

Representations of Africa in the Western News Media: Reinforcing Myths and
Stereotypes

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Abstract

Europeans and Americans primarily encounter Africa through stereotypes and myths. This examination begins by explaining the stereotypes and myths of Africa and grounding them in a historical analysis of their colonial origins. An analysis of the Western news media demonstrates that structural biases and operating frameworks perpetuate negative attitudes toward Africa and Africans. The media primarily focuses on crisis news while positive representations are delegitimized. Statistical analysis demonstrates Africa is not only misrepresented, but it is underrepresented in international news coverage. Specific news case studies demonstrate how individual stereotypes and myths are reinforced by the media's structure, choice of coverage and presentation of events and issues. Media coverage misrepresents Africa and Africans because of the unquestioned acceptance of negative attitudes. Africa and Africans can be more accurately represented by actively challenging stereotypes and examining and redesigning the media frameworks that currently allow these negative characterizations to remain unquestioned.

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It is a peculiar triumph of society that it is able to convince those people to whom it has given inferior status of the reality of this decree; it has the force and the weapons to translate its dictum into fact, so that the allegedly inferior are actually made so, insofar as the societal realities are concerned. –James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* quoted in Okoye, Felix N. *The American Image of Africa: Myth and Reality*. Buffalo, NY: Black Academy Press, 1971. 40.

Introduction

Nigerian novelist, Chimamanda Adichie, spoke in 2009 regarding “The Danger of a Single Story.”¹ During her presentation, she recounts how as a child she read British and American children’s books. When she began to write her own stories at the age of seven, she wrote stories involving white people with blue eyes who lived in areas with snow and remarked often on the weather. Because her only experiences of literature involved foreigners, she felt that they were the only subjects that could be a part of literature. Later when she found African books she discovered that people with her own skin color and warm weather climates could be literary subjects. Finding these African books saved her from “having a single story of what books are.”² The danger of the single story is that it creates one view and that view becomes the sole defining representation of a thing, or worse, a place and its people. In the United States and Europe, there is a single story of Africa. This story is negative. The single story is not lacking in complexity, but it presents Africa as a place of danger, darkness, violence, poverty and hopelessness. There is no good news from Africa.

The single negative story of Africa was created by the efforts of colonial officials and institutions to perpetuate white supremacy and Western domination of the African continent. This single negative story continues because the stereotypes and myths that undergirded colonialism have not been challenged by the Western media. The underlying myths that form this single story are often subtle and, therefore, the media has not even noticed that it is continuing to support the stereotypes and myths of Africa that began with colonial conquest. The danger of the single story as Adichie warns is that it “robs people of their dignity.”³ The single story not only robs those who it maligns and oppresses, but it also lowers the dignity of those who believe and perpetuate it. Most people living in Europe and the United States have no desire to harm Africans. The stereotypes and myths, which are still prevalent, are perpetuated because the media, the government, and individuals are focused on other concerns which further obscure the harm that the single negative story of Africa does to both Africans and Westerners. For example, one of the areas which will be further explored is the role the Cold War played in media coverage of Africa. Both the media and the governments of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. were focused on the battle between capitalism and communism and the ideologies that each thought was better. The Africans trying to establish their independence from colonial rulers were not primarily concerned with the economic or political ideologies of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. They were engaged in liberation movements to establish the right of self-determination. However, the Western media did not cover and did not approach these conflicts from the African point of view, but rather approached them as proxy wars in the U.S. vs. U.S.S.R. paradigm of the cold war. This approach was used because colonialism made it not only acceptable but expected for

Westerners to consider African events as significant only in their impact on the West. This approach limited the media's ability to realize that it was neglecting the actual reasons behind these conflicts and characterizing the Africans in unfair and untrue ways. Therefore, not only does the single story hinder realizing the stereotypes one holds regarding others, the concern for other issues also hinders the ability to realize these stereotypes and further contributes to creating unfair characterizations. Thus, the overwhelming success of colonialism continues to cause the Western media to perpetuate unquestioned the ingrained stereotypes and myths that were created in order to justify colonial conquest and racially-based exploitation and accounts for the continued underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Africa in the media.

