main characteristics of the individuals who purchase/give an alternative gift that are most important for the discussion here. Firstly, that they are already disposed to charity and secondly, that they are consumers in their approach to alternative giving. In many ways it seems like I am making a false distinction in this section between the practices of these individuals and who they are, given that I later discuss these practices as an important aspect of subjectivity. However, the aspect that I am aiming to get at here is the purchaser disposition which, although strongly bound up with practice, can be considered separately for understanding the connection between subjective ethics and ethical practice. I want to introduce this theme of ‘who’ these people are prior to these other discussions so as to provide a framework for thinking about this question in these later sections.

I will explore these quotes further in the following discussions of who the individuals that purchase the gifts are and of how the gift relationship is made complex in the intention of it being made ethical.

⁹⁰This was also explicitly recognised by several interviewees who had wedding lists with alternative gift catalogues but still had gifters who did not want to purchase them an alternative gift from this, saying they wanted to get them a ‘real gift’ as a present.

6.2.1 Who Gives Alternative Gifts? Givers as Ordinarily Ethical Consumers

It is useful here to turn to Cloke *et al.*'s (2007) 'ordinary ethics' (see also Clarke *et al.*, 2007) for a concept that helps to explain further the individuals who purchase alternative gifts. Cloke *et al.* (2007: 1092) use ordinary ethics in their research on homeless shelter volunteers to describe how a specific ethical practice, such as volunteering, does not happen in a vacuum but is built on a foundation of ordinary ethics. Essentially this brings to the fore an understanding that overtly ethical practices emerge in the *ongoing* production of a subject; an ordinary ethical individual might then develop into being a subject engaged with what Cloke *et al.* refer to as 'extraordinary spaces of care' (2007: 1092). It is highly questionable whether a single donation to charity as takes place in alternative giving constitutes such an extraordinary space of care as that of Cloke *et al.*'s (2007) research; volunteering in a homeless shelter demands a great deal of commitment of time, activity and potentially even physical danger from the individuals involved that alternative giving does not. Nonetheless, ordinary ethics provides a framework through which to understand how alternative giving appeals to an ethical individual who is already disposed to being involved in a practice of care. The role of alternative giving is simply to prompt the disposed individual to take action and then enable them to take this disposition forward into this new space of care.

To both Thea and Rachael, the idea that alternative giving is a 'good' thing because it enables money to be given to charities does not appear to be a new realisation. It seems that they both see alternative giving as a way of taking their disposition for care/ethics/charity into the new space of gift-giving. Thea articulates this with the explanation that she likes the way that alternative giving makes it possible to give to charity while also giving a gift, and Rachael makes connections between alternative giving and

other forms of overtly 'ethical' consumption, such as fairtrade, that she already is engaged with, indicating that alternative giving is simply one new expression of her already ordinarily ethical disposition. This makes clear that rather than an emphasis on converting the uncharitable into the charitable, as alternative giving appears to think it needs to attempt (and indeed other charity campaigns do with some using hard-hitting imagery and challenges to an individual's charitability), individuals should be understood as already ordinarily ethical individuals who use devices such as alternative giving as opportunities to take their ethical dispositions into particular charitable spaces. Notable instead is that this alignment of alternative giving with ethical consumption narratives enables these individuals to see how they might also choose to purchase an alternative gift as part of their already ethical disposition, such as with Rachael aligning it with purchasing fairtrade items.

Building on this, I want to animate the alternative gift purchasing and giving subject with the idea that they are a consumer. This is essential for understanding who these people are. In doing so it is possible to consider the wide range of values that are taken into consideration in the process of choosing an alternative gift, particularly in relation to how they have chosen what to purchase and which charity from as discussed in the sections that follow. This makes a difference because it means within the broad category of alternative gifts – all of which could be considered as being overtly ethical – keep other values equated with consumer behaviour can be observed as playing a role, for example concerning the quality of the items purchased and the suitability of them as a gift, and the cost of the items. As will be discussed later, many interviewees had an opinion about the physical appearance of the fulfilment materials, with one potential purchaser describing the gift cards of one charity as 'not good enough', and the price of the items was almost solely the first delimiting factor of starting to decide which gift to purchase: 'I think it was down to the

cost to be honest...whichever ones were in the price range' ('Rachael', Giver and Recipient). However, the role of rational decision-making behaviour appears to have a more ambiguous role in the gift purchasing activity than Rachael implies.

Indicative of the ambiguity in the purchasing and giving subject in alternative giving is the way in which decisions are made around value for money when choosing an alternative gift. Value for money is discussed by purchasers as being significant to the *type* of alternative gifts chosen, but seemingly bypassed with regard to which charity they decided to purchase the gift from. In one of the focus groups I carried out there was strong agreement that items sold by overseas development charities as alternative gifts were particularly good because they showed how with very little money 'you can make a difference [...and] it feels like you've done something' ('Mary', Focus Group, 15th March 2008). This reason for choosing an alternative gift was reiterated by others:

Vicky: I don't know if that would have quite the same impact. Um...yeah, it's a bit different, kind of...like this is quite unusual because it's talking about somebody in India, and it's like, oh, we've helped someone do something. But yeah...buying a lab coat or buying test tubes or something, it doesn't have the same sort of appeal to it.

Louise: yeah. I suppose the gift you got seems a bit more life changing in lots of ways?

Vicky: yeah, it does.

('Vicky', Recipient)

In one way then a gift from an overseas development charity seems to represent better value for money than a gift from a medical research charity, because it seems like more can be done with less money. Equally though, Vicky also added that a gift of a lab coat for charity Cancer Research UK would not 'feel' the same, indicating that there is something over and above the idea of value that means she thinks an overseas development gift makes

a better gift.⁹¹ Additionally, none of the purchasers interviewed indicated that they had compared the cost of similar items from one charity to another. Although one of the focus groups noted a difference in price between catalogues of the same gift items (a goat, for example), they nonetheless found laughable the idea that there could be an opening for a price comparison website for these same alternative gifts. It appears then that although alternative giving is constructed around consumption, these notions of the consumer subject must be understood not only within an economic notion of value, but that these ideas of value change within this context of the item purchased being a gift for someone else, and so needing to be suitable for that. That said, this observation is not new to consumption studies critical of traditional consumption theories that rely on the concept of ‘economic man’, asserting that consumption is never purely economic but involves ordinary forms of care and morality (for example Belk, 1995; Clarke *et al.*, 2008; Crewe and Gregson, 1998; Micheletti, 2003; Sayer, 2000, 2003).

The notion introduced here of the ordinary ethical consumer purchasing and, significantly, giving an alternative gift, based on understanding these people as already ethically disposed and as going about their alternative gift purchase with both considerations of value for money and more long sighted considerations of the gift recipient, will be expanded upon in the section that follows. This will consider why it is that alternative gift givers decide to give alternative gifts.

⁹¹ At the time of the interview (February 2009) Cancer Research UK had an alternative gift range, but this appears not to be in operation any more. Vicky’s feelings about this are perhaps indicative of why this might be the case, with medical research items not having the same ‘appeal’ as a gift as international development items might.

6.2.2 Why Do Givers Get Involved with Alternative Giving?

The question of why individuals decide to give an alternative gift can be considered in two ways. Firstly, as to why a giver decides to opt for a charity-based gift rather than a more traditional gift, and secondly why they specifically purchase/give an alternative gift – what appealed to them about this – rather than, for example, giving a straightforward monetary donation to a charity and telling the person they had donated this money on their behalf as their gift to them. For many purchasers involved in this research it seemed that alternative giving presented an opportunity that had not previously been available, but that this was discussed in different ways in relation to their previous practices and feelings about charity.

For some, the emergence of alternative giving was discussed as solving a problem, fulfilling a need that they identified as existing prior to alternative giving. Alternative gifts offered them an appropriate solution to their problem:

Chris: We got fed up with buying each other socks or not knowing what to buy each other.

Yvonne: Yes, and I think at that time the gifts came on stream, or became very obvious. And, well, we thought that we had enough of other things probably.

(‘Chris’ and ‘Yvonne’, Givers and Recipients)

Although it seems from this dialogue that alternative giving became apparent to Chris and Yvonne at around the same time as they felt dissatisfied with the gifting pattern that had prevailed over the course of previous years, they discuss it as being something they had noticed which they could then change to doing as a solution to their problem, rather than something which made them notice, or brought about, their dissatisfaction with their giving situation. It seems that their reason for purchasing alternative gifts was because they provided a solution to a gifting problem. The nature of the problem with the previous Christmas giving situation is elaborated upon later in the interview:

‘Mostly I feel happy really because I think...compared to people in these countries we are actually very well off...and we have most things we need...and I think, we still do have some presents to open and so on ...it’s quite difficult really. I find Christmas quite difficult because you know we’re people that are well off anyway and then to have all these presents at Christmas, although it’s lovely, it’s um...it can, it’s a bit sort of, we don’t really need all of them in vast quantities really.’

(‘Caroline’, Giver and Recipient)

Caroline perceives Christmas as a time where the giving of gifts is necessary, an intrinsic part of Christmas being an enjoyable celebration, but equally one which heightens their awareness of how much they have materially, especially compared with other people in other places. Because of their relative wealth Caroline says that she finds Christmas a difficult time of gifting because giving and receiving more material gifts comes to seem excessive, threatening to spoil the happiness at this time. A similar sense of unease about unequal fortune and blind celebration was also expressed by Sebastien in explaining his and his wife’s decision to have an alternative gift wedding list:

‘We are the type of people who think we forget too much about the problems of others at Christmas or during weddings.’

(‘Sebastien’, Recipient)

Implied here is that the hedonism that threatens to dominate such occasions as Christmas and weddings should be ethically transformed by participating in gift-giving activity which not only reminds of individual wealth but that also addresses this imbalance in a practical way.

Although these givers do not attribute their dissatisfaction with more material gifts as being shown to them by alternative gift marketing, it does echo one particular narrative which runs through much of this marketing which was discussed in Chapter 5. This is the same with another giver that I interviewed:

‘I think the bottom line is that there’s a very strong kind of commercialised culture in our country as with giving gifts and spending a lot of money and like, I mean the reason I chose this for my grandparents was because I knew there wasn’t anything they needed and I didn’t feel there was much point in me spending ten pounds on something that they were never going to use, whereas I could spend ten pounds on something they actually kind of appreciated the thought in it and actually was having a benefit for somewhere else.’

(‘Sophie’, Giver)

Again, Sophie echo’s the anti-consumerism argument which is found in narratives of alternative gift marketing, but equally does not state that it was the marketing which made her think this about gift-giving. For Sophie though this is expressed in terms of her being a responsible giver because her choice had implications for the gift that her grandparents would be obliged to receive from her, but for Caroline and Sebastien this responsibility is expressed as a broader one to the materialism of the occasion itself. Alternative giving appears to enable these individuals to make both gift-giving itself and the occasions for this to be more ethically acceptable by being less ‘difficult’ and therefore more enjoyable. In these instances alternative giving can be understood as a working together of the concerns of the ordinarily ethical selves into a form of action which these individuals are able to take. Alternative gift marketing has not made these individuals change their mind about particular ethical issues, but instead works through careful targeting with alternative giving marketing which is able to address existing concerns of these individuals and fill the market gap.

Differently, one interviewee who had given several alternative gifts described how he thought alternative giving marketing that he experienced through going to Oxfam shops to purchase fairtrade goods had been a crucial prompt for making him realise not only that he thought he should give some alternative gifts, but also that he should give a certain amount of money to charity:

‘It’s a good way of getting it into people’s system that giving to charity doesn’t necessarily have to be a bad thing. I mean, it certainly opened my eyes to just giving in the first place, so, it’s got its upsides. It certainly made me more aware of what I need to, well, not need to, but should be giving [to charity generally], or whatever.’

(‘Ben’, Giver)

Alternative gift marketing made Ben think about how he should both give alternative gifts and also give to charity more generally. However, he describes alternative giving as precipitating a change in his awareness and actions rather than sense of care for the other. It seems that it is not that Ben developed his sense of ethics through alternative giving but that his already present ordinary ethical impulse was drawn upon and developed into the ‘new’ realm of giving to charity through alternative giving marketing. This is particularly evident in how Ben describes the key reason why he thinks alternative giving particularly affected him at the time it did:

‘I was feeling a bit um, morally driven that year...cos I’d just started teaching. I bought em all stuff to do with third world, sorry, developing world – I’ll get told off for that – so like school stuff...I think it was definitely the fact of like, being in the classroom then, and kind of experiencing what working with kids is like, that kind of lent me in that direction.’

(Ben’, Giver)

So although Ben says that alternative giving marketing led to him thinking that he should give to charity, one reason he sites for his disposition allowing him to be affected in such a way is his experience of working with children under the age of eleven as a primary school teacher. Ben indicates that a shift in took place in his capacity to be affected by charitable devices because of his seemingly unrelated practical experience of working with children.

Barnett *et al.* (2005a) describe how forms of ethical consumption might be thought of as devices which provide a means of governing both consumption and the production of the

consuming self. By this they mean that these devices provide the individual both with a reason to act in a certain, supposedly more 'ethical', way and simultaneously provide a means for them to be able to act in that more ethical way. The purpose of thinking of ethical consumption in this way is to move away from the idea that marketing of ethical forms of consumption involves changing the capacity of peoples care to understanding them as already caring individuals. The discussion by Ben of his involvement with alternative giving can be understood within this framework, as a form of 'other-regarding ethical action' that has been motivated by a device which has generated a new kind of responsibility (Barnett *et al.*, 2005a: 31) which Ben has chosen to respond to. Furthermore, Ben indicates that he was especially attracted to charity giving by alternative giving in the first place because of the school-related items that were being sold. These educational items were able to transcend distance by articulating the needs of distant others through an understanding that Ben had gained of the needs of the children with which he worked in person on a daily basis. In the interview Ben does not elaborate further on why this was so significant though, so I will next consider this in light of other interviews.

