

CONSPICUOUS CHARITY

A Thesis

by

LINDSAY ANDERSON

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

MASTER OF SCIENCE

August 2007

Major Subject: Sociology

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ABSTRACT

Conspicuous Charity. (August 2007)

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With the increased number of natural disasters that have plagued the world in recent years, benefits and charities have become forefront in the media and in people's minds. The most publicized of these charities are ones that invoke the names and the use of celebrities. I intend to discuss how works of charity and philanthropy can be conceptualized as consumption of cultural capital, and how these works can be interpreted in some cases as merely an expedient way to gain social capital or higher social standing within society. Even though this use of munificence has been traditionally frowned upon, I will use Thorstein Veblen, David Riesman, and other social theorists to argue that such misuse is universal and trans-historical. It is important to question the historical and current motivations behind philanthropic or charitable participation, especially by those who can be labeled the socially powerful, because their actions are emulated by the rest of society.

Understanding the motivations behind giving is becoming progressively more important for two reasons. First, contemporary society is becoming increasingly more celebrity oriented where recognition is due to conspicuous social status, as opposed to what you have done. Due to this fixation on fame, celebrities influence many aspects of

society, including people's very behavior. The second reason motivations should be explored and questioned is that the incentives behind giving have not previously been explored in-depth, and therefore charity can not be adequately understood. The amalgamation of these two subjects into one topic is in itself important. By doing such, I bring a new perspective to the discourse on celebrity and of giving.

This question also needs to be asked since understanding who these people are, and historically were, and why they give to charity, is to understand what charity is, and has evolved into. If givers' motivations are not properly examined, giving may become just another empty gesture in a multitude of empty gestures, as they are depicted by Jean Baudrillard and other postmodernists.

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INTRODUCTION

With the increased number of natural disasters that have plagued the world in recent years, benefits and charities have become forefront in the media and in people's minds. The most publicized of these charities are ones that invoke the names and the use of celebrities. I intend to discuss how works of charity and philanthropy can be conceptualized as consumption of cultural capital, and how these works can be interpreted in some cases as merely an expedient way to gain social capital or higher social standing within society. The terms cultural and social capital are used as an extension of similar usage by theorists ranging from Pierre Bourdieu (1979) to the postmodernists (especially Jean Baudrillard in his work *Consumer Society* 1998). Even though this use of munificence has been traditionally frowned upon, I will use Thorstein Veblen, David Riesman, and other social theorists to argue that such misuse is universal and trans-historical. I also contend that it has produced tangible benefits for the socially powerful (or those who wished to be) starting early in western civilization, throughout the era of the Robber Barons, and continuing with present day celebrities. It is important to question the historical and current motivations behind philanthropic or charitable participation, especially by those who can be labeled the socially powerful, because their actions are emulated by the rest of society.

Understanding the motivations behind giving is becoming progressively more important for two reasons. First, contemporary society is becoming increasingly more

celebrity oriented where recognition is due to conspicuous social status, as opposed to what you have done. Due to this fixation on fame, celebrities influence many aspects of society, including people's very behavior. This is an important component of what David Riesman (1961) called other-directed society, which is guided by the norm of conspicuous consumption. Riesman takes and elaborates this idea directly from the work of Thorstein Veblen. The second reason motivations should be explored and questioned is that the incentives behind giving have not previously been explored in-depth, and therefore charity can not be adequately understood. The amalgamation of these two subjects into one topic is in itself important. By doing such, I bring a new perspective to the discourse on celebrity and of giving.

This question also needs to be asked since understanding who these people are, and historically were, and why they give to charity, is to understand what charity is, and has evolved into. Charity is no longer the realm of the noble, wealthy, and privileged; it has now become a multi-billion dollar enterprise that encompasses aspects that even three generations ago would have been unimaginable. If givers' motivations are not properly examined, giving may become just another empty gesture in a multitude of empty gestures, as they are depicted by Jean Baudrillard and other postmodernists.

This thesis brings forth several important questions which arise from the overall question being addressed. For instance, who truly benefits most from giving? Is it the high profile giver, or the receiver? If it is the giver in most cases, as I suggest, how do they benefit? Other questions such as, historically, why have the wealthy and powerful felt it beneficial to be publicly acknowledged and widely acclaimed as generous? Is the

giving of charity, or the participation in philanthropy, a ‘performance’ especially when a person’s celebrity is used? To what extent is giving an example of what Riesman called “fake sincerity?” Can a celebrity who solicits donations for a cause be perceived as genuine if they do not contribute money themselves, or if their participation in a cause is paid? Finally, do celebrities, following in the footsteps of the socially powerful elites that came before them, use giving, which happens to directly follow publicized negative behavior, in order to ‘atone for their sins’? All of these questions are just more specific queries within the overall question: What is the social context within which the motivations of the socially powerful to give can be found? To what extent is giving to charity and participating in philanthropy a means to engage in conspicuous consumption and waste, and also to gain social prestige?

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

THEORETICAL ASPECTS

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

Along with this Veblenese idea of cultural motivation comes the concept of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. In these terms conspicuous refers to the item or act which exists primarily to be seen by others. Veblen conceives of the idea that the elite, in order to remain elite, or rise higher within their class, finds various ways to publicly show that they are wealthy and privileged. By consuming goods that are recognized as expensive, name brand, rare, or by owning more of an item than is necessary, the art of conspicuous consumption is practiced. In these instances you are consuming not according to biological needs, but according to culture, ego, class, and status. “Ownership began and grew into a human institution on grounds unrelated to the subsistence minimum.” (Veblen [1899] 1994, 26) Owning, consuming, and more importantly, being able to show that you were in a position to own and consume became and still is important today. From this concept of ownership arose the leisure class¹. This

¹ (Veblen [1899] 1994, 22)

class of people, who due to their status and possession of resources, are able to conspicuously practice leisure such as putting time and money into hobbies or by not having to work at all. Discussing conspicuous consumption and leisure Veblen states “it appears that the utility of both alike for the purposes of reputability lies in the element of waste that is common to both. In the one case it is a waste of time and effort, in the other it is a waste of goods.” (Veblen [1899] 1994, 85)

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

Examples of some cultural habits that Veblen used throughout his work are manicured lawns and domesticated pets such as dogs. Well kept lawns are conspicuous in that their upkeep is obviously expensive not only monetarily, but in man-power and natural resources such as water. Veblen argues the same effect that is achieved by regimented landscaping could be accomplished by something as simple as a herd of cattle being kept on the grounds, however, “a herd of cattle so pointedly suggests thrift and usefulness that their presence in the public pleasure ground would be intolerably cheap. This method of keeping grounds is comparatively inexpensive, therefore it is

indecorous.” (Veblen [1899] 1994, 135) Veblen goes on to comment on the cultural habit of removing trees and shrubbery that naturally occur and replacing it with plants that are not native to the area, which then require much more attention and resources. Thus, the inexpensiveness of leaving the natural growth takes away from the dignity and honor of the lawn and its owner.²

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

These examples and others are described by Veblen as markers of status; the very fact that they exist merely for show, not for actual work or productive use is a testament to the wealth and status of their owners. The owners receive honor and prestige vicariously through this sort of waste. (The idea of ‘vicarious waste’ is one that can be found in multiple cultures at all class levels, but no where is it more practiced than by the wealthy and powerful.) “In order to be reputable it must be wasteful.” (Veblen [1899] 1994, 96) By waste, especially that of the conspicuous, it is meant that the object

² (Veblen [1899] 1994, 139)

or action is not a necessity, it is superfluous, and in this superficiality lies its cultural value. Veblen posits these wasteful habits that are possible due to conspicuous leisure time, should be considered predatory in nature because they are used to gain prestige through conspicuous waste. Prestige comes from conspicuous waste, publicized waste, the extravagance that the wealthy and socially powerful employ must be seen, must be shown off, or it is for naught.

The tendency towards conspicuous consumption, leisure, and waste is heightened in modern culture. Veblen separates time into four periods marked by what he refers to as differing 'habits of life'. These four periods are primitive, quasi-peaceful, barbarism, and (where we are now) modern barbarism. He posits that "the institution of a leisure class has emerged gradually during the transition from primitive savagery to barbarism; or more precisely, during the transition from a peaceable to a consistently warlike habit of life." (Veblen [1899] 1994, 7) Veblen labels the two periods primitive and quasi-peaceful as 'peaceable' where there wasn't much individual ownership but there was a great deal of cooperation. In contrast, the two preceding barbaric times are labeled as 'warlike and predatory'. The transition from the peaceable to barbaric time period was explained by people taking on a more exploitative frame of mind. Force, aggression, and the accumulation of the trophies that comes from these barbaric behaviors became highly prized, and in contrast, gaining possessions in other manners such as cooperation or actual labor came to be looked down upon.

The institution of a leisure class is the outgrowth of an early discrimination between employments, according to which some employments are worthy and others unworthy. Under this ancient distinction the worthy are those which may

be classed as exploit; unworthy are those...which no appreciable element of exploit enters. (Veblen [1899] 1994, 8)

If something does not employ exploitation (a spin-off of which is conspicuous) it is not considered honorable, this defined the period of barbarism and is carried on into what Veblen labels modern barbarism.