Methodology and Organization

The first section defines stereotypes and myths providing a framework for understanding these general concepts. The next section expands upon these concepts by introducing several specific stereotypes and myths of Africa. An examination of the colonial origin of the current stereotypes and myths about Africa lays the foundation for investigating the structural practices of the media that further contribute to reinforcing these myths and stereotypes. Statistical information regarding coverage of Africa demonstrates that not only is Africa misrepresented, it is underrepresented. Following the statistical information, specific news case studies explore the numerous ways in which the media perpetuate myths and stereotypes regarding Africans.

This examination draws on many different disciplines. The definition and analysis of stereotypes and myths in the first two sections combine historical and psychological methods

of understanding human actions and interpretations. The colonial origin of the myths and stereotypes of Africa is based on historical methods of analysis. Particularly useful are recent trends that provide a historical analysis of the methods of anthropology in colonial Africa.ⁱ Additionally, the analysis of the media combines the techniques of history with communications and political science methodology. Most of the news regarding Africa concerns political events, therefore, an understanding of politics and its context in history is essential. One of the case studies, however, presents an issue that is not primarily political. The case study on cell phone use in Africa shows how the convergence of African economic issues and Western notions of technology is viewed by Western media. This contrasting case study is helpful in demonstrating a different approach that highlights different stereotypes and myths.

The four case studies have been chosen because they cover a wide range of the relevant issues. They show that a variety of news outlets present stereotypes and myths regarding Africa. They cover both recent events and historical situations. Furthermore, they demonstrate a variety of myths including those that are more obvious and those that are subtly ingrained in Western society.

ⁱ Annie Coombes provides such an analysis in her discussion of the influence of missionaries and missionary societies in spreading ideas of African inferiority. The influence of missionaries as amateur anthropologists was especially significant in that missionaries had a more significant influence on the colonial endeavor and the perceptions of the British public than colonial administrators in the early years of conquest. Missionary societies established museums and exhibitions which brought the ideas of the exotic and inferior African to a wider public than those intimately involved in the colonial project. Coombes, Annie E. *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 1994. 161-186. Additional discussion of anthropologists and their differences from colonial administrators is discussed by Terence Ranger in *The Invention of Tribalism in Zimbabwe* which is addressed in the section on colonial origins and the invention of tribes.

Defining Stereotypes and Myths

Prior to examining specific stereotypes and myths or investigating their origins, it is important to have a clear understanding of these terms. Stereotypes and myths are not interchangeable synonyms. While they have separate meanings, they are interrelated. A stereotype creates a general view of a group and expresses a value judgment. Stereotypes are “reductive” and attempt to “essentialize” those they rigidly label.⁴ As Michael Pickering notes, it is important to distinguish stereotypes from the concept of categories.⁵ Creating categories may help in understanding the world. Therefore, one may create categories for large objects and small objects. But a stereotype goes further to place a value on those categories. For example, the large objects are better (prettier, more valuable, etc.) than the smaller objects. This example may sound ridiculous, but most stereotypes sound unreasonable when they are confronted. Similarly, it is now acknowledged as unreasonable by most of society to hold that white people are smarter than black people, but this was a common stereotype. This stereotype is often expressed as the idea of the “ignorant savage.” Yet, because this was a common stereotype, the effect of this stereotype on language and media images has not been fully eradicated.

Myths, on the other hand, are the more complex notions which undergird the simpler form of stereotypes. Myths help provide a framework for viewing stereotypes so that an entire system, such as that of white supremacy, becomes possible because it no longer sounds ridiculous, but “common sense.”⁶ While a stereotype can usually be expressed in a sentence that describes what people think, a myth introduces a general idea that is latent in the stereotype. For example, the myth of the timeless present undergirds the stereotype of

the “ignorant savage.” While it is possible to understand the basic idea of the stereotype, the myth needs further explanation. The timeless present is the notion that certain groups of people, such as Africans, have not changed over time so their behaviors in the present represent a certain “timelessness.” Therefore, viewing them now is like stepping into the past. Furthermore, this is not just their past, but a past representative of all of humanity. Thus, they represent an earlier, less evolved form of “civilized” humanity. European colonizers invoked this notion to demonstrate that European civilization was the top of the evolutionary hierarchy.⁷ Thus, the stereotype implies significantly more than it overtly states because of the myths which underlie it. Furthermore, because each stereotype is founded on not one but several myths, the stereotype perpetuates many complex negative generalizations in easily contained and transmitted units.ⁱⁱ