In one school alternative gifts have been used as part of a replacement for chocolates, given as a prize at the end of each term to reward whole tutor groups for good behaviour such as high attendance. The replacement prize awarded is a photo frame which displays in it a recent photo of the class below which is the gift card of the alternative gift given. This was introduced by the Amanda Sluman, the Every Child Matters Coordinator in the school, in 2006 and she explains that this is for a combination of reasons, partly that she disliked the use of chocolates as a prize, and partly because interaction with charity through fundraising and giving more broadly is one way in which the ethos of care of the school can be promoted among the pupils:

‘I didn’t like the chocolates, and I had regular meetings with all my tutors, so I asked them for some ideas, and one of the teachers has just received um, an Oxfam gift unwrapped present at Christmas, so she said ‘oh, maybe it would be really nice just to give each tutor group one of these little cards’ um, and I liked that idea...The ethos of the school is to be a sort of caring school and I think it’s important that they learn it’s not just caring about themselves in their small environment, but the wider...so although we support overseas charities through this, our main charity is a local one, where they can get involved...I think you could still ‘jazz up’ a certificate and say, you know, you have contributed so much money towards this charity, but when they can see, you know, it’s real, they can see a photograph of this person, or, you know, when they’re awarded. Whoever makes the award really tries to say look...you’re giving life, you’re giving water, you’re giving this um, I think it really, it really does help. It can build up a picture in their mind.’

(Amanda Sluman, St Edmunds School Giver)

Specifically, Amanda explains that alternative giving as a form of giving to charity is so suitable for communicating the idea of the charity donation to the children in the school. She says that although it would be possible to integrate a standard charity donation into the idea instead of an alternative gift, the alternative gift is much better for this purpose because it makes a solid idea of connection between the money given and the way in which it will be used which enables the children to understand this connection by giving them a mental image to draw on.

Indeed, as well as it being understood that the tangibility of alternative giving makes it better than a simple donation to give as a gift, it was expressly determined by one couple to be the inspiration for purchasing the alternative gift of a toilet as a present for a friend:

‘We saw the adverts and thought ‘oh that looks like Tom’ yes! [laughter].’

(‘Patricia’, Giver and Recipient)

It was the thought of giving the ‘toilet’ itself that made these interviewees realise that they wanted to give an alternative gift as a present to a specific person. The laughter they express after they identify this indicates the humorous associations that toilets have and that they thought they shared the humour of it with the person they were giving it to made them

decide this would be a good gift. The person they chose the gift for had helped to build a school in Kenya as a volunteer and so this gave a reason why they thought he would appreciate the charitable aspect of it, but it's the tangible element, specific to alternative giving, that is cited as their reason for noticing it as a gift and for thinking to purchase one for him. This helps to illustrate how alternative giving as a device operates not only by demonstrating the type of ethical situation it poses a solution to, but also by convincing purchasers of the suitability of alternative giving as a gift by producing gifts to purchase that appeal to the purchaser as a gift they would like to give for reasons beyond the charitable nature of them. 'Emily' explains how she would much rather give a specific alternative gift as a gift than a different, more abstract form of giving to charity:

'The reason that I think it was school books was because Mum used to be a teacher and I thought that it would be related and that she'd appreciate it more, rather than something a bit abstract [...] I think that's what I chose and why I chose it.'

('Emily', Giver and Recipient)

The point of relation between giver and recipient is something that I will expand upon later in the chapter, but is significant here in that it is because, in a many instances, the item is being purchased to be given to someone else, and so for this purpose the more tangible nature of it provides the giver with something more on which to base a choice of gift that they think will make it more suitable for the person they are giving it to.

Most of the givers that I interviewed recognised alternative giving to be something they did as an additional charitable activity to any they were already involved in. This included a range of people, from those who had been giving to one particular charity for several decades, to those who supported charities on what appeared to be a more ad-hoc basis. Rachael discussed her giving to charity as something that was necessarily one-off and

dependant on the particular situation for which money was being asked, due to the restriction of her income:

Rachael: I think I've bought the gifts and carried on as normal. I think at the time, and still now, it would be in terms of where my finances were um, in terms of giving...Um, I believe, although I can't remember, I'm sure at one stage err, that a gift [donation] was given to Christian Aid perhaps for, err, a particular project, or MRDF as well, for like a particular crisis that was going on. So that sort of charity giving.

Louise: Kind of one-off?

Rachael: Yes.

Louise: When you really feel like you want to do that?

Rachael: Yeah. But um, as the world rules by money unfortunately, then I guess that's what holds me back on the regularity of it. Which is sad in a way, but you know, these things will grow.

(‘Rachael’, Giver and Recipient)

For Rachael it seems that alternative giving is just one form of charity support that she feels is possible in her financial situation, but that this is the way in which she treats all the forms of support for charities that she gives. Equally though she expresses the desire for her forms of giving to be more permanent and steady, later discussing a charity she felt that she'd like to sponsor a child through if she had an income that she deemed secure enough to be able to do this. Interestingly though, this was with a charity that she had not bought alternative gifts from. There was no indication that she would specifically turn to the charity that she had purchased alternative gifts from when she was able to donate in a more planned pattern. Alternative giving was just one way she chose to support charity generally, in ad-hoc way, and there were other charities that she supported in different ways but that were similarly ad-hoc. Her aspiration is to support charity, broadly, rather than to support a specific charity.

This sentiment is echoed in the decision that was made by Ben following his realisation that he felt he should give more. Rather than turning to Oxfam, the charity that he had

purchased the alternative gifts from and to whom he attributed his realisation that he should give to, he instead chose to give to two different charities:

Ben: I've got my two pet charities; I give to Amnesty International and RSPCA throughout the year...via debits. And I suppose this type of charity [alternative giving] I only give at Christmas, this kind of idea that getting something for...somebody only happens at that time of year.

Louise: And you wouldn't give to the charity, Oxfam, really otherwise?

Ben: Not really, no.

Louise: So it's kind of in addition to your other giving, really?

Ben: Yeah. Yeah.

(‘Ben’, Giver)

Having been drawn to the idea of giving to charity through alternative giving Ben then found two charities that he decided he wanted to support. He indicates that he would still consider purchasing an alternative gift from Oxfam, and explains in an earlier part of the interview that he purchases his coffee from an Oxfam shop, but other than this he would not choose to give money to Oxfam, preferring to give to human rights campaigning charity, Amnesty International and the animal cruelty prevention charity RSPCA instead.

This notion of a ‘pet’ charity is also apparent in the approach that other purchasers of alternative gifts had towards giving to charity, but who also, despite strong commitment to donating to a particular charity or charities on a regular basis, did not always act on this loyalty in purchasing alternative gifts:

Thea: I support Christian Aid anyway and now I'm working for Christian Aid as well, so my support has kind of continued. So I have special interest in Present Aid gifts, and I would always look there first...and that's been a preference for a while, from before I worked there.

Louise: Yeah. And you were saying you bought some from Oxfam as well. How come you chose some of the Oxfam ones?

Thea: Um, that was usually because I had either not found something that I wanted in the right price range or suitability in Present Aid, or just one time there was actually something I thought would just really suit someone so I just bought that from Oxfam straight away because I happened to see it. They seem

to have a bigger range of things, so sometimes I could find things there if I wasn't sure about stuff in the Christian Aid one. And normally that would be because there was something that I thought the person would be interested in...that would be why I chose from there.

(‘Thea’, Giver and Recipient)

Thea bought an Oxfam gift because their range of gifts was wider and so she found a gift there which she thought was more suitable for the person she was giving it to. Even though she describes a real preference for Christian Aid usually, the need for the gift to be suitable for the individual she is giving it to influences which charity she purchases a gift from. In this example, the consumption approach to alternative giving becomes very apparent, with Thea discussing alternative giving in terms of the ‘range’ of gifts and suitability of them for purpose. Alternative giving then is a form of charity fundraising that does not necessarily attract donations in the same way as other forms of giving; the additional elements that gift givers consider mean that they are prepared to compromise their own charity preferences in order to find a suitable gift. This presents an interesting reason as to why charities often seem to find that alternative gift purchasers do this as a one-off form of giving to their charity – it is a more fickle form of charity giving being less integrated into a relationship between an individual and a charity.

A further factor that is important for those who are purchasing an alternative gift is the fulfilment material – the cards, certificate, fridge magnets and other items that are provided to the purchaser to give as the gift to their known gift recipient. From the empirical material gathered, it appears that there are certainly instances when these materials are not felt to hit the right tone. One individual working for a charity in a community-level fundraising capacity commented on her dislike for the cards produced by that charity as their alternative gift fulfilment materials. She expressed that her loyalties certainly lay with

this charity that she was involved in awareness-raising and fundraising for, but had no involvement with the production and organisation of the alternative gifts and so in this moment was discussing the materials simply as a supporter of the charity. When discussing whether she had given an alternative gift she said about the cards:

Sarah: I think they're not good enough:...the images, they're too big;...they're A, A4 folded size, which I think is too big; they've got an image of a turkey or a goat or whatever on, they're not very Christmassy, um...I think they're *rubbish* actually...they're too much, too corporate...they're a bit too goody-goody actually I think. Um...that's my personal opinion. And actually several of us sat round and thought the same...

Louise: So if you did give an alternative gift do you think it would be a Christian Aid one? Or do you think you'd not because of the cards?

Sarah: That's a good question. I'd probably give the gift and create my own card.

(‘Sarah’, Christian Aid)

However much Sarah felt committed to the work of the charity, and demonstrated this in promoting the charity to others, she felt that the style and format of the card of that charity was not suitable to give as a gift. This meant that if she did give an alternative gift she would not want the gift to be presented to the recipient through this card. Her strength of loyalty to Christian Aid meant that she thought she would still purchase one of their gifts if she decided to give one though, rather than looking to other charities. So for some this loyalty remains to the charity they strongly support, but this seems a relatively unusual situation, with other individuals who describe themselves as supporting or having a special interest in a particular charity, as with Thea, opting to purchase their alternative gifts from other charities as they identified them as being better for the purpose. Also notable about these discussions of consumption though are the extent to which this then becomes about the person they are purchasing the gift for. Rather than choosing the best value gift they are basing their decision on a consideration of the person they are planning to give it to and so the purchase becomes a negotiation of their impulse to make giving more ethical and their

care and desire to make their friend or relative happy through giving them a gift which is both suitable and well presented.

6.3 Receiving an Alternative Gift: The Occasion and the On-going Gift

In Chapter 3 I discussed one of the main limitations of primarily using interviews to access an understanding about this ‘group’ of people – that what they say about receiving a gift might not necessarily be what they feel about receiving one. The interviews that I carried out demonstrated a range of opinions about this though and it is partly through these that the process of gifting/receiving an alternative gift can be better understood. I am first going to consider the gift in terms of both the giving process and, although the emphasis has moved now to the recipients, I will still draw on the givers to a certain extent as they have something to say about this process too. Following this I will discuss the ways in which they are integrated into space in the home through their display, for which the physical nature of the object given is particularly significant and is used to create a particular ethical tone within the space.

6.3.1 *The Occasion of Giving and Receiving: Intrigue, Surprise and Delight*

Gift-giving is a quintessential activity for those celebrating at particular times. The majority of the literature focuses on the festival of Christmas as the most prominent celebration involving gift-giving (Cleveland *et al.*, 2003; Gurău and Tinson, 2003; Kasser and Sheldon, 2002; McKechnie and Tynan, 2006), although some also mention other ‘calendrical occasions’ (Mortelmans and Damens, 2001; Ruth *et al.*, 1999). Notable here is that interviewees also discussed gift-giving and receiving they participated in at weddings, birthdays, Mothers Days and Easter. While the literature discusses the different approaches individuals take to purchasing gifts (Gurău and Tinson, 2003) and the importance of

finding the right gifts (McKechnie and Tynan, 2006), there is only scant mention of the significance of the gift-giving and receiving process, with only brief mention in one discussion about gift-giving and receiving within families which states that:

‘Unwrapping gifts and sharing the pleasure of opening sacks, stockings, boxes and pillowcases of presents clearly had its own sense of time and place for each family.’

(McKechnie and Tynan, 2006: 139)

This idea of gift-giving and receiving as having social meaning, here mentioned by McKechnie and Tynan (2006) in referring to the meaning of the time and place of gift-giving and receiving for different families, is found in classic gift literature such as Mauss’ (1990) *The Gift*, albeit in a very different context. Different to this traditional anthropology literature though is the reference that McKechnie and Tynan (2006) make to the enjoyment of the gift-giving and receiving, which raises the possibility of this being a pleasurable activity and having a sense of occasion in its own. One interviewee from my research said that she felt one of the points of gift-giving and receiving on these occasions generally was ‘getting a present for yourself to unwrap’ (‘Yvonne’, Giver and Recipient). This is significant for alternative giving because it understands that one purpose of practices of gift-giving and receiving is to create a sense of occasion and so alternative giving must fulfil this role too.

The activity of giving and receiving an alternative gift, as discussed and shown by a many research participants, creates a sense of occasion through the ability of the gift to facilitate several different stages of gift-giving and receiving, all of which were indicated to be significant to some degree to the enjoyment of receiving a gift. In particular, three such aspects are well illustrated by figure 6.1. This figure displays a series of three photographs

that were taken by one research participant of her mother opening the Oxfam Unwrapped alternative gift that she had given her.