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

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

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

best, the most adored, the ones who care the most, and according to Veblen, that's what it is mostly about – feeding your narcissism in a culture of narcissism so that you can feel adored. Prestige can be gained through conspicuous waste such as charitable spending, participation in awareness concerts, or lending your name or face to a charity for its promotional use.

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

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

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

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

lives. Unlike the traditional-directed, the inner-directed is not following society's rigidly prescribed set of rules to forge who they are. While at the same time, distinct from the other-directed, they are not behaving in order to satisfy the 'jury of their peers'. This is not to say the inner-directed completely flaunt tradition or have no care for the opinions of others, instead they depend more on what Riesman labels their 'psychological gyroscope', this is what keeps an inner directed person 'on course'.³

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

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

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

Following the inner-directed social character in dominance was the other-directed social character which is currently the principal social character. According to Riesman, once people began to intermingle more a new social character was required to

³ (Riesman [1961] 2001, 16)

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

With this new social flexibility and personal instability came a different philosophy “an ‘abundance psychology’ capable of ‘wasteful’ luxury consumption of leisure and of the surplus product.” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 18) From this new philosophy arose a man characterized by Riesman as “shallower, freer with his money, friendlier, more uncertain of himself and his values, more demanding of approval” the other-directed man. (Riesman [1961] 2001, 19) The other-directed social character can be used to categorize and bring structure to the argument regarding celebrity involvement in charity and philanthropy. “What is common to all the other-directed people is that their contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual – either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through the mass media.” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 21) I posit celebrities are an excellent example of Riesman’s other-directed social character. Their very existence as celebrities

is dependent on staying popular and being able to predict, dictate, and conform to the constant changes of fashion and culture.

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

Within the broad social characterization of the other-directed Riesman specifies a position of social power labeled ‘taste-maker’. The ever fickle ‘jury of one’s peers’ that guides the actions of the other-directed replaces the inner gyroscope of the inner directed. The ‘jury of one’s peers’ does have leaders, tastemakers, and individuals who set the bar of consumption and fashion. These ‘tastemakers,’ I argue, are in fact

celebrities, and as long as they play their role (and play it well) are allowed to keep their position of power and influence within their jury. The members of which include not just the public or other celebrities, but the media as well. This leadership requires a finely tuned radar, in order to stay popular or ‘hot’ celebrities must know exactly when (using the example this paper addresses, charity) to take up causes, what causes to promote, and when to drop causes that no longer enhance their image. The description of the ‘tastemaker’, and how one comes to be a tastemaker can not only be applied to celebrities, but also directly back to Veblen and the concept of conspicuous leisure. The rank of ‘tastemaker’ is achieved “by acquiring unusual facility in one’s duties as a consumer –in performance, that is, of the leisurely arts. With good luck one may even become a taste and opinion leader, with great influence over the jury.” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 73)

No longer is the inner-directed trained in the use of etiquette “as a means of handling relations with people whom one does not seek intimacy.” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 74) This behavior was exemplified by Robber Barons and people of their class using charity in a way to avoid actually having to deal with the lower classes personally. Instead, with other-directed, and consequently celebrities the training is now that of consumer tastes, and what matters is the “ability for continual sniffing out of others’ tastes...an intense interest in the ephemeral tastes of the ‘others’ [.]” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 74) Due to this transition in etiquette and social character changes occurred concerning the distinction made between personal and private life. The inner-directed held strict reign on their private lives and it was considered improper etiquette to make

this realm public. Whereas the other-directed, exemplified here by the celebrity, is allowed no distinction between private and public. Their lives and its intricacies are public domain, as are the celebrities themselves. One must not take this lightly as this distinction between the two social characters is important. Celebrities must constantly perform within both the public and private spheres and mold themselves and their actions to fit the whims of the public and media.

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

Another theorist who discusses waste and consumption is Jean Baudrillard. Whereas Veblen defines these two concepts in more economic terms, Baudrillard instead focuses more on their conspicuous nature and describes consumption as a 'manipulation of signs.' By asking the question "does not affluence ultimately only have meaning in wastage?" (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 44) Baudrillard emphasizes and addresses the meaning behind the conspicuous nature of wastage, especially that of those that he labels 'affluent.' "And, again, it is by 'wasteful expenditure' that the aristocratic [see socially

powerful as well] classes have asserted their pre-eminence down the ages.” (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 43) Separating the idea of ‘waste’ from the long held assumption that waste is irrational, Baudrillard argues that it is in fact a rational and purposeful action that continues where utility leaves off. “Within this perspective, a definition of consumption as consumption – i.e. as productive waste – begins to emerge, a perspective contrary to that of the ‘economic’...” (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 43) Baudrillard sees waste and its’ conspicuous nature as much more socially useful and necessary than Veblen. Where Veblen argues it is a way to ‘show off’ and indicate status, Baudrillard argues it is an essential tool in order to be a social being in this society, that society is so predicated on conspicuousness and waste that not to participate, no matter what your social level, is to alienate yourself from society.

In this manner, Baudrillard can also be seen as fleshing out Riesman’s idea of the other-directed society and person. Where Riesman describes how society is becoming more and more other-directed, Baudrillard’s work addresses the fact that society has now achieved this status, and as such, how people interact and advance within it. “[I]t is a matter not of ‘conformism’ or ‘non-conformism’...but of optimum sociality, of maximum compatibility with others... It is, rather, a question of being mobile with everyone else, and rising up the coded rungs of a strictly demarcated hierarchical ladder.” (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 171) Baudrillard makes sure to differentiate the current society, and those within it, from that of the ‘traditional self-made man’; similar to Riesman’s inner-directed society. According to Baudrillard, social risers are not trying to prove or assert themselves as in the past. Instead, their main goal is “relating to and

gaining the approval of others, soliciting their judgment [see Riesman and jury of peers] and their positive affinity.” (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 171) Baudrillard marks this social change as a transition from ‘transcendent accomplishment’ to ‘reciprocal solicitation’, or inner motivation transforming to other or outside motivation.

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

Baudrillard’s idea of calculated status behavior can be applied to the argument I present, that celebrities use charity as a way to not only socially climb, but to cement their status as a celebrity. Baudrillard posits that it “is, indeed, no question of not being mobile [socially]... the individual, who is defined as the sum of his relations, of his

‘valencies’, is also always accountable as such: he becomes a unit of calculation and enters voluntarily into a sociometric (or political) plan/calculation.” (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 171) When someone becomes a celebrity, or strives to become a greater one, I argue they are entering into a contract of sorts, that in order to be treated as a celebrity they must make sure to define themselves as one by their behavior. The behavior that marks a celebrity in society is the fashionable use of conspicuous consumption and waste, and no fashion has been a part of our culture longer than that of generosity. Celebrities must go beyond merely being wealthy or famous, they must be prominent in the media and they must obey (using Baudrillard’s term) the ‘laws of ostentatious’. They enter into this role and social group knowingly, and as such, they must play by the rules, or using Baudrillard’s language, ‘play the game’. “To enter the cycle of consumption and fashion is not simply to surround oneself with objects and services as one pleases; it is to change one’s being and directedness.” (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 170) According to Baudrillard, individuals are no longer autonomous, nor are their values; they are now subject to the constantly changing values of the group and this governs all behavior, especially that dealing with status.

Continuing the argument that celebrities (and others who have historically held social power) have a responsibility to uphold the conspicuous standards of their group is the idea that the lower classes (non-celebrities) learn and emulate the forms of conspicuous consumption that are put into play. “In fact, the field of consumption is a structured social field, where not only goods, but needs themselves...pass from a key group, a leading elite, to the other social categories as these ‘rise’ relatively on the social

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

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

form of signs - into the social circuit, and are seeing the consumption of those relations and of that human warmth in signified form.” (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 161)

These fake emotions that lack sincerity and have signs in place of actual meaning can be further explained by the metaphor that Baudrillard refers to in multiple works, that of the smile.