There are two additional aspects to stereotypes which Michael Pickering describes that are fundamental to understanding their social function. Stereotypes are powerful tools useful for subjugating people because they embody power structures and even more importantly are created as inflexible entities.⁸ Unlike categories, which shift and change to meet the demands of new information, stereotypes color new information to suit the framework of the stereotype. New information is often seen only as that which is useful to confirm a stereotype. When it does not, it is often discarded. At times it may be impossible to ignore information which contradicts a stereotype. The myths which undergird a

ⁱⁱ Pickering discusses Gilman’s view that there are both good and bad stereotypes. While it is true that there are some stereotypes that seem to “idealise other social groups” in actuality they are reverse negative stereotypes. For example, the stereotype that Asians are smarter at math and technology than Americans is really a statement that Americans think they are better than Asians at most things, except for math and technology. The underlying idea is that Asians are not able to contribute to other areas at the same level as Americans. Therefore, all stereotypes have a negative component and misrepresent the groups they attempt to describe. Pickering 40.

stereotype allow contradictory stereotypes to be maintained. An example of this is the idea that Africans are both lazy but ideal hard-working manual laborers.⁹ How is it possible to justify both of these stereotypes? It is difficult to attribute one of these ideas as the “first” stereotype; therefore, because each idea was competing for prominence within a white supremacist framework, two contradictory concepts arose. The “lazy” stereotype is fostered by the racially based idea that European “civilization” is better than African societies because the Europeans observed different behaviors in agricultural and town life. They combined their own pride with their ignorance to extrapolate that African agricultural methods were inferior and that this assumed inferiority was due to laziness. On the other hand, the Europeans also wanted to exploit Africa and one way to do this was through African labor in the form of slavery. If Africans could not be hardworking manual laborers, then there was little point in promoting the slave trade. The solution was to combine these stereotypes into a more complex stereotype that defined Africans as inherently lazy, but hardworking when compelled by strong white masters. Thus, each contradictory concept could be invoked when it was convenient. However, it is important to note that neither stereotype became flexible. Instead each stereotype remained inflexible, but was only used for the “appropriate” situation.

In other situations, even when individuals or society recognize that the ideas that supported a stereotype are no longer socially acceptable, the effect of the stereotype may still linger. This is the case with many of the stereotypes of Africa. Upon examination, most people would realize that many negative attitudes toward Africa are based on outdated beliefs of white supremacy and black inferiority. However, the lingering effect of the

stereotype is to prevent actual equality. Thus, “the negative effects of negative information, cognitive psychologists tell us, may persist in the form of affect [meaning subtle influences] even after its original cognitive base has been completely invalidated.”¹⁰

Another important social use of stereotypes is that they create a sense of belonging or not belonging.¹¹ Stereotypes foster a sense of “us” vs. “them.” The purpose of stereotypes is not, like categories, to help one understand the world, but rather to point out differences, create hierarchies and assign value. Thus, the stereotypes of Africans presented thus far, the idea of the “ignorant savage” or the “lazy” African, were created by non-Africans to enhance the awareness of the differences between Europeans and Africans and give those differences meaning.

Another key idea in this analysis is that of representation. The main argument is that the media underrepresents and misrepresents Africa and Africans by reinforcing myths and stereotypes. Not only is it important to clearly understand the terminology of myths and stereotypes, but it is also crucial to understand the concept of representation. “Representation involves processes of ‘speaking for’ and ‘speaking of’ those who are represented.”¹² The media tells someone else’s story. Therefore, they speak of those people by telling a specific story and they speak for people when they evaluate the story. Thus, misrepresentation is telling someone else’s story without considering their point of view. Misrepresentation can also take the form of telling only part of a story. What is known then becomes all that is known, leaving no room for other ideas. The media is the key to this because “in the West at least, the media constitute the most significant forms and channels of cultural representation and exchange.”¹³ Not only is the media significant in forming these

ideas because it is so prevalent, but because its mission is different from other sources. “The media hold special importance, because it is to the media that individuals look to be informed.”¹⁴ “The media name the world’s parts and certify reality *as* reality.” Therefore, when the media presents a story it is not merely *a* story, but *the* story. The media’s role in representing Africa is definitive. It is because of this role that they have the power to reinforce myths and stereotypes which might otherwise seem to be difficult to sustain. Their misrepresentation becomes the primary or only representation of the continent. The complex processes by which the founding myths and supporting stereotypes were created and transmitted and how they misrepresent Africa are discussed in the section on Colonial Origins. However, prior to examining the origins of the stereotypes and myths of Africa, it is important to outline them.