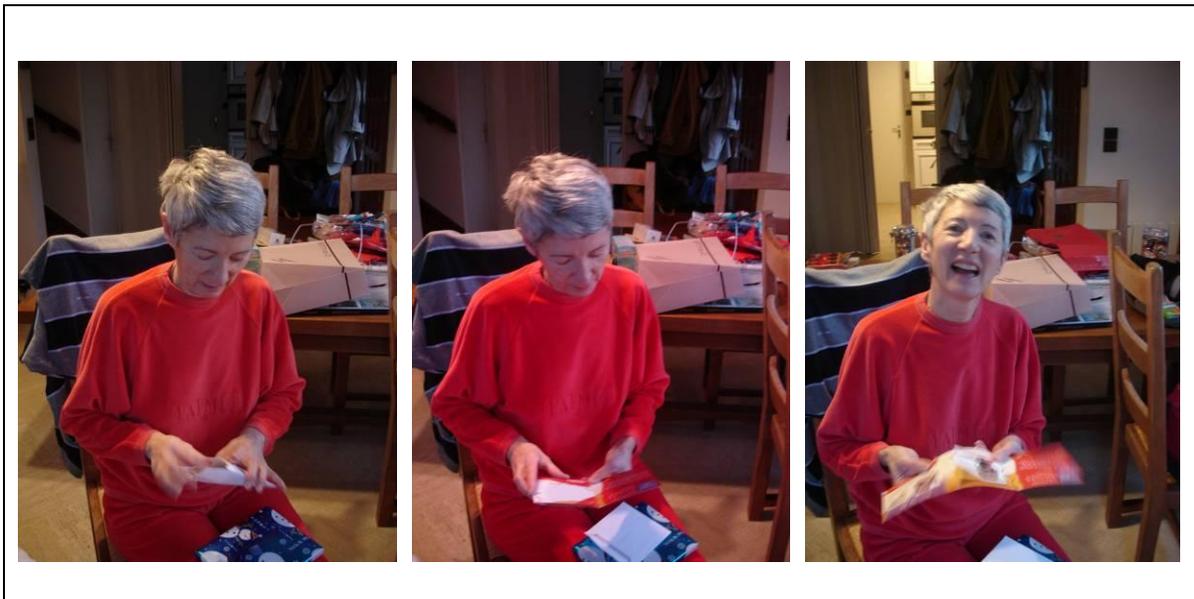


Figure 6.1: Receiving an alternative gift at Christmas

Through this series of photos in figure 6.1 the moments of receiving an alternative gift are well encapsulated, from taking off the wrapping that keeps the item hidden from view, to the initial intrigue and interest in what the item is at the first glimpse of it as it emerges from the wrapping, and finally to comprehension of what the gift is and the resulting emotions, here seemingly of happiness. These moments of unwrapping or opening a gift to the gift-giving and receiving activity were noted by several alternative gift recipients to be important. Emily indicated that this was important for her in receiving a gift by saying:

‘I still got something to unwrap, because I got to unwrap a little plastic goat!’

(‘Emily’, Giver and Recipient)

Here, Emily implies that one aspect that is important to her when receiving a gift is having an item to remove from a wrapping.

An element of surprise was also shown to play a role in the reception of the gift, with alternative giving achieving this either by being an unexpected item to receive or by being a total surprise in that the recipient had not heard of alternative giving until they received an alternative gift. One recipient said that although she knew what an alternative gift was, it was still nice for her ‘just to open something completely different’ (‘Vicky’, Recipient). This is also evidenced in a response by an alternative gift recipient who lamented that she was not able to experience surprise upon unwrapping her gift card because she had been notified about the gift prior to receiving it:

‘I was a bit disappointed to get an email about it before the gift card [arrived], which took away any sense of surprise or ‘niceness’.

(‘Tanya’, Recipient)

The infrastructure of Oxfam – the charity from which Tanya’s alternative gift was purchased for her – evidently meant it was possible for an email to reach her about being given an alternative gift prior to the gift itself reaching her in the form of a card and fridge magnet. Whether this was an oversight by Oxfam, a mistake in the details entered by the person who bought the gift for Tanya, or deemed not to be an issue by the charity, it highlights how the situation and occasion of receiving the gift is significant for how it is received, with an element of surprise being important for some.

Surprise upon receiving an alternative gift was felt especially strongly by those encountering alternative giving for the first time, with one such recipient describing her initial experience upon opening the alternative gift she had been given:

‘I was confused because it was a card but...well maybe not confused but maybe ‘oh, I’ve got a card’. I didn’t really know what to expect. It was, yeah, it was a picture to make you think, like I said before, on its cover. I had to read it twice before I was like ‘oh, that’s what it means’ [laughs], so I think I was being a bit dim [laughs]. Yes, no, it made me think, and I was like, yeah, I did have to read

it twice and then go ‘ohhh, it makes more sense now than just a card’. I certainly wasn’t disappointed I thought ‘ooo, yes, that’s a good gift to give.’

(‘Rachael’, Giver and Recipient)

Rachael explains the puzzlement she had when she first opened the gift and the process she went through of examining the item twice before comprehension ensued. Such an acute sense of surprise seems in part due to the newness of the concept of alternative giving to Rachael, and the notion of the interest in alternative giving as coming from this sense of it as new is expressed by other gift recipients in relation to their positive feeling about being given an alternative gift:

‘I was very pleased: I did not have a goat yet. It was a good and original idea.’

(‘Guy’, Recipient)

Originality emerges as being important to the reception of the gift of a goat by Guy, and so it seems for some that alternative giving will need to retain an element of originality year after year in order for it to retain this status as being a good gift. Even Beth who explained that she was always given an alternative gift from Send a Cow by her parents who were long-term supporters of the charity said that she received different gifts each year:

‘I knew I’d get something from Send a Cow because my parents have been doing this for a while, but I didn’t expect a beehive – before it was a chicken or another animal.’

(‘Beth’, Recipient)

So although Beth knew that it was likely that she would get an alternative gift as a Christmas present, she did not know what it would be and her parents appeared to try and give a different one each year.

The gifting situations discussed here are of instances of gift-giving between one person and another in a very individual act, but in the interviews carried out there was also discussion

of other gifting situations, one of 'favours' at a wedding where gifts are given en mass to the wedding guests:

'I went to a wedding and instead of favours on the table – you know how you sometimes get Chocolates and stuff – they actually did little envelopes which inside said, you know, instead of chocolates we've helped pay for, well mine was actually a fish farm, but I know other people on the table had other things, again related to what they do. So a friend is an occupational therapist, so they had something related to medicine for her. So that one was quite different and really nice because...the chocolates are nice but you know, you eat them really quickly, whereas to have that, like, I still remember it now, but at other weddings I don't really remember what was on the table.'

(‘Emily’, Giver and Recipient)

Significant to Emily about being given an alternative gift at the wedding was that it was so different to other, traditional, wedding favours, and this made it more memorable and special for the day. In many ways this can be thought of as adding an element of surprise in that it was an unexpected type of gift to receive, but additionally Emily makes the connection between the gift she received and the event that it was for. Although not expressly discussed here, the implication is that in giving and receiving a more 'ethical' gift, it is not only this but the whole event or occasion that is made more ethical.

Through these processes of giving and receiving a gift in the context of a festival or celebration a sense of occasion is created in moments of anticipation, confusion and surprise of the item, transforming otherwise mundane objects into something 'special' – a gift. This aspect of gifting is certainly overlooked in the literature of anthropology, consumer studies and material culture that composes the vast majority of work on gifting, but from the research carried out here it appears to be an important part of giving and receiving an alternative gift. Furthermore, the giving and receiving of an alternative gift, as an ethical form of gift, changes the very occasion for which it is being given, turning it from being one that is perhaps enjoyable, but perhaps even troubling (as discussed by

Chris, Caroline, Yvonne and Sebastien), into one that is more memorable or enjoyable in terms of the ethical integrity of the occasion. Hinted at in this section already though, and discussed in the next section is where these ethics function in the context of an alternative gift being given between two people.

6.3.2 Beyond Giving and Receiving: Material Manifestation, Display and Ethics

I now turn to consider how the gift becomes significant also through its use, which is made possible (but also restricted) through the way it is materially manifested in the fulfillment material. This can be considered in light of literatures on both ethics and material culture, to understand the way in which the physical item(s) received – the card or certificate and any other items – are used beyond the giving and receiving occasion and given meaning, and used to give meaning to other places and situations by the recipients. It seems from the research that this process of creating meaning is vital for appreciating how, or indeed whether, an alternative gift is a gift in that it has value to the recipient. Thinking of the actual item given as being important is essential for understanding decisions made by recipient in their ongoing ethical decision making, for understanding what the work that the gift does in relation to the identity of the recipient, and for understanding the work that the gift does to relationships between giver and recipient and recipient and beneficiary. I start by discussing the most material of these aspects of the gift and the implications of this for displaying the gift, before considering this in the context of ethical meaning-making in particular spaces.

It seems ironic that a gift marketed through an anti-materiality narrative (see Chapter 5) depends so heavily on the material way in which it is represented to the recipient through fulfillment materials in practice. Caroline noted in her discussion of the fulfillment

materials that she felt the particular objects received were, in their own right, significant to her appreciation of alternative gifts:

‘A few years ago we were having fridge magnets, I think it was from Oxfam, that you [to Yvonne] sent us and that was quite nice. You know um, fridge magnets, or nice cards. I think that’s quite important.’

(‘Caroline’, Giver and Recipient)

Here Caroline does not elaborate on how these are important, but not only does she think it is important to get these items, but that they should be ‘nice’ too. The charity selling the largest number of alternative gifts, Oxfam, provides the giver with a gift card and magnet, as do charities Plan UK and MRDF. Most charities provide at least a card or gift certificate, and some variously also provide additional material items. One charity provides a photographic print and others small items relating to the gift – for example an alpaca wool finger puppet for alpaca related gifts by charity Practical Action. Of items which rely on imagery and words, so particularly the cards, magnets and certificates, some show images and words related to the items given and some show images and words relating to the festival or celebration for which the gift is being given. All of these items have the role of providing a physical object to the giver to wrap and give to their chosen recipient as detailed above, but can also be seen to have a use beyond this action of giving and receiving and this relies on the physical qualities of the gift item(s).

Many recipients interviewed, particularly those who expressed happiness about receiving an alternative gift, then kept and displayed and potentially then archived the gift, beyond being unwrapped. Governing these activities of display and archive are the very material and form and design of the fulfilment objects, all of which indicate how, where and when the fulfilment items might be displayed. Rachael explains that she still has the card she received as her alternative gift ‘somewhere’ but, that it is not on display any more as it was

in the form of a Christmas card and so this meant she treated it as she would any other Christmas card, according to protocol:

‘I’m one of those people that keep cards! Yes, I’ve still got it somewhere, and at home we hang our Christmas cards up, and so it got hung up with the other Christmas cards, so um, on display. So it got taken down on the 6th [of January, according to British tradition] as per usual. So nothing terribly different there.’

(‘Rachael’, Giver and Recipient)

The fulfillment material of the card certainly seems to suggest it is used in the same ways as any other card given for the same festival or celebration. Anita also kept the alternative gifts given to her as cards for her wedding with the ‘normal’ wedding cards also given then:

‘I kept them all with my other wedding cards, yes....I don’t think I’ve got them all stuck in my [wedding] album, but it’s one of those, one of those future tasks to do on a rainy day [laughs]. But I kept them all, yes, yes.’

(‘Anita’, Giver and Recipient)

So either through display or archiving, the cards are able to be easily integrated into sites used for meaning-making of the festival or celebration, creating an ongoing sense of occasion or a memento of the occasion as with the album of wedding and alternative gift cards.

Individuals who had received magnets as part of the fulfillment material of their alternative gift also displayed these, with the magnetic quality of the item largely determining this to be on a magnetic surface of which the most obvious of these in the home generally is a fridge. Juliet, took a photo of what she explained as ‘On the fridge...the collection gathered over the years’, a photo which shows three magnets of Oxfam Unwrapped alternative gifts received by her family over the course of several gifting occasions (figure 6.2).



Figure 6.2: ‘On the fridge...the collection gathered over the years’: display of alternative gift fridge magnets

As can be seen from the photo in figure 6.2, the fridge is already used as a display space in this household, with the alternative gift magnets being shown alongside other magnets and hand-drawn pictures and receipts. Unlike the occasion-centred display of cards, this display appears to be less specific to the festival or celebration for which the gifts were given and is more about the items of the goat, the working wonder-woman and the gift of books which are represented in the images and words on the front of the magnets.

The type of images and words on the items certainly seems to have an impact on some recipients for the way in which they feel it is most suitable to display them. This is not simply about taking the lead from the type of fulfilment material received though. One small group interviewed expressed different ideas about what they liked on the front of alternative gift cards depending on how they thought alternative gift fulfilment material was most suitable to be used:

Chris: Oh I think just traditional Christmas images really.

Caroline: Oh do you think so? ...I actually quite like the picture of what it is [others agree with umms].

Yvonne: It's good to have that too.

Chris: But I think the outside of the card should...be maybe a Christmas card.

(‘Chris’, ‘Caroline’ and ‘Yvonne’, Givers and Recipients)

The implication from Chris’ preference for a Christmas image on the front of the card was because he liked to display them alongside the Christmas cards that he received and only really at Christmas, making them an integral part of the Christmas decorations for a relatively short and specified time period, as was also the case with Rachael (above). It seems that there is an ambiguity about how alternative gifts are to be ‘used’ by the recipient in terms of whether they are meant to celebrate the gift going to the beneficiary or the occasion for which it has been given. The format of the material suggests particular uses – such as that a card with a Christmas image should be used as a Christmas card, a fridge magnet placed on a fridge – but individuals receiving alternative gifts have differing ideas about what the place of an alternative gift is within the space of a home. Caroline articulated her preference for an image of the item that has been received and before I leave following the interview she showed me the alternative gift cards displayed on the mantelpiece in her living room, still there a month after all the cards from celebrating Christmas (the occasion she received it for) had been taken down. This preference for an

image of the item was also expressed by Anita who also kept the cards in a place that was special to her, this time a wedding album:

‘Personally I would prefer something that was just appropriate to the project, um, you know, rather than pretty flowers or whatever.’