This smile signifies only the need to smile. It is a bit like the Cheshire Cat’s grin: it continues to float on faces long after all emotion has disappeared... No ulterior motive lurks behind it, but it keeps you at a distance. It is part of the general cyrogenization of emotions... Smile and others will smile back. Smile to show how transparent, how candid you are. Smile if you have nothing to say. Most of all, do not hide the fact you have nothing to say nor your total indifference to others. Let this emptiness, this profound indifference shine out spontaneously in your smile. (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 34)

The smile is one of the many ‘fake gestures’ as described by Baudrillard, vacant of meaning, having no purpose but to convey an emptiness, a break within the link between action and result. The result is no longer to convey emotions such as empathy or happiness, instead there are now only the signs of happiness, the signs of empathy but the signs signify nothing. It can be argued that there are no empty gestures because using the example of the smile; when someone smiles, in return a smile is usually given. This argument misses Baudrillard’s point entirely; there is more to gestures than a stimulus leading to a response, a deeper meaning must be recognized and attributed importance. Baudrillard’s argument can simply be summarized as gestures are empty when the meaning that is necessary is absent, regardless of reaction to the empty gestures. Baudrillard asks “how far can we go in the extermination of meaning” and his answer is to “aim for the point of no return.” (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 10)

This lack of authenticity is what is behind Baudrillard's theory of simulacra. Simulacra is defined as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal." (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 1) It is a copy of a copy where the true meaning is lost and irretrievable. Baudrillard emphasizes the distinction between what he labels simulacra from merely simulation or pretending because these have true meaning they are just hidden, there is a point of reference. With simulacra there no longer exists the anchor that moors emotions, gestures, or actions to the meaning that once existed. Baudrillard quotes Ecclesiastes, who succinctly states "The simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true." (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 1) This idea of simulacra can easily be applied to giving. If people are just participating in giving in order to gain social benefits, and their participation is predicated on others participating, and they inspire others to participate, where is the original idea of charity? If what you are basing your idea of charity off of is itself distorted, and you then manipulate the idea to suit your own selfish needs, and it is then distorted more so by others, charity no longer means sacrifice in order to assist others, the meaning of charity is lost, it is imploded. It is, to quote Baudrillard "but another spiral in artificiality." (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 11)

DEFINITION, HISTORY, AND INTERPLAY OF CHARITY AND PHILANTHROPY

In order to make the argument that the meanings of charity, philanthropy, and giving as a whole are lost, these ideas first must be defined in terms of what they were socially, so the discussion of what they are in contemporary society can be had.

According to Friedman and McGarvie “Charity expresses an impulse to personal service; it engages individuals in concrete, direct acts of compassion and connection to other people.” (Friedman and McGarvie 2003, 31) Since the argument I make centers on Western culture and society, specifically the United States, the history of charity will be discussed within this Westernized context.

Throughout history those in power have always participated in giving. These acts have resulted in much criticism of their charitable motivations. Even before common era:

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

Another source of such historical criticism concerning charity can be found within the Bible. “Jesus measured generosity not by the size of the gift but by the sacrifice it caused the donor. Two coppers put in the treasury by a poor widow were of more significance in His eyes than the magnificent contributions of the rich because they gave out of their

abundance, she out of her very subsistence.” (Bremner 1994, 13) This ideal is also shown through the Christian practice of tithes, giving ten percent of your accumulated worth. In this way munificence is determined through what you forgo, not what you possess in excess. Jesus was attributed within the Bible as not only criticizing the lack of sacrifice in reference to charity but also ostentatious shows of charity. Jesus told his disciples “When you do a charitable deed do not sound a trumpet before you.” (Bremner 1994, 12)

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

Religion was not the sole area in which criticisms of charitable motivations existed. Although it did contain many of the most vocal dissenters, there were

philosophers who also bemoaned the use of giving conspicuously and selfishly. For example, English philosopher Thomas Hobbes discussed various topics, one of which was human nature. Hobbes argued that self-interest and self-protection were central motivations of human behavior. “Hobbes could not conceive of anyone practicing philanthropy except to enhance the esteem or ‘honor’ in which he is held in the community or to promote his own security and power.” (Bremner 1994, 42) Dutch physician and philosopher Bernard de Mandeville “defined charity so strictly as to exclude any action bearing the faintest whiff of self-regard...discount the role of altruism and benevolence in human affairs.” Mandeville is also quoted as having said that “‘Pride and vanity have built more hospitals than all the virtues together.’” (Bremner 1994, 58) In another reference to pride (and supporting what Hobbes argued concerning the ‘honor of the giver’) Mandeville argues that “Pride and avarice also figure in the exchange: the beggar’s plea flatters our ego and makes us feel both obliged to give and expectant of a reward for our generosity.” (Bremner 1994, 85)

These ideas concerning the practice of charity that stems from Christianity and philosophy were epitomized in the United States by the New England Puritans, who saw charity as their spiritual duty. Charity was an important enough concept as to be central in many of John Winthrop’s sermons, including one of the most famous ‘A Model of Christian Charity,’ commonly known as ‘A City upon a Hill’. This speech is well known for arguing that the wealthy have a holy duty to look after the poor and that the Puritans should be “a godly community, overflowing in charity.” (Friedman and McGarvie 2003, 32) The Puritans’ ideas of charity are important because at this time (the conception of

New England, which later would lead to the United States), the idea of charity was defined more in terms of motivations than results. “In Winthrop’s evangelical view, the Puritans would not only love and assist one another, but also do so for the right reasons. They would rise above the petty calculations and narrow self-interest that so often drive human cooperation.” (Friedman and McGarvie 2003, 32) The Puritans focused more on the original idea of Christian charity, and set their society up as a reaction to Catholic sale of indulgences which they saw as mercenary, buying your way into Heaven, instead of earning salvation by helping those in need. It is ironic that even though the Puritans focused so much on charity and how it should be enacted, they fell short of this selfless ideal, as does our resulting society today.

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

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

A year before the American Revolution, the second wave of benevolence, philanthropy, got its first footholds into what would later develop into the United States starting in Philadelphia, the ‘City of Brotherly Love.’ Philanthropy, as it was in the colonies, was not yet an impersonal act, but a way for those with power and resources to attempt to improve what they considered the ‘human condition.’ During its inception in the

colonies philanthropy was defined and promoted as “a voluntary enterprise of private persons, moved by ‘an Inclination to promote Publick Good.’” (Friedman and McGarvie 2003, 37)

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

Since it was those with the resources and social clout who funded philanthropies, it was their vision of a ‘good society’ that was enacted. “By virtue of their leisure, breeding, education, and success, the rich were deemed ideally suited to minister to their cities’ needs, particularly in periods when governmental functions were limited.” (McCarthy 1982, 3) This change came when charitable organizations, which were grassroots in nature, became structured similar to that of for-profit organizations.⁴ Where there were once volunteers and emotional investment now there were employees, offices, and management; and many times assistance to those in need was lost in the bureaucracy. This transitional period concerning approaches to munificence is known as

⁴ After the American Revolution there arose a new mind set among the people, from the goals that started the revolution arose a spirit of reform, the government was ineffectual at assisting those in need, and charities had ceased responding and being responsible to the public.

the 'Age of Benevolence.' This period was when philanthropy came to be a widely used method of benevolence.

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

Though it would be simple to dismiss this idea of philanthropy (a way to impose personal beliefs on the public) as something relegated to the past, it would be foolish to make such a broad generalization. Just within the last century in the United States philanthropic organizations went from 12,000 in the 1940's, to 300,00 in the 1960's, to roughly 1 ½ million organizations in 2000.⁵ These numbers show that people, specifically in this case Americans, have a tendency to use giving as a way to control their society and how its functions. Their motivations may not be as altruistic as they are self-benefiting.

⁵ (Friedman and McGarvie 2003, 363)

“Helping others can knit society together or pull it apart. Without a compelling social program, charity can dissipate into transient encounters between unequals. But without direct, mutual bonds between givers and recipients, philanthropy sacrifices practical effectiveness and moral purpose.” (Friedman and McGarvie 2003, 48) This statement shows the interplay that is often found within giving between charity and philanthropy. During the ‘Age of Benevolence’ philanthropy became more widespread, but this is not to say that charity was no longer practiced or necessary. Instead, philanthropy arose and took its place beside charity as a way to practice giving. Both were practiced extensively, both were used for similar causes, it was what the giver wanted to accomplish that accounted for the differences between the two forms of benevolence. However, the social motivations behind both forms remained the same and these motivations are continued today.

According to Robert Hall, ‘Social Motivation’ is “the motivation to do something that will not result in tangible economic or status gain—where the drive is more internal than external, and the purpose is larger than just self-gratification.” (Hall 2006, 12) This definition of social motivation can easily be used to define the motivation behind participating in charity and philanthropy as well. The idea of selfless giving with no personal benefits is what giving should be according to some social ideals; however, many times this component of self-sacrifice is not present in giving. Many scholars separate the idea of giving into two separate and opposite ideals. “Altruistic helping has been defined as behavior motivated by the desire to increase another’s welfare, while egoistic giving has been defined as motivated by the desire to reduce one’s own personal

distress or to receive rewards for giving.” (Piferi, Jobe, Jones 2006, 171) This idea of egoistic giving can be easily applied to benevolence that is given in order to shape society into a specific image. Using society as a mirror in order to reflect your own beliefs is not only selfish and self-serving, but it’s exploitative; or in the words of Veblen, predatory, because you are enacting change using those who are in need in order to gain prestige in the eyes of society.

Veblen argues that giving, especially bequests⁶ can be considered ‘honorific waste.’⁷ By using money and resources to further your own name, or that of a family member, it is a publicized way to demonstrate the ‘superiority of your soul.’ The benefit to others can be seen as merely a bonus. “Nonetheless, motivation is not simply an academic question; it goes to the heart of any definition of charity, philanthropy, or civility.” (Friedman and McGarvie 2003, 361) By labeling giving such as this ‘honorific waste,’ Veblen is questioning the cultural motives behind the benevolence. His idea of the ‘Cultural Prism,’ motivations being more important than the outcome can be applied here.