Stereotypes and Myths of Africa and Africans

The main general stereotype of Africa is that which was mentioned previously as a place of danger, darkness, violence, poverty and hopelessness. Many Westerners view Africa as primarily a jungle or desert landscape where the people speak unintelligible languages.¹⁵ Africans are thought to live in rural areas, practice strange customs, and fight pointless battles against each other. These somewhat vague but decidedly negative stereotypes of Africa are founded on several myths that support the tone and message of the stereotypes.

Table 1 (next page) summarizes these myths or categories of myths. The second myth, the Myth of the Timeless Present has already been introduced. The other myths, however, need further explanation. The Myth of the Lack of Progress requires special

attention because it involves an important use of language. While some argue that language is merely how people communicate and doesn't have the power to disadvantage others unless they allow it, language is powerful because it creates perceptions. "It is through language that selves and others are mediated and represented."¹⁶ Individuals or groups can strongly influence the perception others have by the selective and careful use of language. This is particularly true because language can be subtle. One example of this subtlety is the distinction between the words modern and current. To say that someone or something is current places that person or object in the present time. This is a chronological description. To say that someone or something is modern, however, expresses a value judgment. The opposite of modern is primitive. To be primitive is to be lesser. "Western societies classifying themselves as modern and civilized rel[y] heavily on the contrast between their own sense of advancement and the idea of racially backward and inferior societies."¹⁷ Therefore, by calling oneself modern in comparison to others expresses a judgment that you are better and the others are lesser.

Table 1

LIST OF MYTHS		
#	Myth/Stereotype	Description
1	Myth of Lack of Progress	This myth promotes the idea that Africans are isolated from global processes and not “modern” or “advanced,” instead they are considered a “backward” people. ¹⁸
2	Myth of the Timeless Present	This myth promotes the idea that Africa is a timeless place where everything has always been a certain way (i.e. timeless). ¹⁹ Therefore, Africans are less evolved than others, specifically Europeans and Americans.
3	Myth of the Primitive/Exotic	The uses of the words primitive or exotic encompass a value judgment. ²⁰ Their use means that there is something better (less primitive, more modern/advanced, smarter). These are reference points generally used to demonstrate how one culture is better than another (because I use a stove to boil water instead of an open fire does not make me a better or smarter person). This is a problem of the language of description. Similar problems occur with use of the words “tribe” and “tribal.”
4	Myth of Tradition/Ceremony/Ritual	This myth promotes the idea that African History is static rather than dynamic. African traditions are viewed as always existing in an unchanging way. ²¹
5	Myth of African Continuity	Africa is often viewed as one country or one similar place. ²² However, over 800 different languages, wide cultural differences, economic disparities and other differences dispute this myth.
6	Myth of the Lack of History	This myth states that Africa is a place without history and arises from colonization efforts to justify racist policies that focused on constructing the idea that white people brought history to Africans; it plays into the ideas that Africa is timeless and static. ²³
7	Geography Myths	These vary but include the idea that Africa is mostly jungle or desert or that there are no “modern” cities and that wild animals are “everywhere.” ²⁴
8	Population Myths	These vary but include the contradictions that Africa is either over-populated (because Africans cannot restrain themselves from having children) or it is under-populated because the people are poor and dying of hunger and AIDS.
9	Poverty Myths	Many of these are specific to poverty in Africa, for example, the belief that all Africans are poor.
10	Hopelessness Myth (i.e. Africa is a lost cause)	There is so much violence, instability, corruption, poverty, disease, and other problems that these issues can never be resolved; therefore, it is not worth trying to help or concerning oneself with the continent.