(‘Anita’, Giver and Recipient)

Unlike Rachael, Anita and Caroline preferred to keep the cards in a place where they would be able to return to them and appreciate them. Caroline treated the cards differently to the Christmas cards that she received, despite the images on the front being Christmas rather than alternative gift themed, because she wanted to continue to see the gifts in her home.

It is here that the very significance of the material form the fulfillment objects take becomes obvious, because it is through such display and archiving that they have ongoing use to the recipients, by building meaning, particularly in relation to ethics. The roles of the mantelpiece and the fridge door as spaces of display in the home have been considered in work on material cultures. The mantelpiece has been discussed as one particular location that facilitates the space of the home as one of meaning-making and identity formation (Cieraad, 1999; Hurdley, 2006, 2007; Jackson and Moores, 2005; Money, 2007). Several scholars specifically discuss the role the fridge door plays as a bulletin board or display space which creates and articulates social meanings (Maschio, 2002; Watkins, 2006), that it is a surface which transmits social knowledges because it maps ‘a moral economy of the household, depicting social networks and articulating values’ (Watkins, 2006: 147). The way in which this takes place with alternative gift fulfillment material was discussed by Yvonne in relation to a fridge magnet that had been part of an alternative gift she had given to her son and daughter-in-law:

‘it had children who were orphaned in the Tsunami, and it had a fridge magnet which was on the fridge all year. I don’t know if it’s even still there [...] and it

was really nice having that image, their children liked and identified with it. Little children were playing in it, so it was good having that picture.’

(‘Yvonne’, Giver and Recipient)

The positive way in which Yvonne describes how her grandchildren interacted with the fridge magnet indicates the importance of the display of such material in the family home, and the reflection that it has on the way in which that family is disposed to such activities. By displaying the magnet so that the small children in the household are able to see the image the parents are arguably demonstrating their own belief in such work of the charity and aim to integrate their children into such beliefs through encouragement of their own identification with the children represented. The display of the magnet on the fridge for the whole year implies a lengthier reflection within the home of the particular ethical values represented by it than with other forms of material culture. Additionally, this indicates a sense in which the material culture gives substance to a relationship between the giver and recipient, with it being the giver who tells me about the way in which it was displayed. Therefore, this material culture provides a way in which both the ethical effects of the gift and the relationship between giver and recipient are able to linger.

The relationship between the physical material of the object and the use of it to create ethical meaning is a feature also discussed by another interviewee:

‘The fridge magnet idea I think is fantastic. It’s brilliant because people actually have something material to hold and, you know, stick on the fridge or anything metal and, err, that’s really good because um, because you kind of keep seeing it as well, once you’ve taken the card down if you like, because cards you can sort of display them for a while and then you feel the need to kind of put them away or they get a bit tattered or whatever...It’s a really good way to make people keep thinking.’

(‘Thea’, Giver and Recipient)

Thea’s preference for fridge magnets revolves around the way in which she likes to display the material gift in her home and the type of materials that are most practical for that. The

longevity of a fridge magnet is considered preferable to the relative fragility of a card because she likes to display the gift for a greater length of time than she considers a card to be materially suitable for. The repeated reminder of the gift by seeing it displayed is indicated by Thea to be an important aspect of receiving such a gift because of the ability it has to prompt thought. Although she does not elaborate on the kind of thought that it prompts in this part of the interview, she uses this same phrase in relation to why she likes to give these gifts to people too; it initiates the question from recipients of ‘why do you think that it’s important [to give gifts like this]?’ So it seems that Thea likes to have the item around to continue to remind her about the recipients and the reasons why it is important to remember people such as this, acting as a kind of ethical reminder to think in a particular kind of way. The material elements of alternative giving then are used by recipients to produce an ongoing ethical self – a kind of self work as would be recognisable through Foucault’s notion of technologies of the self (discussed in Chapters 1 and 2) – but one which is oriented toward the other. Although this could be criticised through a theory of the hyperreal (outlined in Chapter 1), as removing the ethical signifier from the original context and so removing it from the framework in which it makes real a difference to this other, Thea discusses this in terms of this other orientation informing her ongoing actions, such as through continuing to purchase alternative gifts, with the material culture prompting this.

Most recipients interviewed had something to say about the fulfilment objects, arguably because of the difficult role these items must play in representing an action and idea to the recipient but while also being pleasing to look at. The material incarnation of a monetary donation to charity as an alternative gift was discussed in ways that suggest it is a complex object that must fulfil a number of roles, for example with some recipients expecting it to

function as a decoration for the occasion for which it is given and others desiring to use it in the ongoing production of ethical and social meaning in their home. The distinction between the occasion of gift-giving and receiving and the ethics of the gift is one such tension that must be negotiated by the giver in their choice of gift and the receiver in their use of the gift, with some recipients, such as Caroline, simply ignoring the celebratory theme of the gift so as to continue to display the item. However, there are other aspects of the material culture which impact upon the reception of the gift and in terms of the perception of the charity.

It seems there is a difficult line to be trodden by the charities between making fulfillment materials that didn't appear too 'amateurish' and not appearing to have been expensive to produce. One focus group discussed the low quality of the cards of one particular charity:

Thomas: Now, have Send a Cow been doing it the longest? Because...I think theirs is some of the more sophisticated marketing...

Chloe: Yes, whereas the Feed the Children cards...

Thomas: Look homemade.

Chloe: They do.

Thomas: I quite like them.

Chloe: They're not very good quality...

Steph: Well, they look like they, they've just sort of pulled clip art of the web and [agreement from others]...they look very amateurish!

(‘Thomas’, ‘Chloe’ and ‘Steph’, Focus Group B, Birmingham)

While there is one dissenting voice speaking up in favour of the 'lower quality' cards, the consensus from the focus group participants was that they were not very good quality and therefore not as good as some of the more 'sophisticated' materials. Equally though, several interviewees who had received alternative gifts expressed that they felt there was a point at which the fulfillment material would appear to be too lavish for the type of gift that it was, saying that they would not want to receive something that was 'gimmicky':

I don't think you would want anything too gimmicky with it or, because then you'd wonder where your money was going really.'

(‘Vicky’, Recipient)

‘Obviously it's nice to have something, but no, the important bit is that someone else is getting the money rather than the fact that you get anything in particular.’

(‘Toby’, Giver and Recipient)

Both Vicky and Toby indicate that the main point of alternative giving is that money goes to help a beneficiary rather than being spent on fulfillment material and that, for Vicky, if this was lavish it would raise questions as to what her money was being spent on by the charity. There is a sense in which the ethics of the alternative gift could be detracted from if it appeared an excessive amount of money had been spent on the fulfillment material.

Indeed, Emily and Olivia both indicated that they felt alternative gifts they received had gone too far in terms of material provision:

‘I don't think you need loads of gimmicky stuff, I mean the plastic goat was nice but it wasn't necessary really, and in a way you'd probably rather the money went to the cause you're actually supporting.’

(‘Emily’, Giver and Recipient)

‘I would have just preferred to have received the letter and not these dreadful cards with the um...pop-ups... I mean there's obviously somebody who's had to design these, they have to print them, it's not cheap card, I mean, how much money did it cost to produce these, and I'm sure ninety percent of the people who receive them don't put them up and the pop-ups? Surely, surely not.’

(‘Olivia’, Recipient)

The skills which are being used by these recipients and potential recipients to differentiate the different quality and effort that went into producing the fulfillment materials demonstrates the sophisticated interaction as consumers that they have with the items. Not only do they approach them as a representation of an item going to a beneficiary, but they also critique them based on the economics of the production of the physical item and how it

relates to the ethics of the gift. Vicky and Emily both discuss how a gimmicky item might detract from their enjoyment of receiving an alternative gift because it makes them question how the money used to purchase it is really being spent. It seems that the recipient still thinks it is very important to receive something so that they can understand what the gift is and enjoy displaying it, but this is in tension with the perceived expense of this to the beneficiary.

6.4 The Relationship Between the Giver and Receiver of the Alternative Gift

Although the theme of the relationship between the giver and receiver has appeared throughout the previous sections, it will be drawn into focus in this section as an element of alternative giving that is particularly important for the way in which it is taken up in practice. The concept of a relationship is one that has been strongly questioned within the non-representational context of geographical scholarship (Harrison, 2007), arguing from a Derridean perspective that there is always a gap between what is said/represented and how this representation is then interpreted and so something always gets lost in the action of telling/representing. Taking this logic to alternative giving questions the very idea of a relationship forming in the giving/receiving of a gift, and therefore prior to any discussion about relationships in alternative giving the way in which the notion of relationship is being used must be detailed. One of the quintessential points of a gift for Mauss (1990) as discussed in Chapter 2, is that it is to bring about a higher degree of social cohesion and therefore the relationship is the very purpose of giving/receiving gifts. The difference between these two perspectives is one between the possibility of a relationship and the effect on individuals/society on the perception of a relationship. In many ways whether or not this relationship is possible is not the point, because the perception of a relationship by those involved has very real effects.

The very perception of the relationship between the giver and the receiver with alternative giving appears to be significant to the reception of an alternative gift, and the alternative gift to the perception of the relationship that follows the giving and receiving of the gift. The alternative/ethical nature of such gifts appears to lead to complex outcomes because of the demands made by it on the recipient to be charitably disposed toward the beneficiary, not of their own choosing but as chosen by the giver; the gift demands that the giver and receiver share a mutual charitable disposition. In interviews with givers and receivers this sense of mutual disposition was sometimes expressed through an appreciation of how the other person would make a connection between the gift item and their own life. Significantly this was not just that the giver or receiver could make a simple connection between the physical gift and an aspect of the recipient's life (as is suggested for example in the Oxfam Unwrapped catalogue where gifts are marketed for gardeners, foodies, etc, as discussed in Chapter 5), but there is often a more ethically significant reason, either explicit or implicit, behind the idea of an alternative gift as being suitable for giving and receiving in a particular relationship.

For example, Vicky, in talking about the alternative gift of a small business loan that she'd received from her sister, explained that she thought her sister chose this for her because of the way in which her sister perceives her to relate to the type of gift that it is:

'My sister wrote that she thought I'd 'appreciate this helping hand for women around the world'...She knew that...I'd been in Tanzania myself like, obviously it's a different country, but like helping women out to sort of further themselves and educate them and help them kind of deal with what happens to them rather than it being very male dominated and dictated. So yeah, I think she thought that it would probably strike a chord... I think it's probably something that she would be happy to receive and um...yeah, we have quite a kind of similar kind of tastes and ideas around helping others and um...yeah, doing something like that that feels good and yeah, so I think it probably does, it shows that she and I probably both have the same idea on it and...it could have been given either way sort of thing.'

In this instance Vicky sees her relationship to her sister articulated through her sense of the gift. This indicates that it is not just the way in which she, as a recipient, relates to the beneficiary that is important, but that her perception of the giver's understanding of that sense of relating is important. As Vicky says, the message that was written in the card, important in her sister's absence at the point of receiving, helped explain to her why she had chosen this gift, which was that her sister thought that she would appreciate it for that particular reason.

An alternative gift giver, Juliet, also discussed how she made the decision to give her mother a particular alternative gift:

'This year, I "purchased" an Oxfam Unwrapped Working Wonder-Women...and I gave it to my mom...I knew that she did not *need* anything and, as she is very involved with various charitable organisations, she would appreciate the value, both monetary and actual, of it...I'm very happy I did this. My mom was very happy. She liked the wonder-woman theme, as she is a bit of a feminist and loves stories of women who raise up against the world and do good things! (Her heroine is Erin Brockovich, needless to say!).'

(Juliet', Giver and Recipient)

Again, there is an understanding indicated as to why Juliet thought her 'mom' would appreciate such a gift, demonstrating how she perceives it to relate to the recipient's ethical vocabulary. Juliet drew on the knowledge she already had of her mother's charitable activity in specific detail and is able to appreciate that she particularly supports feminist causes so as to purchase a gift that she thought was suitable for her.

Indeed, these positive experiences of alternative giving contrast with less joyful experiences of giving and receiving an alternative gift:

'My Mum bought one for her cousin...and it was a goat, but this cousin is a single lady in her fifties who, well she's got everything she needs really and she's not easy to buy for, so my Mum got her this goat and she really didn't get

the point and looked a bit non-plussed about the whole thing which was a bit embarrassing.’

(‘Steph’, Focus Group B, Birmingham)

Implied by the explanation that the cousin did not ‘get the point’ is that the alternative gift fell outside of the mutual ethical vocabulary of the giver and receiver. Although it is not possible from this comment to know how the cousin felt more generally about giving to charity at the time and whether it was on the basis of this that she was ‘non-plussed’, it is clear here that the gift caused a point of disconnection between giver and receiver. Steph describes how the situation was ‘embarrassing’ for those there and so rather than making the occasion into an ethical one it detracted from it emotionally because the recipient was not able or prepared to share the purpose of the gift that the giver saw in it. Even though the cousin was difficult to purchase a gift for, and therefore the situation fitted that described in alternative gift marketing of when to give an alternative gift, it was not able to fulfill the function of strengthening the social relationship between the family members.

Another interviewee, Olivia, indicated that her and her husband were even angry at having been given an alternative gift:

‘Part of it is her [the giver] and I don’t get on very well, and she’s made some unfair comments about me to people...if I’d asked for this I could feel good about it, but I didn’t, so I don’t feel good about it at all, I feel quite annoyed about it. I think it’s more the underlying assumption that my husband and I don’t give to charity or whatever, which is completely not true...I also wonder if there could have been another message in the card, as you can see it says ‘Seasons Greetings’. I suppose that’s kind of ok, but if it was me I would have written something like, I don’t know...‘I genuinely thought you might appreciate this’, or something.’