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

⁶ which is giving in the form of a legacy or in someone’s honor after their death

⁷ (Veblen [1899] 1994, 349)

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

A cultural motivation that is powerful in influencing those with social and financial power to participate in giving, especially historically, is Noblesse Oblige. “Noblesse oblige means ‘nobility obligates.’ Originally, noblesse oblige was used to suggest that certain requirements of behavior could be legitimately imposed upon persons of noble birth.” (Murray 2006) Noblesse Oblige was a class based set of standards and/or obligations that was passed down generation to generation among the aristocracy concerning the cultural markers and principles of their class. “Noblesse oblige can take many forms. In the Old World, it represented the duties attendant upon noble birth. But in a country devoid of hereditary aristocracy and the trappings of baronial tradition, it took on new meaning.” (McCarthy 1982, ix) Since the United States historically has had no aristocratic or noble class this new meaning was transformed from Noblesse Oblige into Richesse Oblige. The idea behind this concept is that the wealthy have an obligation to the society which enriched them. No longer was class and birth the standard, now it was material wealth.

Financial affluence was seen as a blessing, and one was culturally and socially required to ‘spread the wealth’ as it were to those that were less well off. “‘To whom much has been given, much is expected.’ This suggests the view that those who have great wealth have a duty to use it for a larger purpose than their own interests.” (Singer 2006, 61) Ownership of wealth has culturally been connected to an idea of public service, the wealthy are seen as stewards of society, and as such a duty is imposed on them, a duty that should be expressed through giving. “Civic stewardship –the notion

that successful citizens owe a dual obligation of time and money to the communities in which they have prospered-is a uniquely urban interpretation of this ancient ideal.”

(McCarthy 1982, ix)

Noblesse Oblige was more than a duty to society, more than an obligation due to noble status; it was in its own way a cultural contract. One that was not agreed to, but imposed on those that had the ability to fulfill its mandates. Much of it was dedicated to conspicuous shows of status, cultural habits, leisure activities that those of other classes could not participate in. However, one aspect of Noblesse Oblige was supposed to be less predatory, free of exploitation, and that was the obligation of giving. Yet, this did not occur because giving was used as a way to gain prestige as well, it was used in a self-serving way and when Richesse Oblige became instilled into the culture it too took on these predatory aspects. Noblesse Oblige and its counterparts, is an important concept because I argue that that these ideals were appropriated by social groups who wanted to achieve a type of cultural nobility. However, they were not noble, they were not aristocrats, and in some instances they were not even the extremely wealthy (in these instances they were culturally powerful) these were people who were looking for ways to validate their societal status.

RICHESSSE OBLIGE

In the United States those that historically were the closest tied to the idea of Noblesse Oblige and more specifically, Richesse Oblige, are the wealthy industrialists of the past that were dubbed Robber Barons. “Indeed, the terminology used to describe Gilded Age magnates frequently incorporated royal metaphors. Businessmen were dubbed ‘robber barons’⁸ their wives ‘society queens,’ and their undertakings ‘feudalistic.’” (McCarthy 1982, 104) The way that they used their wealth to extend their social and cultural power was reminiscent of the royal practice of patronage, and it was from the aristocracy this powerful class took its cues. Where the famous used to be counted among religious, political, or military leaders, now those who held social power and sway were the conspicuously wealthy. These wealthy and influential persons used their wealth to create, cement, and maintain their social (and at times cultural) status. They commandeered the idea of Noblesse Oblige, and transformed into the more fitting Richesse Oblige, and due to this, received both the benefits and responsibilities that came along with this ideal.

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

Though the Robber Baron class was loosely following the idea of Noblesse Oblige, by creating their own standards and forging their own interpretation of this ideal,

⁸ See Appendix for names of those referred to as Robber Barons

they were creating instead a hybrid idea of Noblesse Oblige; which unless close attention is paid can be confused with Noblesse Oblige. This hybrid, Richesse Oblige, is referred to as Noblesse Oblige as in the quote above. However, Richesse Oblige is defined more materialistically and is achieved more by personal mobility than birth. The figures placed within Richesse Oblige can also be considered inner-directed social types because they created the niche in which their class existed, and these individuals were more influenced by themselves than by their peers or others in their class as the aristocracy was. The Robber Barons, or as Riesman (borrowing from Veblen) refers to them ‘Captains of Industry,’ were fiercely individual minded, driven, and successful men who could not rely on tradition to lead them as their predecessors had because of how they earned their wealth: industry. This industrial boom was new to society and different approaches to these new situations were needed. “...Captains of Industry who thought themselves responsible for American productivity, whereas they merely engrossed the instinct of workmanship of the race, charged mankind for what, as a body, it already “owned,” and wasted what others had produced in a frenzy of extravagant, usually vicarious display.” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 71)

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

In order to stand well in the eyes of the community, it is necessary to come up to a certain, somewhat indefinite, conventional standard of wealth; just as in the earlier predatory stage it is necessary for the barbarian man to come up to the tribe’s standard of physical endurance, cunning, and skill at arms. A certain

standard of wealth in the one case, and of prowess in the other, is a necessary condition of reputability, and anything in excess of this normal amount is meritorious. (Veblen [1899] 1994, 30)

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

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

Philanthropy and patronage were two of the most conspicuous methods of giving used by the *Richesse Oblige*. "Patronage, and particularly institutional endowment, was depicted as a self-serving means of seeking notoriety, undertaken by donors contriving to 'cover their nakedness with the mantel of respectability,' and win unmerited praise."

(McCarthy 1982, 103) Participating in giving bestowed upon the wealthy members of this class honors and societal approval that they otherwise might not have had access to, or deserved. By using giving, Robber Barons, and others of the Richesse Oblige could practically purchase prestige. This is evident by the fact that their money went to assist those in need while at the same time bettering their public reputation. Their charitable and philanthropic practices had the ability to cast a glamour over their daily and business practices. Giving was used not only to promote themselves, but it was also helpful in disguising their exploitation of the community that they claimed to be assisting.

He [Richard Teller Crane] detested his fellow philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, whom he leeringly referred to as “the Dr. Jekyll of library building and the Mr. Hyde of Homestead rioting and destruction.” Out of the millions Carnegie made through his workers, he bestowed ‘paltry thousands’ on libraries which his employees could neither see nor use, a practice incomprehensible to the paternalistic Crane. (McCarthy 1982, 117)

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

Unlike the Puritans and other groups that came before them, the Robber Barons did not see giving as their Christian duty, instead participation was in order to meet their fulfillment of Richesse Oblige, giving was a useful tool in order to keep up with their wealthy peers. “They did not follow the advice Jesus gave to the rich young man to sell all he had and give to the poor because they believed that doing so would result in more harm than good and deprive them of the power and responsibility of deciding how their wealth should be used.” (Bremner 1994, 159) Charity and philanthropy became an expedient measure with which those who sought entrance into the upper classes could

rise in status and regard. The wealthy already considered part of the *Richesse Oblige* also benefited from the use of giving to rise even higher within the ranks of this self-designated class of individuals. During this time “charitable giving and cultural patronage had been reduced to rungs in the social ladder, and the urge to do good inspired by the prospect of having one’s good deeds immortalized in the society pages.” (McCarthy 1982, 169)

During the early 1800’s the wealthy donated much of their time and resources to charitable obligations. However, as class and wealth became more stratified, there became distaste for dealing directly with the poor and unfortunate. “Rather than personally mingling with the poor, the self-made man would remain aloof from squalor and want. His task was to bestow, not befriend.” (McCarthy 1982, 62) Veblen also mentions this particular aspect of giving, how donors are, and were able to authenticate their feelings of superiority by highlighting the contrast between themselves and those they helped.⁹ Another change that was recognized during the shift from the early 1800’s to later in the century was that society (and how people interacted within it) was measured more materialistically and quantitatively than ever before. Charity was used as a measuring stick of societal and self worth, who could give the most or the best was what was important, not the act of giving itself.

“The Civil War shattered the benign ideals of the antebellum generation, giving rise to a far harsher, tooth and claw interpretation of *noblesse oblige*. The carnage of the war blunted the nation’s sensitivity to human suffering [from this] rose Social

⁹ (Veblen [1899] 1994, 341)

Darwinism.” (McCarthy 1982, 61) When applied to giving, Social Darwinism was used by the wealthy to choose to only assist the ‘deserving’ poor and needy, those deemed unfit were expected to benefit by donations to asylums and prisons. This form of selective charity was embraced by the robber barons such as Carnegie, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, and Morgan, who used their charitable donations to invest in conspicuous cultural ways such as art, music, and research, but not directly to individuals. This type of largess helped the wealthy not only to keep control of how their money was spent, but on whom. “According to Carnegie the worst thing a millionaire could do with his money was to give it to the ‘unreclaimably poor.’” (Bremner 1994, 159)

As this shift in society occurred, so did the actual way in which charity was performed. Gone was personally giving alms to the poor, or door to door solicitation, and instead social events that benefited a cause came to be the norm. Human nature being what it is however, these events were more centered on who was hosting and who attended, than who was actually benefiting. “By sponsoring an opera, musicale, or play in the name of charity, aspiring Society queens could enhance their reputations, sharpen their skills at social one-upmanship, and fulfill their charitable obligations at a comfortable remove from misery and want at one and the same time.” (McCarthy 1982, 30) These gatherings of the wealthy and influential practically guaranteed the host or hostesses’ name in the society pages and a heightening of their prestige. This wide spread practice of ‘cocktail charity’ drew much criticism from other socially influential members of society. ““Jesus never instituted a charity ball where amid the voluptuous swell of dance, the rustle of silks, the sparkle of diamonds, the stimulus of wine and

women dressed décolleté, He could dissipate His love for the lowly,' sneered another indignant cleric.” (McCarthy 1982, 102) However, their voices were not heard over the growing power and control of the Richesse Oblige.