Michael Pickering discusses the concept of the primitive and the term progress which is equally difficult to use without expressing a hierarchical value judgment. Progress means movement toward a goal, but it is rarely used in this manner. Progress has come to mean improvement. Instead of needing to define the goals toward which a group is progressing, the term progress seems to stand for those goals. Those goals are technology, wealth, and other similar ideas associated with Western society. Therefore, the Myth of the Lack of Progress concerns several ideas. First, Africans are not innovative and advanced like Europeans and Americans; Africans are “backward” and must catch-up to Western standards. Second, Africans are outside of global processes. For some reason, usually explained as African inferiority, Africans are considered as outsiders and incapable of contributing to technology, the global economy (except in subservient positions as locations of raw materials for export or captive markets), politics, art, or history. While it may be true that many Africans do not have the same advantages or living conditions as Westerners in industrial areas, this does not mean that Africans are incapable of working toward goals. However, the implication is that Africans lack the intelligence and innovation that is inherent in Westerners and this accounts for the differences in their living conditions.

The Myth of the Primitive/Exotic is closely related to the Myth of the Lack of Progress. The “primitive” African is presented as inferior. He/She is lesser because of strange practices and “backward” ways of living. However, these strange practices can be almost glorified as the “exotic” African. The modes of dress, the types of food, the religious or social customs, especially those involving dance and ceremony, the indigenous languages and certain other aspects of life are highlighted as “exotic” differences. The fascination with

exoticism makes the notion of the primitive or inferior status of these aspects less prominent for a time.²⁵ It seems as if Western culture is celebrating Africa. However, the underlying message is that it is celebrating African inferiority. The lingering effect of the terms primitive and exotic is that their use encourages looking at Africans as inferior, although those who use these terms may not intend that interpretation. An important related note is that the evolutionary idea of a “primitive society” is often embodied in the use of the word to describe individuals. Because certain individuals live or lived in ways which are now described as “primitive” they are part of “primitive society.” But as Michael Pickering notes, “primitive society has never existed.”²⁶ The distinction of being primitive is applied either to past societies, which would not have characterized themselves in this fashion because for their time they were at the height of innovation, or to people and groups living in the present, but without access to the most advanced technologies. Thus, the primitive is a projection onto others from one’s own perceptions. Similar problems of the language of description are encountered with the terms tribe and tribal. The problem in this context is that there are several meanings attached to these terms. In the next section, the idea of the creation of tribes is discussed. In Western society, the term tribe carries with it a strong sense of the primitive, the exotic, the inferior, and the unintelligible. In African society, the tribe is understood as a valid unit of societal organization. Therefore, someone from Africa who has a tribal affiliation does not usually consider talk of his or her tribe (or tribes) as insulting. Whereas discussing African tribal conflict or tribal issues in the U.S. or Europe often implies that the conflict or issue is unintelligible or unimportant and that the people involved are inferior to Westerners. Curtis Keim explains that

By the mid-nineteenth century, the word tribe had assumed a negative meaning that implied political organizations that were primordial, backward, irrational and static. A person didn't join a tribe; one was born into it. People in civilized societies could actively select from among different, creative courses of action, but tribal people followed tribal customs without thinking. It was indeed fortunate for tribes that they had such customs to guide their actions, because [the perception was that the] members were so limited intellectually [as to have no other options].²⁷

Thus, these first three myths depend greatly on the language of description and the power of word choice to create mental images and emotional characterizations of different groups. The latent feelings in words and expressions are an important part of the way in which Africa is presented and viewed in and by the media and in turn influence how consumers of the media respond to Africa.

The remaining myths have less to do with language than with grand concepts. The Myth of Tradition, Ceremony and Ritual like the origin of tribes is discussed more fully in the section on colonial origins. However, the main idea of this myth is that African traditions, ceremonies and rituals are static. They do not change. This supports the myth of the timeless present. The Myth of African Continuity promotes the idea that Africa is one undifferentiated place. This gives credence to the idea that it is all jungle or all deserts. Additionally, all the people must be similar. This justified many colonial practices, the most significant being that the colonizers did not have to take time to understand different groups of Africans and could carve up Africa in any way they liked. The legitimate differences that most Europeans and Americans recognize in other areas, such as the right of different nations

to rule themselves (as in recent territorial disputes in Eastern Europe), is not as easily acknowledged in Africa because of the myth of African continuity and its continued success. Europeans and Americans have difficulty seeing Africans as different from one another and their disputes with each other as legitimate reasons for wanting self-rule and independent nations. The Myth of the Lack of History focuses on the idea that because Africa is a timeless and static place it cannot have history since history denotes change over time. Therefore, white Westerners brought history to Africa. In this way not only is Africa again inferior to Europe and the United States, but Westerners are also glorified as bringers of history. Thus, “Western education teaches that Europeans not Africans are the motive force in African history.”²⁸