(‘Olivia’, Recipient)

The way in which the gift given speaks about the relationship between the giver and recipient is very apparent in this justification by Olivia of her negative feelings about receiving an alternative gift. This is not to do with her feelings about charity generally –

she is keen to emphasise that she does give to charity – but is about the way in which she perceives her relationship to the giver and therefore what the giver was trying to say to her through the gift. Although literature on gifting highlights the negative effect that gifts can have, for example with recipients receiving a gift of clothing that is totally at odds with their style taking this to be a lack of interest by the giver in them (Ruth, 1999), the implications of this are moral with alternative giving. The impersonal tone of the message in the card is explained by Olivia to be a sign of moral disapproval of her ethical subjectivity and, in effect, perceives the alternative gift to be a kind of moral-selving by the giver, with all the negative connotations that Allahyari (2000) brings to this term. Rather than being about the other who might benefit from the alternative gift, Olivia understands it simply as being about the giver using the gift to show her that she is ethical but that Olivia is not. Moral-selving can also be used to explain the embarrassment felt in Steph's family in that the non-mutual feelings of the recipient about the alternative gift perhaps made the giver feel like their actions portrayed them as being a 'do-gooder' by giving a gift that was ethical rather than appropriate for the recipient and so as caring more about their own image and ethical credentials than about the gift recipient.

Interestingly, Olivia was the only interviewee who expressed her own unhappiness at receiving an alternative gift. There were other tales of unhappy reception of alternative gifts, but these were all stories of someone else, such as with Steph (above), rather than first-hand accounts. There are, however, indications that this is a difficult aspect of alternative giving to access through talking to people with recipients perhaps feeling obliged to express happiness at receiving an alternative gift. For example, in the interview with Chris, Caroline and Yvonne their mutual decision to give each other alternative gifts was explained as being due to an ethical dissatisfaction with *giving* each other socks and

‘smellies’ at Christmas, but later on it emerged that *receiving* an alternative gift was a more emotionally difficult aspect of giving and receiving alternative gifts:

Louise: And do you miss the socks and smellies at all?

Caroline: A bit actually, yeah.

Yvonne: Yeah.

Caroline: Every so often I think perhaps one year we could have a year off [from alternative gifts]. Or maybe we could do socks and then do a smaller gift. Maybe we could do that.

Yvonne: Umm [in agreement]. ...but I think I would feel quite bad having done it for a while just to stop.

Caroline: Yeah, I agree.

(‘Caroline’ and ‘Yvonne’, Givers and Recipients)

So although Caroline and Yvonne both tentatively mention that they might like to receive something less altruistic at a future date there is a sense of guilt expressed over this, with it appearing to be an unethical thing to think and express. In this context then dissatisfaction seems to be almost unspeakable because of a mutually recognised ethical discourse. Equally there is also a sense in which there is an internal element of ethical conflict within each person, with Yvonne being torn between finding Christmas a ‘difficult’ time of year when fully based in material practices, but also enjoying receiving these more self-oriented gifts. It is not so easy to receive an alternative gift as it is to give one, but the societal and subjective expectations of the alternative gift make it difficult to express such feelings.

6.4.1 The Place of the Beneficiary in the Giving and Receiving of an Alternative Gift

Givers and receivers of alternative gifts both expressed how the tangibility of alternative gifts was important to them. As discussed above, this is used by givers to choose a gift suitable for the recipient, and this is also then used in the mutual appreciation between the giver and receiver as to why it is a suitable gift. However, this can also be understood from the perspective of those who receive the alternative gift and choose to engage with the

fulfillment materials beyond the giver-receiver relationship. A sense of tangibility is created for the givers and receivers both through the use of photos and writing – and particularly the interaction of the two – and through their own, personal understanding of the particular object that is represented (the toilet, water tap, or whatever it is). For some, these were used in conjunction with each other to create a better sense of connection with the beneficiary, which I argue is best thought of as empathy.

When asked about whether she felt the gift's information and images were important to receiving the gift, one recipient explained:

'If you kind of say... 'I've given you a fishing net, this is actually what it's going towards, this is how it will change people's lives' um... [It's] a bit like the adverts, kind of, you can give somebody a fish and it will feed them for a day, or a fishing net and it will help them, you know, provide for themselves. So it just gives a bit more background and a bit more kind of, um, understanding of the gift itself... You learn about people that are less fortunate than yourselves, and you have to kind of imagine yourself in those situations um, kind of... yeah. So you want to support them.'

('Emily', Giver and Recipient)

Notable from this extract is the way in which the simple naming of an item – a fishing net – has enabled Emily to make connections to other more specific understandings she has about particular areas of development work and therefore to understand the difference that her gift could make to the life of a beneficiary. She then explains how this has helped her to imagine what it might be like to be in need of such an item and consequently have a greater sense of empathy for the beneficiary. This notion of imagining was described further by another recipient who said that she had put the fridge magnet of the tap she had received onto her fridge door. This, she felt, created a real resonance between the image on the magnet or a small girl drinking from a tap and the meaning of the fridge to her:

'It's quite appropriate really on the fridge, you go into the fridge and you raid, and you help yourself to goodness knows what, and there are people without all

the – not that all the things we eat are particularly good for us – but [...] I thought that was a good idea.’

(‘Patricia’, Giver and Recipient)

In placing the magnet as she had on the fridge Patricia felt she was able to create a stronger sense of empathy for the beneficiary, making a connection between the image and the activity she was about to partake in – opening the fridge and taking something from it to eat or drink. Making this simple connection reminds Patricia of what she has that others for whom the gift she received benefit from don’t have, and feel compassion toward them through an activity that she would otherwise perform unthinkingly.

Earlier in the chapter I discussed how using an alternative gift to ethically implicate such everyday actions can be thought of as akin to self-work, however I now consider how empathy can be used to understand this. In Chapter 2 I discussed how materials from charities can be considered as facilitating a bringing to consciousness of particular types of beneficiaries for an individual. The positioning of the magnet on the fridge by Patricia appears to bring about a repeated awareness, an everyday reminder. Simply through glancing at the image a whole onslaught of emotions are brought about in Patricia. One way in which this could be thought is as exemplifying the type of benign neglect that Noddings (1984: 112) criticises of ‘caring about’ distant beneficiaries, or even worse, that these feelings of empathy act as a false panacea to the guilt over the high levels of consumption that this recipient of the alternative gift is able to participate in compared with the levels of the beneficiary. However, Patricia does not describe it in terms of thinking about the tap that she has enabled a similar beneficiary to now have access to, or in terms of happiness that this has been done and feeling virtuous about having done this, but rather discusses it in terms of how much less these beneficiaries still have than her. This is

significant, firstly because this is invoked from the positive ‘end result’ image on the magnet, and secondly because if considered in terms of the donation that was given on her behalf as the gift, for an extended period after being given, alternative giving could be thought of as stymieing charitable giving by perpetuating the feeling of doing good beyond the time of impact of the charitable giving, leading to an overblown sense of virtue. Instead the fulfilment material is used to remind of an ongoing sense of lack of these beneficiaries, and so for this individual this daily reminder on the fridge acts simply as a small part of the ongoing involvement that she has which, as she says later in the interview, also includes committed monthly giving to an overseas development charity. Her sense of empathy cannot be thought of in isolation but is connected through the disposition and, importantly, actions of this individual to other forms of caring action for these beneficiaries.

The way in which alternative giving is used to prompt thought about a material lack of some other people through the use of ‘positive’ images showing the result of giving the item indicates that recipients of alternative gifts are aware that the image does not show *their* goat, toilet, fishing net etc, and therefore not the beneficiary of their particular action of charity. Indeed, the terms with which many of the interviewees referred to the beneficiaries of alternative giving were often vague and unspecific, making passing reference to beneficiaries, notably to the ‘developing world’ (‘Ben’, Giver), the ‘benefit for somewhere else’ of these gifts (‘Sophie’, Giver) and ‘people in these countries’ (‘Caroline’, Giver and Recipient). These apparently vague references could be interpreted as a disengaged and uninterested attitude from these gift purchasers toward the beneficiary-receivers but I think this would be a misrepresentation of these givers and receivers. In the interviews that took place I felt there was a strong importance on what was not said as well as what was said, with comments such as these referring to a common discourse about such

beneficiaries which the importance of caring for such individuals through purchasing alternative gifts was taken to be implicit. At this level of thought about the beneficiaries it seems that there is little difference through alternative giving about the way in which those in the 'North' think about those in the 'South'. Despite the ability of alternative gifts to enable tangible connections to be made between the lives of those in the 'North' with those in the 'South', for many involved with alternative giving it seems it is just another way of giving to charity.

This long-term insignificance of the specificity of alternative giving in terms of connecting to the beneficiary is pertinently highlighted in the memories that some of the recipients interviewed had of the alternative gift they had received. Several recipients of alternative gifts were unable to recall the gift they had received, or the details about where items such as these might be used:

'They effectively pay for a goat to be sent out to, I think it was Africa but I can't really remember.'

('Emily', Giver and Recipient)

'I think it was for, to pay for, um, a goat...in Africa. And I'm just thinking, I should have thought about this, but I might still have the card...I'm just having a quick look ...Oh yes, I've got it. Oxfam Unwrapped and, oh no, I'm completely wrong. It was for the gift of small business training um...I don't know where I got goat from! How bizarre...And then it says about a lady who's in India. So I was completely off the wall.'

('Vicky', Recipient)

Neither Emily nor Vicky are immediately able to recall the location of the item they received, or indeed, in the case of Vicky, the actual item that was given to her. Despite this apparent indifference to the item given and potential location of the beneficiary though, there is still a general sense of care toward the person who could benefit, it is simply a far more generalised sentiment for these people than the specific nature of the alternative gift

might suggest. This implies that, while the specific nature of the gift item might be important to the giving and receiving relationship and identification of the gift as being a gift through the fulfilment materials, it is the understanding of the type of beneficiary – as generally from the ‘South’ – that is significant to the sense of where their gift is going.

This understanding of the connection made by the gift to the beneficiary is further complicated by the confusion that many givers and receivers appear to have about the way in which the donation made through alternative giving is used – whether it is used to provide the exact item represented to them or used for other purposes within the charity. This appears to have had a mixed reaction from interviewees. Even though almost every one of the interviewees appeared to be aware at some level that the money from the alternative gift they were involved with might not be used to fund the item they had purchased or been given, there was still confusion about this, with their understanding often being guided by something they had ‘heard’ somewhere, and largely being unaware that different charities operate their schemes in different ways:

‘I know that it’s just money going to the charity, but...I think it’s nice that they brand it as certain items. Um, I suppose it’s true that any big charity, you’ve always got to be thinking about how much their admin costs cover and how effective is the money that they use and, you know, paying the staff and that kind of thing. Um, but actually whether the money goes towards those items...probably not. Because I mean the outcome – they’re all for the same purpose really. So I’m not too worried. I just think it makes a better gift if you can then relate it to the person. Like Josie’s a doctor so I buy her something medical related, or my Mum used to be a teacher so I buy her something to do with education. But if it went towards feeding people actually, or helping them to have a livelihood then, I don’t think that that matters.’

(‘Emily’, Giver and Recipient)

The gifts that Emily had bought for Josie and for her own Mum had been from Oxfam Unwrapped, a charity that groups the money it raises from alternative giving into themed funds, something that Emily did not seem to be aware of. So although Emily was aware

that the money was not likely to be spent on the item detailed in the fulfilment material, she still was not sure of the specific details of how this money would be channelled by this particular charity. As she also explains of her positive attitude to the money not being spent on the particular item she perceives the broad purpose of the use of the money to be the same however it is used and so for this reason it can be understood that her connection to the beneficiary is more strongly felt by her through the general ethos of the charity from which she purchased the alternative gifts, rather than to the particular beneficiaries that she imagines through the gift items. To her the appeal of alternative gifts specifically over general charity donations appears to be centred instead on the ability to ‘tailor’ the gift to the individual she is giving it to, although Emily does also say that she likes the fact that:

‘You learn about people that are less fortunate than yourselves, and you have to kind of imagine yourself in those situations um...yeah. So you want to support them.’

(‘Emily’, Giver and Recipient)

So the specificity of alternative giving is not simply to enable her to make connections between the gift and life of the individual she is giving it to, but also enables an imagining to take place, as it did with Patricia, and provide a greater incentive to support through giving because of the empathy that this generates for Emily with the beneficiary.

Another interviewee seemed very aware that the money with which she bought a can of worms as a gift would go into a themed fund, as it would with the charity from which she bought it:

‘Obviously I’m aware that it doesn’t actually *necessarily* buy an actual can of worms. Err, it would go towards agricultural projects, which may include cans of worms, or similar.’

(‘Thea’, Giver and Recipient)

Later in the interview though Thea elaborates on how she interacts with the way in which the money for the gifts she purchased is used, and on how she relates to the notion of the beneficiary:

‘[The fulfilment material] gives you something to focus on and think that your money’s really doing because...what you’re getting back is the knowledge of what it’s doing and I think that’s really helpful because otherwise people can just worry...they don’t know where their money’s going. Because to give a donation you have to really believe um...I suppose and be completely faithful that the...charity is going to use it in a good way, and that it’s not up to you to know the way kind of thing, whereas this gets you involved. It’s like ‘this is the kind of thing that we do’ and it encourages you to carry on giving I think because...you can see ‘oh, that’s what they’re doing this year’ kind of thing...[and] the idea that um, you know...you can imagine helping a project or a set of people, that’s really cool.’

(‘Thea’, Giver and Recipient)

So although Thea has already identified that she is aware of how her money is going to be used – or rather that it possibly will not be used to purchase the item that she has ‘bought’, and seems at ease with this situation – she thinks that the themed use of the money is far preferential to the use of the money in a general way in the charity because it allows givers and receivers to have a much stronger sense of where their money will be used and she still draws on the imagery and information presented in the alternative gift fulfilment material to form a particular idea in her mind about the way in which it might benefit some people and, as she says, encourages her to keep on giving.