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

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

As the Richesse Oblige’s time in power peeked and started to fall there arose to replace them another class of individuals whose social standing and control is to this day still in operation. Riesman puts it best when he states “the old captains of industry have been replaced by an entirely new type: the Captains of Non-industry, of Consumption

and Leisure.” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 209) This transition reflects and incorporates Riesman’s theory of the change from inner-directed society to other-directed being the dominant social character. I contend that this shift first occurred within the echelon of social leaders, that since by very definition an individual’s social character does not change, a new set of social leaders were instead necessary in order for this societal transition to occur. These new leaders, these Captains of Consumption, were not necessarily the wealthy, nor were they natural leaders of men, instead they were those that embodied the other-directed personality and publicly performed according to the ‘jury of their peers.’ “[F]rom the beginning of this century until 1940, there was a distinctive shift from interest in political and business leaders...to interest in entertainers.” (Fowles 1992, 12)

This shift is important to note, because no longer were the cultural leaders capitalistic minded and goal-oriented, now approval and ‘being liked’ were hailed as all-important.

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

The Richesse Oblige, and specifically the Robber Barons expended a great deal of energy and social influence towards the purpose of legitimizing their status, proving their right to power, and expanding the influence of their class. Whereas, the new Captains of Consumption, or more generally the other-directed person, is constantly

increasing the boundaries of consumption and leisure, always looking for the niche and nuance with which to distinguish themselves. “These relatively stable and individualistic pursuits [of the inner-directed social character] are today being replaced by the fluctuating tastes which the other-directed person accepts from his peer-group.” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 79)

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

CELEBRITY

“In the earlier period the biographies’ subjects were ‘idols of production’ – people interesting because they achieved something in the world, made their own way, worked their way to the top, were useful to society... the intervening years however there is a shift to ‘idols of consumption’.” (Dyer 1979, 45) These contemporary ‘idols of consumption’ exist within a field of conspicuous leisure, waste, and consumption. They stand in marked contrast to the cultural leaders that came before them not only in their actions, but in their influences. Baudrillard titles these new social characters as ‘Heroes of Consumption,’ and when referencing them and their inner-drives he refers to them as ‘liberated’. “The liberated man is not the one who is freed in his ideal reality, his inner truth, or his transparency; he is the man who changes spaces, who circulates, who changes sex, clothes, and habits according to fashion, *rather than morality*, and who changes opinions not as his conscience dictates but in response to opinion polls.” (Baudrillard 1988, 96) The ‘liberated man’, the ‘Hero of Consumption’ and the ‘Captain of Consumption’ all can be used to support Riesman’s concept of the other-directed social character. I put forward that all of these different titles do the same thing, recognizes a social shift that occurred roughly after World War II that led to our current leaders of consumption, celebrities.

“The hero was distinguished by his achievement; the celebrity by his image or trademark. The hero created himself; the celebrity is created by the media. The hero was a big man; the celebrity is a big name.” (Fowles 1992, 12) Celebrities stand as the next stage in conspicuous leadership, they are neither the heroes nor captains that these

theorists described; instead they take conspicuousness further and into realms that are far more public than these past leaders could. “The defining characteristic of celebrity is that it is essentially a media production, and its usage is largely confined to the twentieth century.” (Giles 2000, 3-4) Media is now far more wide-reaching than it ever has been and is entrenched within our society and our culture. This influence is so pervasive that it not only provides what people see, hear, and read; but what sets the agenda as to what they are influenced by and interpret as the norm. One of the aspects of the media that is unique to our current time period is the creation and rise of the mediated celebrity. “A celebrity is merely a person who is known for this well-knownness.” (Giles 2000, 3-4) Due to the cultural value put on conspicuous consumption and leisure within the last few generations, celebrities have risen to symbolize this ideal lifestyle. Celebrities participate in this lifestyle, promote this lifestyle, but more accurately they embody this lifestyle. Their very existence, their cultural status, their fame, comes from their ability and skill at participating in conspicuousness and waste, and none do it better.

This fame that celebrities achieve should be seen as a process, not simply a state of being. This fame is achieved, calculated, and regulated by not only the ‘jury of their peers’ but by the media itself. Widespread fame used to come after death, however, in this celebrity oriented culture it can be achieved within a lifetime. Fame is no longer bestowed upon an individual due to great deeds, bravery, or sacrifice, fame is now accomplished by how you promote yourself and your created publicized image.

“Promotion is probably the most straightforward of all the texts which construct a star

image, in that it is the most deliberate, direct, intentioned and self-conscious..." (Dyer 1979, 68) The Hero has been replaced by the Star.

The star is a media-created idea that originated in Hollywood, there have always been celebrities in different fields, but the idea of stardom is a new phenomenon. Within the current Western culture the idea 'celebrity' and the 'star' have been imploded into one indiscriminate meaning. There used to be more of a distinction between the two, a celebrity was well-known, a star was well-publicized. "A star image is made out of media texts... sociologically speaking, stars do not exist outside of such texts; therefore it is these that have to be studied" (Dyer 1979, 68 and 1) These two terms are similar to the situation involving the usage of *Noblesse Oblige* and *Richesse Oblige*, though they have differing meanings they are used interchangeably to convey similar meanings. When one speaks of a celebrity now, one is speaking of a star, and vice versa. Due to this interchange that is present in our culture these terms will also be used interchangeably to convey only one meaning within this paper that of the popularized media produced image of an individual.

Baudrillard recognized within his work how the media image takes precedence over the actual individual. In reference to stars he wrote they "embody one single passion only: the passion for images... They are not something to dream about; they are the dream." (Baudrillard 1998 [1970], 56) Celebrities become cultural luminaries when their publicized media image becomes equal to, or more important than their talent. When their performance becomes secondary to their image, they truly become a star. When it comes to the interplay between stars as people, and stars as images, Richard

Dyer puts it best: “it is assumed that we are dealing with the stars in terms of their signification, not with them as real people. The fact that they are also real people is an important aspect of how they signify, but we never know them directly as real people, only as they are to be found in media texts.” (Dyer 1979, 2)

These media texts contain the narrative of not only celebrities, but also reflect our society, our culture. Celebrities are merely the mode through which these stories and the resulting messages are presented. Celebrities are other-directed because our society is and demands this behavior of our leaders, our representatives. In order to represent the culture accurately celebrities must display their consumption, their leisure, their waste, because if they do not we demote them, we withdraw our affection and attention. In order to receive our interest stars must seem tangible, approachable, not so much ‘just like us’ but real, sincere. “The performer puts himself at the mercy of both his audience and his emotions. This sincerity on the side of the performer evokes the audience’s tolerance for him” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 194) In this way sincerity is a performance, and as it is a performance it loses some of its meaning, a performance is a translation of something by an individual who enacts it, and some aspects are always lost in translation.

Stars are judged by how sincere they seem, how they measure up to our cultural standards of sincerity, and using Baudrillard’s argument the focus is on gaining the approval of others (society) and performing the signs of sincerity accurately and appropriately.¹⁰ Riesman’s definition of the other-directed character agrees with this assertion and states that it is an internal need that drives sincerity. “Plainly, it is the

¹⁰ (Baudrillard [1970] 1998, 171 and 173)

other-directed person's psychological need, not his political one, that dictates his emphasis on warmth and sincerity." (Riesman [1961] 2001, 196) If we use the idea of politics to describe the process by which people make decisions and the interplay of human group interactions, then it may seem that this statement seems to contradict Baudrillard. However, this is not the case. Within Riesman's description of society he emphasizes that in order for any society to function the outer compulsion of society must become the inner compulsion of the individual. So if the other-directed individual has a psychological need to emphasize warmth and sincerity this impulse must be influenced by, and come from other-directed society. Though it may seem that the individual possesses sincerity, it is impossible as, according to Baudrillard, sincerity in its true form no longer exists. 'Sincerity' is merely a performance in a society where sincerity is but a cultural memory. In other words, societies come to value the simulacra of sincerity, not inner-directed, authentic sincerity.

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

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

This 'ostentatious caring' is merely a way to conspicuously promote yourself as compassionate, and to receive the societal benefits of producing the signs of sincerity. Celebrities are trend setters, they bring fads into vogue and they set up actions and

behaviors that are emulated. They manipulate themselves and their actions in order to win the adoration of the public. At the same time that they are influencing the public, they are simultaneously depending on the public.