The last of these points that Thea makes is of particular interest for it shows that her ability to imagine the gift in use is not strongly affected by whether the money spent on it definitely went to buy it or not. As another recipient of an alternative gift put it:

‘It’s so interesting how easy it is to believe that it’s going to go to buy [the alternative gift], even though potentially you know that it’s not... I know that it won’t go to the thing, but yet I thought that it would, in a way.’

(‘Zoe’, Giver and Recipient, Focus Group A)

Even those who give or receive an alternative gift and know that the money is not necessarily going to be used according to the gift they purchased or received still might find themselves knowingly deluded into thinking of ‘their’ gift. This indicates that, with some of the givers and receivers of a charity’s alternative gifts, alternative giving is a successful device for them to use to attempt to govern supporters of charity. These individuals may be well aware of how their money is (not) being spent, but still find their thoughts being taken along by the narrative and representations provided to them by charities through alternative giving which, in some cases, might lead to continuing support for development charities. Additionally, given the shift from very specific imaginings to very general imaginings of the gift items, although some interviewees expressed a very strong allegiance to one particular charity, there was no mention by anyone of how their particular ethos was expressed or not in alternative gifts; alternative gifts appear to produce a possibility of a specific imagining of the beneficiary but less of a sense of how this beneficiary is specifically or differently connected to any particular charity over another charity. For the governing of givers and receivers by charities this is where any of the charities might perceive alternative giving to be problematic because the giver and receiver are provided with no sense of why they should go on to support that particular overseas development charity again.

As mentioned earlier, not all givers and receivers interviewed seemed so aware of, or at ease with, the idea that the funding they had provided through alternative giving might not have gone to purchase the item of their alternative gift. As such, none of the interviewees seemed shocked or surprised that this might be the case, but there were certainly indications from some, such as Ben, that it was not something they had given a great deal of thought to, even if it was something they possibly knew about:

‘Well it is a bit of a con really, if they do say it’s going to this. I mean maybe I should have looked a bit more carefully on the website...I’m not sure whether it does say that anywhere on the website, but...it would be nice if they were upfront about it and say ‘look, this is going to buy what we’ve said it is’...I’d prefer to know if it wasn’t so I could make my own decision, instead of hiding it somewhere on a website...It’s like ‘you will be buying this cow, for this village’ or ‘these books for this school’. If it’s not, well, it’s a bit cheeky...I like to know what I’m spending my money on.’

(‘Ben’, Giver)

Ben indicates that he feels the way in which the gifts are presented in the online catalogue from which he purchased them is as if there is a direct link between the item purchased and the way in which the money is used by the charity, and that to find out how the money is used would require a much more thorough search of the website – there is no clarity of message throughout the catalogue. The description of it as being ‘a bit of a con’ and explanation that he likes to know what he’s spending his money on makes reference to a broader consumer discourse from which he is making this decision about what to purchase as a gift. As I argued in chapter 5, the format of alternative giving, created by the charities, positions the potential purchaser as a consumer. It seems that this position of consumer not only enables the consumer to interact with charity with the consumer techniques of browsing and selection of an item, but also with an understanding of consumer rights and entitlement. Within this then a tension between the idea of charities as trustworthy non-governmental, public organisation, and charities as businesses begins to emerge for the supporter-consumer. Charities have long raised funds by garnering a relationship of trust between themselves and their supporters, and while there is still the need for trust from the supporter that the charity will spend their money as they are led to believe, this is undermined by the glossy consumer appearance of alternative giving which jars with this trusting ideal. Further, this highlights how the governing of supporters by charities through consumption creates false hope of a stronger connection between giver and beneficiary

being possible, and ultimately emerging in the small-print to the supporter, in this instance, as the charity in disguise as the beneficiary.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the practices of alternative giving carried out by those who give and receive alternative gifts. As such, I have considered how these gifts, constructed as ethical, constitute an element of consumption activity for individuals who are disposed to care for distant others in particular ways. In that the alternative gift must be received by someone other than the purchaser though, the (interconnected) relationships between the recipient and the gift and the recipient and the giver implicate this sense of the gift as ethical. For some it emerges that an alternative gift is easy to give, with the device presenting a solution to a problem of excessive, self-oriented, materialism at certain celebratory occasions which, for these givers, is expressed as being their duty of responsibility, either to wider societal problems of excess on particular occasions, or as a responsibility to both recipient and beneficiary. In that it is the giver's choice about what to purchase they situate them self as in this position of responsibility. However, there are indications that receiving such a gift is a less easy or straightforward aspect of alternative giving.

While all the alternative gift recipients interviewed expressed a general positive feeling about giving to charity, the degree to which alternative giving was received in the same frame of mind within which it was given appeared to depend on the recipient's perception of why they had been given an alternative gift. Furthermore, even when this was evident to the recipient, there was still a sense in which some recipients felt obliged to receive the alternative gift graciously because this was how they were disposed to respond to the

distant other. The implication of this is that although the fulfilment material enables ethical and social meaning to be brought to both the gift-giving occasion and to the places in the recipient's home where the item is displayed, this virtue does not necessarily completely fill the gap where a more self-oriented gift might have been. Although material culture is important for enabling meaning to be created, particularly where this enables the ethics of the gift to stay manifest in the individual's home and so must be suitable for this, it appears to be important that this material does not come across to the recipients as being lavish or gimmicky to try to fill the gap of a self-oriented gift. Rather, it emerges that recipients prefer this material to demonstrate clearly the gift that they have been given, and perhaps with reference to the occasion for which it is given. In identifying this it seems that alternative giving does not stray into the hyperreal; that despite the spectacularisation of charity in alternative giving, recipients use the devices as a means to gain some sense of connection beyond themselves, to the beneficiary and their sense of need and joy at receiving a particular item, instead of using alternative giving as opportunity to moral-self through detaching the ethical meaning and virtue provided by the gift and using it to 'better' themselves.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Thesis Overview

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the practices of constructing, giving and receiving alternative gifts in the contexts within which charities operate. Particularly, I have sought to understand these practices in a landscape of charity fundraising which is attempting to make itself in such a way as to continue to engage with a society continually wanting new and exciting ways to give. As a result, charities have had to develop innovative devices which both take charity giving into the spaces in which individuals carry out their daily activities to enable them to encounter giving to charity and provide mechanisms and narratives through which they are able to integrate giving to charity into their lives. Alternative giving is one such fundraising device that has emerged over the course of the last decade in charities in England and Wales, and not only provides an example of innovative fundraising but, moreover, is unique in the extent to which it produces charity giving as a form of commodity.

In light of this I have been particularly interested in understanding alternative giving as a new (ethically imagined) space of connection which has emerged from the charity sector and which is broadly constructed through spaces of retail and takes place through practices of (ethical) consumption. Specifically, alternative giving is most prominent and successful in development charities and so I have considered the particular reasons why it is so suitable as a mechanism for constructing and mobilising charitable support for the distant 'other'.

Cross-cutting these concepts of consumption and ethics in the charity-constructed space of connection are theorisations of government and the place of the subject within this. As such, I have engaged with literatures on government, governance and governmentality which characterise a form of contemporary citizenship based on a 'responsibilised' citizen who acts according to their personal preferences in the marketplace. It is in this setting that these subjects are understood as being mobilised to act in particular ways by a range of devices (Clarke *et al.*, 2007). Although citizenship is traditionally conceptualised as a nationally bounded form of identity, the notion of global citizenship has emerged and, therefore, overseas development alternative giving can be thought of as one device which attempts to mobilise the global citizen, simultaneously providing a set of ethical narratives to the consumer and a way for the consumer to act upon these.

With these themes in mind I posed the following questions early in the thesis:

- 1) In what institutional, societal and governmental contexts has alternative giving, as a distinct fundraising device, emerged and how is alternative giving manifest in the social milieu?
- 2) What processes of mediation are carried out by charities in their construction of 'development' through alternative giving and what are the implications of these for an imagined geography of development's people and places?
- 3) In what ways does alternative giving govern the ethical subject?
- 4) What is the place of ethics in the practices of giving and receiving alternative gifts?
- 5) What is the afterlife of an alternative gift for the recipient given the gift's material form and what are the implications of this?

So as to address these questions I structured the main empirical chapters, 4-6, around different spaces of alternative giving (spaces of organisation, spaces of marketing and

production, and spaces of practice), and from which the following key findings can be drawn. Following a discussion of these findings I reflect on the implications that can be taken from researching alternative giving for several of the theoretical concepts that I outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 of the thesis, on carrying out research with charities and researching 'ethical' practices, before finally considering the implications of this research for potential future directions of research into charity fundraising.

7.2 Key Research Findings

7.2.1 International Development Charities and the Emergence of New Fundraising Devices

Firstly, in addressing question 1, it can be seen that the global interconnectedness of international development charities has enabled the device of alternative giving to transfer from charities in the USA to those in the UK. This transfer of innovation indicates that this kind of charity, which operates internationally, might be the route through which other new forms of fundraising enter the national context. It has also been seen that the charity giant in international development, Oxfam, is essential to wider public familiarity with alternative giving both because of the ability to market alternative giving more extensively, and the greater attention that the Oxfam gain from the national media in terms of public relations. Ultimately it seems that this has huge benefit for all charities with an alternative gift scheme, by making individuals aware of the possibility of alternative giving and prompting some to seek it out in particular charities. However, the necessity for charities to develop further new fundraising devices then becomes apparent, both in order to generate more news and so get free media coverage, and so as to continue to make charity-giving intriguing to givers. In part, alternative giving is able to facilitate the latter with the introduction of new gifts each year, but this does not command the attention of the media

and their cheap marketing in PR in the same way that a new and novel fundraising device does. A constant search for innovative ideas is necessary for charity fundraisers and for this they must be able to keep their administrative systems flexible. This may be easier for larger charities with fundraising departments large enough for a post dedicated to the development of new fundraising forms.

Differences in the assimilation of alternative giving into individual charities can be addressed in terms of spending models. Although variations in these can be justified by charities through reference to organisational ethos, it can instead be analysed as resulting from more pragmatic decisions. These decisions are based on: the existing structures of fundraising; the need for particular kinds of money perhaps resulting from the funding provided by government; the charity's perceptions of their potential alternative gift audience and place within the alternative gift market; and the significance of the money raised through alternative giving to the trajectory of the charity's development. As a consequence, the form in which alternative giving is used by charities is such that it maximises the opportunities for funding to benefit beneficiaries but with minimal influence on the way in which this is carried out; the integration of new forms of fundraising into individual charities is carried out with the aim of limiting the destabilising effect of the fundraising device on the existing organisational structure, unless this enables expansion of the charity.

7.2.2 Representing the 'Distant Others' of Development

Moving on to research question 2, so thinking about the representation of the distant other, one of the criticisms levelled at fundraising by international development charities is that support for these charities is mobilised around individual charity brand which, in turn,

prevents meaningful intervention into the broad issues of these forms of poverty by collectively motivated individuals (Desforges, 2004). In some respects alternative giving appears to contravene this assessment, in that alternative gift catalogues largely present relatively similar kinds of objects for sale as gifts and so presents a consistency of issues of international development. Further, although individuals might be extensively loyal to one particular charity in other forms of giving it does not mean that they will necessarily be so with alternative giving. The broader picture of international development emerges such that they are able to recognise the issues they are concerned about in other charities' alternative gift catalogues. Alternative giving is able to transcend such organisational distinctions around, for example, religion, through an overt emphasis on the practical issues of international development's others.

Critically though, alternative giving is centred on a tension between sameness and difference of the distant others constructed through the selection of images and production of text about them. Maintaining the right balance in this tension appears to be crucial to the success of alternative giving as a form of fundraising that has been particularly prevalent for international development. Arguably, the ability to construct absolute difference is vital to the kinds of alternative gifts that are popular with individuals in that the givers and receivers are not presented with a situation that they might find themselves in. Unlike forms of domestic charity where items might appear either mundane due to over-familiarity, or symbolic of personal distress (for example, as cancer charity gifts might) and therefore not celebratory in tone, a perception of absolute difference of situation means that interest can be created around the sense of the unusual and through the notion of an impersonal (but real) sense of care that can be shared between giver and receiver.

That said, the notion of difference in alternative giving is necessarily tempered with the construction of human sameness in terms of need; although the specific items represented as fulfilling these needs might be perceived as ‘exotic’, the needs themselves are portrayed as universal. Furthermore, the ‘others’ depicted are often shown as culturally so but broadly undetermined in terms of, for example, potentially contentious issues such as cultural hierarchy or religion. They are culturally detached in the way in which they are represented which means they are less likely to present an ideological challenge to potential donors but rather are able to be widely acceptable to them. The issue at the centre of this is that alternative giving appears to create itself so as to be acceptable to its target audience, being edited and compiled by marketers and fundraisers rather than the beneficiaries themselves and therefore simply reinforces a discourse of North-South dichotomy, rather than presenting a challenge to this – either by fully embracing the idea of a shared humanity or by overtly giving ‘the other’ its own voice. The construction of development in alternative giving in this way does not appear to be a result of deliberate strategies of charities though; instead it emerges through the process of catalogue and gift production as fundraisers attempt to present a ‘face’ that will have the greatest affect and appeal to the potential donor. This is produced in a network of negotiation between variously positioned people comprising both donor and beneficiary facing fronts of the charity who care about those involved.

7.2.3 Charity Fundraising and (Ethical) Consumption

Having summarised the construction of the imagined geographies of development in alternative giving I am going to consider alternative giving in relation to research question 3, in terms of ethical consumption. Alternative giving exemplifies a deeper movement of charity fundraising into commodity cultures, spectacularising the notion of use value

through constructions of difference, such as through a romanticised representation of the rural, in the creation of gifts. The use of difference within the marketing of alternative giving presents a problem for post-colonial projects; however the alternative gift functions through a dual sense of difference and similarity, with the latter enabling gift recipients to empathise with the needs of distant 'others'.