A celebrity whose public identity depended on being seen as caring and compassionate was the former Princess Diana of England. Her public involvement in charity and philanthropy helped to bestow her other title, that of the 'People's Princess.' Once her marriage to Prince Charles of England became something that no longer kept her in the public's eye in a positive manner (due to the rumors and speculation regarding adultery) she created a new role for herself, that of global humanitarian. At the height of her involvement with charity, Princess Diana was the royal patron for over seventy charities that ranged from AIDS to leprosy. She usually chose charities that were avoided by other endorsers, and through this tactic, gained public and media recognition for forging new paths and caring for people that no one else cared for. "Diana did not have a happy life, and there is the suspicion that by wanting to be 'a Queen of people's hearts,' she sought the public adoration as a way of compensation." (West 2004, 74) The distrust of her motives has basis in actions of Princess Diana's that were not as expertly spun in the media, actions that contradicted her image as one who gave her all to the people. "She was, in fact, a rather ungenerous royal masquerading as lady bountiful. The publication of Princess Diana's will has, at last, revealed the truth behind the hype. While the total value of her estate was a staggering 21.7 million [pounds], not a penny was left to charity." (Tatchell 1998, 1) In fact, in her will, she split her money to leave it to her already wealthy sons, the Princes of England, her godchildren, and her butler.

Where was her love for the suffering when she did this? Another action of hers that seemed to contradict her persona of commitment to charity was when her marriage to Prince Charles ended in 1996 so did most of her involvement with charity.¹¹

The situation that celebrities find themselves in is a Catch 22. While they are the taste makers, leading the ‘jury of their peers,’ they are at the exact same time the group that this fickle jury has the most influence over. As Riesman simply put it, “opinion leaders who try to influence verdicts as well as to repeat them – a dangerous game indeed.” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 78) Being a taste maker is hazardous because you create while at the same time attempt to incorporate, there is a fine line between being adored and abhorred and celebrities must walk this line every single day. Celebrities embody culturally prized ideals such as wealth and beauty, yet this is not enough. Because we place celebrities in a position of leadership they are also expected to behave in ways that we ourselves wish we could. Western culture honors generosity while at the same time expecting conspicuous consumption of its members, and celebrities are required to epitomize, and at the same time reconcile, this contradiction.

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

Celebrities are used by various interests as mediums to transfer the glamour that is associated with their embodiment of these prized ideals on whatever they are

¹¹ http://www.emma.tv/humanitarian/profiles/princess_diana.aspx

promoting, and charities have benefited from joining in on this craze. In order to ‘sell charity’ celebrities are used (similar in method to ‘brands’) as if they were selling a physical product instead of the idea of generosity.

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

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

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

The phenomenon [of celebrity participation in giving] is so pervasive as to raise the question, Is large-scale, high profile social activism a latent trait in every would-be pop star and movie icon? Is there the urge to rescue the Earth, the children, the whales, the natural byproduct of selling millions of records or

saving the world on-screen year after year? It would appear so, given the messianic aspirations of the entertainment elite that have never been more in evidence. (Chocano 2000, 1)

Even though they are our cultural leaders celebrities are not experts in charity or the causes associated with it. Most celebrities know as much as the average person about topics such as the Rain Forest or the killing fields in Darfur. Yet as leaders we expect them somehow to be more emotionally engaged and committed to topics that we ourselves are not. The cult of celebrity that our society is so wrapped up in has taken on a life of its own, and now celebrities participate in giving not because it is right, not even because we expect it, but in order to stay in the forefront of our society's deeper spiral into consumption. No longer is the duty to participate in giving noblesse oblige because current society is no longer led by nobility, even *richesse oblige* has given way to a new form of class obligations, that of '*popularity oblige*.' Those that hold the status of celebrity or star are popular, they are well known and their actions are closely watched and followed. Their popularity obligates them to participate in charity in order to (similar to the Robber Barons) give standing to their class and their place within it. In order for celebrities to stay central to our culture, our undisputed leaders in consumption, their participation in giving becomes a de-facto requirement. Charity is a useful cultural tool in order to separate themselves from the pack, to add that extra something to their credentials, caring.

Ever since the Beatles grew their hair and began holding up the two fingered peace gesture, musicians and actors have regarded it as their prerogative to promote issues of global importance. As Bono from U2 once said: "As a pop star I have two instincts. I want to have fun. And I want to change the world." Most

of the time, however, these artists do not know what they are talking about. Too often, their motive is only to help themselves. (West 2004, 53)

Charity is a very public way of creating and maintaining a sought after image, however, very rarely do people consider the fact that if the public knows about a charitable donation then it was purposefully publicized through the media. “Parading their donations like undersized fig leaves – which fail to conceal their rampant voyeurism and vanity.” (Cater 2002, 1) A charitable cause that a celebrity participates in is something that they can be interviewed about, photographed carrying out, and when a cause is in style, celebrities flock to be associated with it. Due to this association that forms between the cause and the celebrity’s image certain causes have difficulty finding celebrity endorsements such as mental health, domestic violence, or certain physical ailments. This idea is encapsulated by what Andrew Smith refers to as the ‘sliding scale of sexiness.’¹² Celebrities want the cause they are associated with to involve children, animals, cancer, or the environment; something that is universally seen as positive and is usually in style. “The trouble with trying to make philanthropy fashionable is that fashion is by definition fleeting-just as hemlines rise and fall...And that raises the question: What happens to the old cause when the fame and money move on to a new one-or when having a cause at all ceases to be fashionable?” (Wood 2007, 26)

Celebrities pick and choose their charities based on popularity because they want to be included in the goodwill that certain issues invoke. It is curious how so many celebrities admit to, and are publicized for, having drug, alcohol, and sex addictions, yet very few

¹² Smith, Andrew. *All in a Good Cause?* 2002

endorse and raise awareness of these causes. The idea of celebrity involvement in charity is also problematic because the fame and status that celebrities enjoy is not concrete, it is uncertain and many times stars go to great lengths to get themselves connected to the currently popular cause. “Celebrities cannot afford to let the causes they represent go stale and hence frequently jump ship and migrate from burning issue to burning issue, from MS to diabetes to AIDS to breast cancer, desperately searching for the cause du jour...” (Harris 2003, 294)

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

donations, concert benefits, and auctions. Some of the more interesting ways that celebrities decided to lend a hand were:

- Tonight Show host Jay Leno auctioning a Harley-Davidson motorcycle on Ebay that was covered with the autographs of celebrity guests who appeared on his show¹³
- An auctioned New Year's Eve date with heiress Paris Hilton¹⁴
- Martha Stewart selling red and blue ponchos that she designed from her website www.marthastewart.com¹⁵
- Morgan Freeman auctioning a chance to attend the premier of his new movie 'An Unfinished Life' before its released in theaters¹⁶
- Rapper, The Game, donating his customized Bentley car, that he himself received as a gift for promoting sneakers aptly titled 'Hurricanes' from which he receives a portion of the profits, and a portion of this will be donated to a charity¹⁷

What all of these examples of celebrity charity have in common is that they all are thinly veiled methods of self-promotion. However the aspect of all of these acts that is the most insulting to the idea of charity is that not a single one of these acts are a sacrifice or a deviation of their normal behavior for these celebrities. How is taking two seconds to get celebrity guests, who are already appearing on his show to publicize themselves, to sign a motorcycle a hardship for Jay Leno? How is a publicized date that will surely be covered by the media and planned down to the last minute, a sacrifice for a woman whose celebrity is built entirely upon being photographed and simply being born a Hilton? How is Martha Stewart forgoing anything by designing a poncho that will be made by other people and sold on her website, where people who go to buy it will

¹³ Snow, Michelle. *Celebrities Step up to Help Katrina Relief Efforts*

¹⁴ Hall, Sarah. *Michael Sings for Katrina Relief*

¹⁵ MSNBC Online. *Celebs Pledge Money, Time to Katrina Relief Efforts*

¹⁶ ET Online. *Stars Rally for Hurricane Victims*

¹⁷ MSNBC.com. *The Game Gives His Bentley for Katrina Relief*

also be exposed to her other merchandise? Who stands to benefit the most from Morgan Freeman auctioning a ticket to his new movie; the Katrina victims, the winner of the auction, or the studio and actors connected to the movie that will be publicized through the winning of the auction? The last example is truly one of the more crass Hurricane Katrina inspired celebrity giving. By giving away a car that was first given to him in order to entice him to lend his name to a shoe (from which he will receive a portion of the profits) *The Game* truly takes the idea of charity to an all-time low. The fact that the shoe was named 'Hurricane' was a piece of irony that could just not be passed up. Though all of these acts raised money for the victims, there were less publicized, less conspicuous routes that these celebrities could have taken in order to assist these people, however, where is the PR in that?

Just recently, within the last few decades, charity has become more institutionalized, more streamlined, more commercialized. Charitable causes need to be advertised, need to be publicized, need to have name recognition in order to collect money, and a celebrity endorser is an effective way to do this. "In the cutthroat world of nonprofit fundraising, star endorsement is critical to visibility, and nonprofits are willing to pay for it." (Chocano 2000, 3) In this situation, where celebrities need a cause to promote themselves, and charities need a celebrity to promote their cause, a dually parasitic bond is formed between these two factions. Even though a celebrity's status is something that is never assured day-to-day, they still hold the upper hand in their relationship with the charity organization because, as time goes by, the organization depends on the celebrity even more. "Celebrity endorsement is currently the primary

means by which the major charities market themselves.” (Smith 2002, 1) As their primary means of advertisement, celebrities hold an unspoken power over the charities, ‘treat me right or I can walk away.’ Once established, and scandal free, a celebrity depends less and less on a charity as a reputation builder or fixer. It is unfortunate that a charity benefits the most from an established celebrity whose reputation is untarnished; because these are the celebrities most unlikely to seek charity endorsements.

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

than celebrities. Charitable organization and causes use celebrities just as much as celebrities use them, both hoping to gain the attention of the public and from this further their own goals.

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

Charities seeking endorsement should be aware of the pitfalls that come along with attaching its organization's reputation with that of a celebrity. Not only is fame fleeting, but also it can turn negative very quickly; it's a short hop over the line from renown to notorious. Examples of celebrities who have embarrassed or damaged the charity or cause they are associated with are commonplace, and this is a risk that charities are willing to take. Supermodel Naomi Campbell was contracted by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to star in their anti-fur campaign; she was advertised in the media claiming that she would rather go naked than model fur. However while modeling in Milan in 1997, she appeared wearing fur, and was puzzled as to why PETA was so angry. Her defense was that fur was back in style and really it was all about fashion.¹⁸ Another star whose promotion backfired was former spice girl Geri Halliwell when she was asked to be the UN ambassador on reproductive health. "Geri Halliwell admitted to a documentary maker that she did not know the difference between 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice.'" (West 2004, 62) These two examples are extreme cases of when

¹⁸ Smith, Andrew. *All in a Good Cause?* 2005

celebrities publicly negated their work in the name of a cause; more commonplace behaviors are stars not fulfilling their obligations to a charity, such as not showing up to shoot a commercial, or making unreasonable demands.

Celebrities are usually paid to endorse a charity, and if they aren't paid money they usually receive perks, that if taken advantage of, can end up costing a charity thousands. Celebrities usually expect charities to provide expensive transport, five-star lodgings, and to keep them well fed and entertained; if charities aren't careful they can end up spending more money on the celebrity than the celebrity brings in for the cause. If it's a 'free performance' put on by a celebrity benefiting some cause or another, usually the charity is required to pay for the stage setup, the lights, the special effects, the backup dancers, and other expenses that go along with a large scale performance, so it is never really free. "These are people who are so taken with themselves, they expect red carpet treatment from a group that needs money and doesn't want to spend it on them." (Chocano 2000, 4)

Though they may not always profit in material ways, stars through their performance of giving obtain benefits that are very other-directed, and because of this highly valued in our society. "[T]oo many entertainers simply have an infant-like compulsion to be the centre of attention: ...too many celebrities are shallow and insecure souls who have the principle compulsion to be noticed, to be loved, and will go to all lengths to ensure this." (West 2004, 55) This love from the public fulfills not only a personal need that the celebrity may have but more so a cultural need. Adoration is not the only perk that celebrities receive from endorsement of charity; there are other

benefits that make it worthwhile. “Charity work can also help a rising star gain exposure, help a fading star raise a sagging profile or help a Hollywood supernova get his very own meeting with Congress, an audience with the pope or a televised interview with the president.” (Chocano 2000, 2) Stars are encouraged to participate in giving by the media, their peer group, and as the position of celebrity becomes more and more a production, their publicists and agents. Celebrities are encouraged to take part in charity and if sincerity is present, instead of merely the signs of sincerity, than that is an extra bonus, but unfortunately, participation in giving is no longer merely an option for an ambitious celebrity. “There are plenty of reasons for celebrities to do charity: guilt, faith, personal suffering, ratings, p.r. ‘If you want a long-term career and you want to be taken seriously by the public, to do nothing is a mistake,’ says publicist to the stars Ken Sunshine. ‘Charitable work rounds out and humanizes your image.’” (Poniewozik and Keegan 2005)

Not only do celebrities expect to be treated a certain way, they also do not expect to donate their own money to the cause they are supporting. By taking the time to ask others to contribute, appearing in advertisements or at events, or letting their name be attached to a cause, many celebrities consider this charity; instead of actually giving what they are asking others to give, money.

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

Examples such as these help bring specific behaviors to light that contradict the façade that many celebrities and public personalities put on in reference to charity. They are involved with charity, but is it truly a sacrifice if they are paid to do so, do not contribute their own money, or give such a little percentage in comparison with their normal conspicuous spending? For example “the Tommy Hilfiger Corporate Foundation gave \$200,000 to Choate Rosemary Hall, the exclusive Connecticut prep school. Tommy [Hilfiger] also donated \$750 to the Ethiopian Children’s Foundation.”

(<http://www.thesmokinggun.com/foundations/list.html>) Another popular culture icon, the band Aerosmith, donated \$206,500 (tax-deductible) to a charitable foundation they founded, however only \$6,150 was donated to charity from the foundation that year.¹⁹

How is this charity?

Charitable organizations know that in order to be convincing, celebrities should be kept in their sphere of influence as much as possible. For example, in order to benefit a cause singers will give a charitable organization free tickets to their concert, or in a move that brings more attention to the actual celebrity, record a song and give the proceeds to the charity. Singers such as Michael Jackson, Elton John, and Ozzy Osbourne have used this plan to raise money for AIDS, famine in Ethiopia, or more recently, Tsunami relief for Asia. The first large project of this kind was Woodstock, however the most closely linked to charity was Live Aid in 1985. Live Aid was a large gathering of musical celebrities from all over the world, of course the most attention was

¹⁹ <http://www.thesmokinggun.com/foundations/list.html>

paid to the American and English stars, but performing were celebrities even from Japan and Austria. “The trick was to sell famine relief like a hit record, and it worked.”

(Fowles 1992, 178) Live Aid was also a warning to the world about what happens when celebrities step out of what they know and attempt to take on charitable giving alone.

“Live Aid raised 200 million [pounds] for the ‘starving of Africa.’ But it did not go completely to help the needy.” (West 2004, 61)

Though the concert was envisioned and carried through by a well-meaning celebrity, he was a celebrity non-the-less, and once the money was raised did not have experience on how to actually use it to help. The money was used to buy food, which was then sold on the streets of Ethiopia, and because of this, did not reach the people who needed the free food the most, the truly poor. When this was realized the food was directly distributed to the poor, and though this sounds like the best way to battle hunger, any economist will tell you that in actuality, this is the best way to depress a farming nation’s economy. The rest of the money was turned over to the Ethiopian government, who then used it to build a larger oppressive army, finance warfare, and the people suffered even more.

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

Celebrities can use charity to secure their status as a star, but just as easily charity can also be used to repair or revamp their public image. “In the eyes of the jury of peers

one may be a good guy one day, a stinker the next. Toleration, let alone leadership, depends on having a highly sensitive response to swings of fashion.” (Riesman [1961] 2001, 73) Many celebrities who have their bad behavior or eccentricities routinely publicized in the media resort to charity to fix their reputations. An example of this is singer Michael Jackson, who to this date has been involved in two very public trials accused of pedophilia; he is also the unofficial poster child for publicized celebrity eccentricity. However, just as often as he is in the news for insisting that it is natural that forty-year-old men have eight-year-old boys sleep with them, he is also in the news for his charitable donations. “Maybe stars can draw on a reservoir of trust, but that trust can be volatile. In 1985 Michael Jackson was a beloved humanitarian. Today, hearing him sing "We are the world/We are the children" is not so touching. Not in a good way anyway.” (Poniewozik and Keegan 2005, 64) Another example of a celebrity overhauling their image by using charity, was actress Angelina Jolie. “Once known for partying and eccentric displays of affection, Jolie’s image was revamped when she became a U.N. goodwill ambassador in 2001.” (Sims 2004, 1) Charity is an excellent way for celebrities to get the media focused on what they do in public, effectively hiding what they do in private, or have done in the past. By being excessively generous they are able to hide their predator ways underneath a facade of peacefulness.

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

In the past, using charity as a way to whitewash a person's image after their death was an effective tool that was used quite frequently by the Richesse Oblige. The money that the wealthy earned in life through exploitation and unchecked greed was used to help the exploited only after the benefactor's death. "Until the nineteenth century charities were largely established as the result of bequests made in the wills of rich merchants, and others, charitably minded or with perhaps half an eye on an easier passage through the pearly gates." (Fowler 2001, 15) Following in the footsteps of the powerful class that came before them, the aristocracy, the Richesse Oblige used giving more as a form of self-redemption than a form of altruism. By giving of their wealth, people whose reputation was built on ruthlessness and greed were able to wipe away their shortcomings, their misdeeds, and their indiscretions. Why have an obituary that lists you as a deviant, when you can be called a philanthropist? Learning from this, celebrities started using this practice as well, time and money can heal most, if not all wounds.