Further, alternative giving also uses the display spaces of the commodity so as to engage with individuals in their everyday, skilled activities. This both indicates that individuals increasingly use the marketplace to act politically-ethically; economy and ethics cannot be easily separated and, moreover, alternative giving constructs an ethical narrative around personal areas of consumption which draws connections between the ordinary practices of individuals and distant others which both frames the ordinary practices as unethical and offers a solution for this. Distinctly, alternative giving must bring together a host of narratives on ethical action (around notions of anti-consumerism, anti-materialism and care for the gift recipient) which are not specific to the beneficiary, instead addressing a broadly ethically disposed subject and enabling them to extend this ethical disposition into the arena of international development charity. Significantly, this means that rather than appealing to altruism wholly with the face of need, alternative giving appeals to the already ethical subject by addressing their desire to create themselves as an ethical individual by tying their consumption behaviour into a form of charitable action.

In entering the commodity arena through alternative giving, charities are able to connect with potential supporters through their everyday vocabularies of consumption rather than requiring them to enter into a charity vocabulary in the first instance. Although this means that charities are then able to engage with those who are disposed to care who have not

perhaps previously felt compelled to interact with charity, this makes demands on the charity for higher levels of professionalism in the presentation of themselves through their marketing and fulfillment materials. For example, it seems important to both giver and receiver that the fulfillment materials provided are of a suitable standard for giving to a recipient as a gift and for this recipient to display in their home (or wherever else), perhaps for several months or longer. This level of production may be difficult for smaller charities less integrated into systems of contracting with professional service companies or employ specialists and with less ability to invest in such contracting and employment. Alternative giving both enables this sense of the professional charity to emerge in charities where it has enabled the growth of the charity, but also demands this for the wider success of alternative giving.

7.2.4 Moral-Selves or Ethical Connections?

Fourth, and finally, I am going to outline the key findings which address research questions 4 and 5, in terms of individual ethical disposition and practice. In this thesis I have demonstrated how alternative giving enables individuals to carry out further acts of care in their lives, or makes them aware of how they can take their caring impulse into this different space of charity giving. Moreover, I have argued that alternative giving is not necessarily simply being used by these individuals to create a front of an ethical subject as is implied by literature on moral-selving (Allahyari, 2000). Instead, alternative giving appears to be carried out both through a deeper sense of responsibility to various others and a feeling that alternative giving is a very possible form of action for an individual to participate in as a way of starting to address issues of material poverty elsewhere. Although these deeper senses of care for the distant other are relatively difficult to access through research, and I will come to a summary of this methodological problem, I have

tried to demonstrate in the empirical exploration of the ethics of alternative giving that the actions of individuals in their involvement with alternative giving can be interpreted through this different, less cynical lens.

Alternative giving is a very visual way in which to give to charity in that part of the premise of it is built around the possibility of giving and displaying materials which evidence the giving of money to charity. Alternative gifts do, for some givers, provide a way of both introducing this kind of giving to the recipient and providing a medium with which to initiate conversation around international development issues. Further, the material gifts, when displayed by the recipient facilitate a re-imagining of the ethics of giving to charity to them and to others who enter into the space in which they are displayed. However, these traces of charity donation appear to be about more than the kinds of ethical selves that can be created through involvement in the practices of giving or receiving an alternative gift. Evidence of the participation of individuals in these practices for reasons beyond the self include the way in which alternative giving materials are used to facilitate a sense of empathy for those depicted. Significantly, this sense of empathy is not simply explained as giving the individual a sense of having done good, but is used to motivate further involvement in charity, as a reminder of the needs that others have for which they can help which might then be acted upon either by purchasing and giving alternative gifts, or by giving to charity more generally. Alternative gift purchasers and receivers do not engage with alternative giving as a change from other kinds of charity giving, and it seems that they do not place the focus of their donating on alternative giving but instead use it as a way of infiltrating a particular area of their practice, gift-giving, with ethics.

Additionally, there was great concern on the part of both givers and receivers that the fulfillment materials of alternative giving did not appear to have been overly expensive to produce. Although this material is important for the transfer of the gift and the donation of charity from giver to receiver, both in terms of demonstrating the suitability of the alternative gift for that particular gifting relationship and for enabling the recipient to understand the implications of their gift, excessive materiality of this detracts from the gift being a charitable one. So while the device of alternative giving in itself might be 'gimmicky' in abstract terms, as a new form of fundraising that has the ability to capture the attention of individuals and the press, those involved in giving and receiving are nonetheless concerned that the material practices of it are not preventative to the majority of money from the gift going to the work of the charity.

Finally, it seems that alternative giving not only presents giving to charity as an individual practice of care. Givers and receivers very much perceive that it should be practiced in a joined up sense of care situated in the subjects involved. Several interviewees gave examples of situations where the alternative gift had not been a popular one, and in these it is the giver who becomes framed as ethically selfishly, as prepared to deny the recipient a 'proper' gift for the sake of their ethical sensibilities. In such instances the care of the giver for others generally is called into question, because of their apparent inability to demonstrate care for the gift recipient through the giving of a gift appropriate to the recipient. These situations highlight how care is very much understood by those involved as emerging from the basis of particular actions in the virtuous and caring subject rather than consisting in particular, independent, lone practices.

7.2.5 The Implications of these Findings for the Future of Charity Fundraising

By way of a summary then, it is evident from this research that charities must constantly grapple with producing forms of fundraising that have benefit for others through the activation of charitable giving. This is not an easy task for it must both speak to a public audience through (potentially expensive) marketing whilst achieving a level of income significantly above that spent. Alternative giving appears to have had some success at both engaging with new charity donors and at presenting some of the issues around which their work is carried out, mobilising support for these issues.

That said, there are signs that charity fundraising might already be moving on from alternative giving. Recent indicators show that some charities have decided to stop investing in an alternative giving scheme or are reinventing it in different ways. Notably, Plan UK have done away with alternative giving in 2010, citing this decision to be due to plans of improvement and expansion in other areas of fundraising.⁹² This signals that the level of investment required in alternative giving is not deemed to be strategically worthwhile for all charities, with their distinctive fundraising situations. Further, those charities continuing to have a form of alternative giving appear to be developing this into other forms of fundraising. UNICEF, for example, have developed a selection of items from their alternative gift range 'Inspired Gifts' into a parallel range of items which are marketed as a way for the individual simply to donate to the charity, but with a choice about what that money is spent on and for which they receive a gift tag with information about what the donation has been spent on. Both of these developments of alternative giving indicate that for some charities, alternative giving has run its course, and for others, alternative giving is providing new ideas for fundraising.

⁹² See: <http://www.plan-uk.org/involved/shops/> [Accessed 5th September, 2010].

Equally, there is an issue around the depth of this connection made through alternative giving with individuals, and whether this in fact persuades them to become more involved with international development. It seems that, although alternative giving might have the ability to engage individuals with the idea of giving to charity through building tangible connections between their lives and those of these distant others, it is not necessarily fully successful in building further commitment to overseas development's others specifically. Arguably, therefore, these charities should attempt to build broader issues around overseas development into their fundraising devices so as to make it more possible for those introduced to charity giving through them to support the campaign for global equality in a more connected way.

7.3 Rethinking Concepts Relating to the Government of the Ethical Consuming Self

In the earlier chapters of the thesis I engaged with a range of theoretical literatures in order to situate charity/charities and practices of alternative giving and to provide a framework through which to consider their organisation and practice. Therefore I will now return to several of these theoretical concepts in light of my discussion of alternative giving so as to critically reflect on these conceptualisations.

The first of these concepts that I want to return to is governmentality, which provided a useful framework through which to consider the practical operation of power in the relationships between government, charity and individuals. The particular emphasis in the research on alternative giving was on the question of the governing of individuals by charities through marketing. Through this research it appears that the government of individuals through devices such as alternative giving is more a process of trial and error

than calculated intervention, with those creating such devices never being certain as to the reason for the success or not of their device even after dissemination and so governmentality can be said to act with an element of blindness. Further, the individuals who are targeted by the marketing and challenged to make themselves in a particular way bring to this an already existing disposition which appears, in some instances, to be born out of a sense of care for the other which has emerged through relationships with others, rather than through governing devices. Based on this then, I would argue that governmentality in these instances is not all encompassing but rather works alongside a wide array of subject-level experiences and interventions, some of which exceed broader notions of government and which the device must attempt to draw upon in order to appeal to the subject. Governmental devices do not act in isolation on the individual subject.

A second key theory which I initially outline in Chapter 1 is that of simulacrum. This provided a very useful tool with which to consider the authenticity of the images produced by charities which individuals act upon through alternative giving (as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). One of the central tenets of simulacrum is that individuals prefer the glossy surfaces of the pretend realer-than-real which the society of consumption now presents, rather than the real on which this is originally based. This certainly appears to resonate with aspects of charity fundraising which are evidenced in alternative giving with, for example, fundraisers now producing computer simulations of African and South-East Asian villages through which individuals are able to chart their alternative gift purchasing progress as a game. However, this concept of simulacrum attempts to sever all ties between the real and the simulation of the real and this is where alternative giving is able to provide a critique of it through highlighting the extent to which charities put much time and effort into authenticating the images that they use of beneficiaries and the demands that

individuals who purchase alternative gifts make for this to be the case. Therefore it can be concluded that the level at which simulacrum is present within society is certainly not dominant and all encompassing.

Moving on, I want to consider the critical contribution that this research on alternative giving presented here can have to the moral/ethical theories with which I have engaged in this thesis. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the concept of moral-selving should be challenged in terms of the way in which it presents those practicing charity through giving an alternative gift in that it certainly seems that individuals do not simply purchase and give alternative gifts in order to make them self into a charitable individual. That said, it is difficult to get beyond the notion of moral-selving because to do so involves paying attention to aspects of charitable actions that are more felt than shown through observation and which are more difficult for individuals to articulate in words. Also, given the concept of alternative hedonism also emphasises the self-centred feelings of good that are produced by ethical actions for the individual involved in such practices, a similar line of critique may be drawn. Alternative hedonism may well be a useful lens through which to understand alternative giving in some respects, in that the alternative gift only 'works' where it enables individuals to form a positive relationship to it (i.e. it doesn't produce pleasure for either giver or recipient where it is not understood and it is in these instances where it does not seem to have been an appropriate action to take). However, there appear to be moments where individuals still request to receive an alternative gift even where they hint that they would possibly prefer to receive a more material (and so less ethical) gift because of the sense of how this could help someone other than them self. This then demonstrates the extent to which there is a need to be careful when applying this theory of ethical action based on the specifics of what's being consumed as there are other ways of

interpreting the empirical materials which do not conclude that ethical action revolves so strongly around the individual.

Further, as discussed in Chapter 2, virtue ethics is an ethical theory which is able to understand that, although rooted in the subject of the individual, ethics does not wholly play out through the self-satisfaction of the individual but instead is built around a subject who is responsive to others through the way in which they are disposed. While I would argue that this theory has a great deal of purchase on understanding the subject as responsive within specific contexts to others rather than as acting with the overarching rationality of moral codes or theories, it does however lack attention to the impact of social networks on such dispositions. For example, with alternative giving the social networks of the school and the church were discussed as being prominent spaces which were appropriate for the giving and receiving of alternative gifts and so highlighting that individuals do not necessarily respond to ethical devices in isolated units, but at times respond through their involvement in wider, coherent, networks.

Finally, these points of critique lead me to return to gift theory and the notion of reciprocity which have both been prominent in understanding the mechanism of alternative giving in its specificity. Both of these concepts bring with them the idea that gift-giving is very much an interested and emotionally self-invested action. This certainly emerges as significant to the giving and receiving of alternative gifts between known individuals. However, as developed in Chapter 2 and corroborated through the discussion of the empirical material relating to such giving and receiving, gift-giving appears to involve more than the giving/receiving of *a* gift; the materiality of the gift is essential, required to be something that is able to adequately reflect the giver and receiver's mutual

understanding of their relationship. Further, the social setting and way in which the gift is given contributes to the sense in which the item is a gift and therefore that it has a meaningful function in the relationship between giver and recipient. Therefore, any examination of gift-giving drawing on gift theory must pay attention not only to the idea of gift-giving, but also to the specifics of the individual gift being given and the gifting situation this takes place within.

7.4 Critical Reflections on Researching Alternative Giving

Having summarised the main findings from the thesis, I now want to offer some points of reflection on researching alternative giving. There are two aspects of the research that I have carried out for this thesis that I especially want to focus on here. These have emerged through the approach that I have taken in examining both the spaces of the charity through which alternative giving is constructed and produced, and the spaces of practices of giving and receiving alternative gifts. One of the aims of this thesis was to attempt to get beyond the representational analysis of development charity fundraising and to allow room for a more generous sense of charity spaces and ethical subjects. This has been a methodological challenge and entailed a degree of ‘reading between the lines’ of what people have said about both the production of and their engagement with alternative giving, attending to what was not said.

7.4.1 Researching ‘Ethical’ Organisations?

One of the discussions which has developed around charities as organisations is the extent to which they are self-fulfilling entities, or in other words, whether they carry out their fundraising activities primarily to sustain the organisation. The very mechanism of alternative giving suggests this in that it appears to place charities in direct competition

with each other through the construction of a charity marketplace, although implications of this research suggest this is, in part, a way for charity to enter into new spaces of fundraising rather than a way of facilitating direct competition.

However, researching and assessing the contemporary intentions of charities as distinct organisational bodies is not necessarily an easy task. The research I carried out for this thesis involved considering what the charity employee(s) said about their role in the organisation and how their practice related to the overall framework of the organisation. There certainly appeared to be mechanisms within some charities which entailed an assessment of the adherence of alternative giving to the charity's identity with, for example, particular posts within the charity being responsible for ensuring alternative giving fitted the organisation's ethos and brand.

Contrary to this cynicism though were the indications of care that the individuals I interviewed showed both for the beneficiaries of the charity and for the donors to the charity. This was observable in particular instances. For example, where the interviewee gave up the free time of their lunch hour in order to speak to me, such as at Christian Aid, indicating a real personal commitment to achieving the best kinds of fundraising possible, outside of any sense of a corporate agenda. In other places this was discernable in the interviewee's elaboration of how they had come to the point of working for the charity with, for example, one interviewee describing the effect of an extended period of volunteering for a cooperative in India on her desire to fundraise. Although there are inevitable tensions between the organisational structure of a charity and the employee (or volunteer) ethical disposition (Cloke *et al.*, 2010), there emerged a sense of integrity with these interviewees about the degree to which they would not compromise their own ethics

for the sake of the organisation. Including such aspects in research is essential for understanding organisational practice and involves attending to details which are not necessarily about practice. Although I have begun to do that here, such as through keeping a research diary, there certainly is more that can be done so as to better understand the workings of 'ethical' organisations.

7.4.2 *Researching 'Ethical' Practices?*

A Second, principle, focus in this thesis on the practices of giving and receiving alternative gifts has attempted to understand the more ineffable aspects of such practices. This certainly presented a challenge for the social science research methods used for this research, of interviews and focus groups. When asking people to speak about their reasons for choosing to be involved in alternative giving, or about how they felt when giving or receiving an alternative gift, it was very difficult for them to escape language which implies moral-selving. In aiming to get beyond these notions of selfish altruism in this thesis I have attempted to open out a theoretical framework around which notions of connection and relating can be interpreted in the material produced by these methods of speaking to people. Additionally, as with researching organisations, it has involved thinking more deeply about the ways in which individuals may have attempted to articulate such aspects which are important to their involvement beyond a purely self-based affect narrative of such practices. Glimpses of this have been visible, for example in the discussion of how one giver was led to appreciate the benefit of such work through working on a daily basis with children. Other indications have been the desire by many givers and receivers to have more information about the item and how it will be used so as to gain a better sense of the other and expressed that they did not mind whether their money was actually spent on the item

represented if it was of more use to the charity being unrestricted.⁹³ Therefore, getting at the deeper senses of care for the other is not necessarily simple, but involves paying attention to interpretive frameworks and the detail of what is expressed.

7.5 Further Research?

Finally, and following these critical reflections on alternative giving and on the research carried out for this thesis, I am going to offer two ideas of future research which might prove fruitful for understanding more about charity fundraising.

Firstly, it seems that an in-depth ethnography of fundraising in one particular charity would be illuminating of the way in which the relationships between the charity as an organisation, the individuals employed by them, the donor audience, and the beneficiaries are significant to how decisions around fundraising are made. I anticipate that it is only through such a detailed examination of the daily, mundane and seemingly insignificant aspects of developing fundraising strategies and fundraising devices within individual organisations that better understanding of the purpose of fundraising in the organisation can be made.

Secondly, of special relevance to alternative giving and already mentioned in Chapter 3, research into the beneficiary outcomes of particular forms of fundraising would provide a better understanding of whether the way in which the charity fundraises influences the way in which it carries out its beneficiary work. In so doing, the impact of the ‘Northern’ donor

⁹³ Although I do not mean to suggest here that those who were not happy about this are demonstrating selfishness, rather that they perceive their relationship to the charity and beneficiary to be different and perhaps feel misled by the charity they had trusted.

on the 'Southern' beneficiary could be assessed, building on the critical analysis of the kinds of ethically imagined spaces of connection already undertaken in this thesis.

Appendix 1: Example of Charity Participant Consent Form

Consent for participation in research for: 'New practices of giving: Alternative Gifts and charity'

This research is about 'alternative gift' schemes that are operated by overseas development charities. Particularly, the aims are to understand why these schemes have recently started to emerge, what the response of the public is to these and why, and what this means to organisation and operation of the charities that run the schemes. It will also consider how alternative giving differs from other forms of charity giving.

Your Participation

Your input into this research will take the form of an interview. Questions will be about the alternative gift scheme in your charity, particularly in relation to the history of it, the practicalities of operating the scheme, whether it has been successful and the problems with running such a scheme.

The interview will be audio-recorded if consent is given for this, otherwise notes will be taken during the interview. Any audio-recording will be used only by the researcher [Louise Rutt] to assist in analysing the information given, for the purpose of this research. Following the completion of this study, the recording will be deleted.

There are no known risks from this research to the participant.

If the participant wishes for information they provide to be used anonymously, then this will be the case in any document resulting from this research (such as Ph.D thesis, reports and academic publications).

Participation is voluntary and consent can be withdrawn at any point, without undue consequences.

Please raise any issues or ask any questions that you might have about participating in this research, either now or at any stage of participation. When you are satisfied, and if you still wish to continue, please indicate your responses and level of consent below:

I have read and understood the consent form, and give my informed consent to participate in the Alternative Gifts research project

I do/do not consent to the interview being audio-recorded for the purpose of this research? (Delete as applicable)

I would like my identity/the identity of the charity to be made anonymous in any documents resulting from this research

Or

I am happy for my identity/the identity of the charity to be known in any documents resulting from this research (Delete as applicable)

Name.....

Charity.....

Signed.....

Date.....

Appendix 2: Overseas Development Charities and their Alternative Gift Catalogues

Charity	Alternative Gift Catalogue
Action Aid	Gifts in Action
Build Africa	Alternative Gifts
CAFOD	World Gifts
Christian Aid	Present Aid
Concern Universal	Give Love
Concern Worldwide	Concern Gifts
FARM-Africa	FARM Friends FARM-Africa Presents
Feed the Children	Alternative Gifts
Charities Advisory Trust	Good Gifts
Help the Aged	The Alternative Gift List
Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF)	Extraordinary Gifts
Muslim Hands	Great Charity Gifts
Oxfam	Oxfam Unwrapped
Plan	Alternative Gifts
Practical Action	Practical Presents
Save the Children	Wish List
Self Help Africa	Gifts of Hope
Send a Cow	Send a Cow gifts
Smile international	Gifts with Love
Tearfund	Living Gifts
UNICEF	Inspired Gifts
World Vision	Must have Gifts

Appendix 3: Initial Interview Request Letter and Information Sheet to Charity Representative

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Alternative Gift Research and Oxfam Unwrapped

As postgraduate researcher at the University of Exeter I am undertaking a three-year project, funded by the University, into alternative gift catalogues such as 'Oxfam Unwrapped'. I understand that you are involved in managing this gift range at Oxfam and so I am writing to ask whether it would be possible to talk either to you, or to someone else you might be able to direct me to, about this.

I have enclosed a more detailed outline of my research, the sorts of topics that I would hope to ask about, and information about the research ethics committee that my work is monitored by.

I will phone in the few days to find out if it would be possible to arrange a time to talk, but if you would prefer to contact me then please do so; my email address is:

louise.rutt@exeter.ac.uk.

Yours faithfully,

Louise Rutt

Information about Alternative Giving Research Project for Potential Participants

The Project

This research is focused on ‘alternative gift’ catalogues and schemes in international development charities. The main aims are:

- To understand the context and circumstances within which alternative giving started and has since grown.
- To examine differences between charities’ alternative giving schemes the reasons for these differences.
- To consider how international development charities seek to engage the general public with alternative gifts and the resulting beneficiaries (be they directly or indirectly connected).
- To research public responses to alternative giving and their reasons for these responses.
- To chart any specific beneficiary outcomes of alternative giving (recognizing that this is not applicable to all alternative gift schemes).

Potential Participation: Oxfam/Oxfam Unwrapped

I realize that time is very pressured in charitable organizations, but was hoping that it might be possible to come to talk to someone at Oxfam about ‘Oxfam Unwrapped’, some time in the next month or so.

The Oxfam Unwrapped website has lots of very useful information, but I have some additional questions, for example about: how the alternative gift catalogue is created and marketed, and why; why the catalogue was first initiated and how it has developed and changed since then; and what the public response has been to Oxfam Unwrapped, both in terms of sales and in terms of any other feedback.

This research is towards a PhD thesis and I will be happy to provide a summary of findings to Oxfam following my completion of this thesis.

Research Ethics guidelines

My research is carried out following the University of Exeter Ethics Guidelines, my use of which is monitored by the School of Geography, Archaeology and Earth Resources Ethics Committee. These guidelines cover various issues that you might be concerned about and I would be very happy to discuss these with you.

Appendix 4: Charity Interviewees

Charity	Interviewee	Role	Interview Location	Interview Date
ActionAid	Alison Liney	Administrator, Supporter Care	ActionAid Supporter Services, Chard, Somerset	30/7/07
Very Large International Development Charity: 'Aid International'	'Kate' ¹	Product Development Executive	Charity Headoffice, London	9/1/08
Send a Cow	Richard Cottrell	Marketing and Communications Officer	Send a Cow, Newton St Loe, Bath	11/1/08
ActionAid	Peter de Vena Franks	Marketing Manager	Action Aid Headoffice, Archway, London	26/2/08
Feed the Children	Kim Tame	Marketing Coordinator	Feed the Children Headoffice, Twyford, Berkshire	12/3/08
World Vision	David Thompson*	Marketing Manager Gift Catalogue	n/a	13/3/08
World Vision	Sarah Trickey*	Programme Officer	n/a	25/3/08
Help the Aged	Steven Greenberg*	Head of Individual Marketing	n/a	14/5/08
Concern Universal	Debbie Stenner	Communications and Supporter Development Manager	Hereford Cathedral Cafe, Hereford	21/5/08
Build Africa	Chris Pearson*	Appeals and Publications Officer	n/a	18/6/08
Concern Universal	Ian Williams	Executive Director of Concern Universal	Concern Universal Headoffice, Hereford	21/7/08
Tearfund	Sharon King	Product Development Executive	Tearfund Headoffice, Teddington, London	7/8/08
Plan	Jane Parsons*	Marketing and Fundraising Executive	n/a	23/9/08
Practical Action	Paul McQuaid	Practical Present Marketing Manager	Practical Action Headoffice, Bourton on Dunsmore, Warwickshire	26/9/08

Charity	Interviewee	Role	Interview Location	Interview Date
Christian Aid	Daniel Charles	Supporter Recruitment Manager	Café, Lower Marsh, Waterloo, London	7/10/08
Christian Aid	'Sarah' ²	Regional Administrator	Christian Aid Regional Office, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire	21/10/08
Muslim Hands	Shahid Bashir and Tariq Nasir	Fundraising Manager/Projects Manager	Muslim Hands Headoffice, Nottingham	2/12/08
Oxfam	Paul Vanags	Oxfam Unwrapped and Innovations Manager	Oxfam Headoffice, Oxford	23/7/09
Methodist Relief and Development Fund	Anna*	Marketing and Communications Officer	n/a	19/8/09

* Indicates interviews carried out by telephone. All other charity interviews were carried out in person.

¹ Interviewee requested organisational and personal anonymity due to some opinions given being her own, both these names are, therefore, pseudonyms, however I have provided a brief description of the charity.

² Although this interviewee did not request anonymity, I have made her identity anonymous as some of material used from this interview was relatively sensitive and, again, overtly explained by the interviewee as being her own opinion.

Appendix 5: Interviews, Focus Groups and Email Responses about Practices of Giving and Receiving Alternative Gifts

Pseudonym	Involvement with Alternative Giving	Date	Research Participation
Amanda	Giver	13 February 2008	Interview (in person)
Sophie	Giver	9 January 2009	Interview (telephone)
Toby	Giver and Recipient	12 January 2009	Interview (telephone)
Thea	Giver and Recipient	17 January 2009	Interview (telephone)
Anna	Giver	17 January 2009	Interview (telephone)
Rachael	Giver and Recipient	19 January 2009	Interview (telephone)
Jessica	Giver and Recipient	20 January 2009	Interview (telephone)
Ben	Giver	20 January 2009	Interview (telephone)
Emily	Giver and Recipient	12 February 2009	Interview (telephone)
Vicky	Recipient	20 February 2009	Interview (telephone)
Patricia	Giver and Recipient	14 March 2009	Interview (in person)*
Neil	Giver and Recipient	14 March 2009	Interview (in person)*
Anita	Giver and Recipient	26 April 2009	Interview (telephone)
Olivia	Recipient	10 June 2009	Interview (in person)
Chris	Giver and Recipient	5 February 2010	Interview (in person) ⁺
Caroline	Giver and Recipient	5 February 2010	Interview (in person) ⁺
Yvonne	Giver and Recipient	5 February 2010	Interview (in person) ⁺
Alice	Giver and Recipient	15 March 2008	Focus Group A
Elise	None	15 March 2008	Focus Group A
Gemma	Giver	15 March 2008	Focus Group A
Laura	Not known	15 March 2008	Focus Group A
Zoe	Giver and Recipient	15 March 2008	Focus Group A
Chloe	Giver	15 March 2008	Focus Group B
Lisa	Giver and Recipient	15 March 2008	Focus Group B
Rob	None	15 March 2008	Focus Group B
Steph	Giver and Recipient	15 March 2008	Focus Group B
Thomas	Giver	15 March 2008	Focus Group B
Alena	None	1 July 2009	Focus Group C
Jody	None	1 July 2009	Focus Group C
Iain	None	1 July 2009	Focus Group C
Joe	None	1 July 2009	Focus Group C
Carla	Recipient	January 2008	Email response
Thieno	Giver	January 2008	Email response
Juliet	Giver and Recipient	January 2008	Email response
Guy	Recipient	January 2008	Email response
Marie	Recipient	January 2008	Email response

Pseudonym	Involvement with Alternative Giving	Date	Research Participation
Tanya	Recipient	January 2008	Email response
Sebastien	Recipient	January 2008	Email response
Holly	Giver	January 2008	Email response
Justin	Recipient	January 2008	Email response
Beth	Recipient	February 2008	Email response
Jasmine	Giver and Recipient	February 2008	Email response

* Interviewed together

+ Interviewed together

Focus Group A – Birmingham
Focus Group B – Birmingham
Focus Group C – Bristol

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