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

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

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

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

A celebrity that exemplifies and built her career on this cultural need for public venting of emotions is talk show hostess Oprah Winfrey. Gaining incredible popularity since the 1980's and still continuing strong Oprah dedicates the majority of her hour long talk show to two things: feelings and commercial advertisements. Oprah is one of

the wealthiest women in the world building her empire upon the foundation of empathy and sympathy. The show is built around acceptance of those who are guests on the show, of herself, but mostly acceptance of the current culture of caring, and of the conspicuous actions that result from this caring. Once her celebrity status was cemented Oprah turned her attention to charity and philanthropy, both of which she usually promotes using her talk show as the pulpit from which she preaches. One episode of the Oprah Winfrey show was centered on a health condition called Obstetric Fistulae, which is a condition in which a hole can occur during childbirth in the wall between a woman's rectum and vagina. This condition, if not treated leaves many women stigmatized by their community and can lead to paralysis. Oprah raised awareness about this condition that affects an estimated two million women currently; however, did she center the show on financial support? No, instead she had herself filmed while she gave the women suffering from this condition makeup kits. As if free mascara or lipstick will help the incontinence, odor, sterility, and nerve damage that comes from this condition. Instead of focusing on the tragedy that befell these women and the hardships daily that they face she instead turned the attention of her show into an opportunity for personal growth.²⁰

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

²⁰ (Wood 2007, 24)

This flash over substance approach to giving is so permeated within our culture that few even question the motives behind giving and our culture's place in those motivations.

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

As contemporary culture becomes more other-directed there is more of a tendency to replace the personal sacrifice that used to be present in giving with tax write-offs, fun, profit, or publicized praise.²¹ "Charity is often seen as a postmodern Papal indulgence-absolving yourself of the sin of capricious social excess while toasting this wisdom with a glass of champagne." (Byrne 2005) It is no longer sufficient that charity make you feel good, it must now also make you look good to the public and your peers. "Charitable causes are to modern celebrities what sack cloth and ashes were to medieval monks: a symbolic form of self-abasement, a humbling gesture of penance to their own god, the public, a deity as jealous as Jehovah was of Job." (Harris 2003, 291)

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

But behind our collective love-in, there is an artifice in which we are all complicit -- an ethical version of the emperor's new clothes. If we lose the ability

²¹ (Bremner 1994, 209)

to discern caring from posing, we risk devaluing charity into a public performance devoid of meaning and credibility. The conscience industry risks becoming a reactionary force. By creating an illusory culture of caring, we believe we are doing good when in fact we are doing nothing. Our conscience off the hook, we can settle back to the status quo..." (Blackburn 2005, 25)

This notion of charity and philanthropy that is becoming more mainstream is that of self-interest and self-promotion. The original idea of charity has not just been lost, but imploded, it no longer even exists. There is no longer a true meaning of giving with which to reference, and because the giving is simulacra so is the concept of sincerity that is connected to it. The social and material benefits that are now ingrained into giving are so dominant that the actual act and meaning if giving are secondary. The substance is second to the bling.

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

This literal example of bling symbolizes what giving has become. Something to do and then forget about, something that after it's done holds no lasting meaning or value, something that can be tossed in a drawer and pulled out later to show others what a caring individual *you* are. "A Jewish proverb says: 'If charity cost nothing, we would all be philanthropists.' Perhaps we are getting there now." (Blackburn 2005, 25)

POWER OF CELEBRITY

“The fame stars have won lends them power. It is not power in the ancient sense, by which a few can legitimately exert authoritarian control over others, but rather power in a modern sense, by which few have license to influence on a vast scale. Americans turn to stars for the guidance they can provide.” (Fowles 1992, 176) Celebrities are chosen to be the spokesperson for charities, not because celebrities experience more unfortunate circumstances that require donations, actually quite the contrary is true, their wealth and fame insulates them from many hardships that most people experience; they are chosen because people are more willing to listen when a celebrity speaks, and follow where a celebrity leads. Many charities hope that the love and adoration that the public heap on celebrities will transfer through association to their cause, and subsequently enrich their bank accounts. Celebrities hold a similar hope that the attention that the needy draws will be placed, no matter how momentarily, onto them. They think that by helping those in need, they will be seen as a humanitarian, and this will help distinguish them from the other celebrities in their field. Charitable causes hold our hearts because pity and empathy are powerful emotions; there are few people that will admit to not wanting to help those in need. Celebrities hold our imagination because they achieve a level of popularity, wealth, and influence that very few non-celebrities will ever achieve. Through this envy and adoration, the cult of celebrity holds a power that can only be rivaled by religion in its far reaching and all engulfing influence. Together these two entities are a powerful force to be reckoned with, they have the ability to receive our

love, our adoration, and from this, our money and attention. “But why are the charities so fixed on celebrity? The answer is obvious: because we are.” (Smith 2002, 2)

When a person achieves the status of celebrity, when strangers recognize and adore them they achieve a form of tangible power. Celebrities can convince, not only their fans, but other celebrities and people of power that they are worth listening to, not because they are knowledgeable about the subject, or an educated expert, but because of what they are, a celebrity. If they did not hold this societal position of celebrity, they would not be listened to, Bono is not an economist, but governments listen to him the same when he speaks to them about third world conditions. It doesn't matter that he is from Ireland, which is not considered by anyone a third world country, he is still considered an 'expert' on the conditions that people in these countries endure. “James Garner [actor] innocently asked, ‘Why should anyone be interested in our opinions about anything? Why do they put us on pedestals? We're just playing cowboys and Indians – that's all we're doing. We haven't discovered the cure for cancer. None of us.’” (Fowles 1992, 155) Bono is a millionaire rock star, his fame in our culture lends his words and opinions credibility, but his charisma, and that of other celebrities like him, leads us. Celebrities can use their fame as a pulpit and their popularity as a microphone in order to get their message across, whether they are selling shoes, erectile dysfunction medication, or charity. It doesn't matter what they are selling, it doesn't matter if they have any experience in the field, because they and charity organizations as well know we will listen. “On many days it is unclear if we are leading celebrities into the world of philanthropy, or they are leading us into the world of celebritydom.” (Pollick 2004, 35)

They are celebrities; they present themselves as such, they are treated as such, and we expect them to behave as such.

In 1972, the Italian sociologist Francisco Alberoni coined the term ‘powerless elite’ to describe the condition of celebrity, suggesting that entertainers may have wealth and status but feel trivial as they have no real purchase on society. I disagree with this statement because with status comes a form of power, and today celebrities have high status simply due to their status as celebrities. I do agree that at times it can seem as if celebrities use charity in order to fill a void they believe exists within themselves or their lives, however, what is power if not the ability to have a say in what people see, feel, think, want, and experience?

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

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

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

Participation in charitable giving can be traced throughout history by all groups and classes. Yet this thesis focuses on the giving of the socially powerful in order to make the argument that their participation can influence the giving of the rest of society. Using Riesman’s concept of social character types this paper focused on two separate groups of leaders; the Robber Barons that were defined as inner-directed whose wealth made them socially powerful, and contemporary celebrities, defined as other-directed, whose media popularity makes them the current socially powerful group. Continuing to use Riesman’s theories to show a linear progression of conspicuous charitable giving by

the socially powerful within our culture, I argue that if our culture continues to participate in this simulacra charity, this self-serving giving, then the final social character the 'Indifferent' will emerge as the dominant personality. Indifferents view as spectators, they are defined by their apathy, they are not emotionally involved nor have any enthusiasm, no genuine involvement.²² To be an indifferent social character you believe that no action you could perform would make a difference so you choose to not even participate.

Even though Riesman in 1961 argued that indifferents were present in society, I argue that as of right now they are not our cultural leaders, and this is a significant distinction, especially in terms of charity. If, as I posit, our society emulates the actions and behaviors of our cultural leaders (currently celebrities) for our leaders to continue to spiral deeper and deeper into the other-directed performance of charity apathy would result. Our culture is on the cusp of this transition now, but we have not yet reached this point of cultural lethargy concerning giving. If the cultural leaders become indifferents, especially in great numbers, this characteristic of indifference will become the norm. Currently our society emulates our cultural leaders' simulacra giving, yet giving, motives not withstanding, still occurs. Once indifference is reached even this giving will cease, and giving of any type will not replace it.

²² (Riesman [1961] 2001, 171)

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APPENDIX A1) American Industrialists referred to as Robber Barons²³

John Jacob Astor - real estate, fur

Andrew Carnegie - railroads, steel

Jay Cooke - finance

Daniel Drew - finance

James Buchanan Duke - tobacco

James Fisk - finance

Henry Flagler - railroads, oil

Henry Ford - automobile

Henry Clay Frick - steel

John Warne Gates - steel, oil

Jay Gould - finance, railroads

Edward Henry Harriman - railroads

Collis P. Huntington - railroads

Mark Hopkins - railroads

Charles Crocker - railroads

Leland Stanford - railroads

John D. Rockefeller - oil

²³http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robber_baron_%28industrialist%29#List_of_businessmen_who_were_called_robber_barons

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