There are three categories of myths that are listed next. These include geography myths, population myths and poverty myths. The main geography myths, which focus on the idea that Africa is either all jungle or all deserts, have already been mentioned. However, it is worth mentioning that in actuality only 5% of Africa is jungle.²⁹ This proves that the notion of Africa as all jungle is erroneous. The problem is that due to lack of knowledge of Africa there is no suitable alternative view except to extrapolate that the continent must therefore be all deserts. This view is persistent because it is very rare for Westerners to have an understanding that there are industrial cities in Africa. It is even rarer for Westerners to have ever seen a photograph or image of one of these cities as they are rarely, if ever, presented in the Western media. The only possible exceptions are if the city were plagued by violence or natural disaster. However, in these types of situations it is likely that the city would hardly resemble an industrial center because of the trauma necessary for the media to

consider it worthy of news coverage. A further component of the geography myth category is the idea that wild “safari” animals are everywhere in Africa. While Africa is home to some of the world’s largest animals including elephants, hippopotamus, and lions, because of human occupation these animals are restricted to preserves located in Southern and Eastern Africa. Many travelers to West Africa are disappointed to find that they cannot see any wild animals.³⁰ Even those who go to Southern and Eastern Africa must plan to visit the tourist attraction areas where the animals are located similar to Florida’s Sea World. The notion that zebras are just walking down the street is entirely erroneous.

The second category of myths focuses on population. This category centers on two contradictory ideas. The notion is that Africa is either over or under populated. This category presents two competing ideas. First, the idea that Africa is over populated stems from the theory that Africans are more sexual (than Westerners) and unable to restrain themselves from these instincts.³¹ Therefore, Africans have more children than Westerners because they lack self-control and are irresponsible. Second, Africa is under populated because everyone is dying of AIDS. This does not entirely contradict the first theory since AIDS can be transmitted sexually. Therefore, according to this myth, Africans are still unable to restrain themselves from sexual activity but they are not living long enough to have as many children and those children are most likely dying of AIDS as well. AIDS is a problem in Africa as it is in the rest of the world. Some of Africa’s other problems make the AIDS issue more difficult to tackle, but the entire continent is not plagued by AIDS. Additionally, many African governments have made great strides to work with their citizens to reduce the problem. These success stories are often neglected by the media. Furthermore,

the notion that Africa is over populated even prior to the AIDS problem is difficult to support in comparison to other areas. The population density for Africa is roughly 65 people per square mile while the population density of the U.S. is 76 people per square mile and the population density of Asia is 203 people per square mile.³²

The poverty myths are another category for examination. The primary impression regarding poverty in Africa is that everyone is poor. This arises from the fact that the media rarely presents an alternate point of view. The only viable alternative is the notion that a few corrupt generals, business people, and leaders may be wealthy. However, the reality is that Africa has a diverse spread of wealth. Unfortunately, poverty is a major challenge for the continent. However, as Chimamanda Adichie notes, she grew up in a middle class household in Nigeria. The middle class in many African countries may be smaller or differently defined than in Western nations; however, there are many people in Africa who are successfully living day to day and providing for their families. Many of these people, like their European and American counterparts, are also trying to improve their lives and the lives of their families, communities and possibly even contribute to the betterment of the world. Also, as in Europe and the United States, one of Africa's primary problems is the distribution of wealth. Thus, the poverty myth category is significant in that it highlights an economic reality. The economic problems facing the world today are shared by almost all countries. The differences are much fewer than most tend to believe. Most of these differences are the degree to which something is a problem. For example, the problem of poverty is more significant in Africa, while the disparity in the distribution of wealth is more

significant for the Western nations. Yet all of these countries share these same basic economic issues.

The last myth summarizes the negative feeling that the previous myths promote. The overall feeling that these myths engender is one of hopelessness. The Hopeless Myth evidences itself when Westerners, usually government leaders and media opinion-makers, decide that Africa is not worth their time, Africa is a lost cause, or Africa cannot be a valuable part of global decision-making. It is true that there are significant problems for African people and African governments. However, the same can be said of any people or any government. The difference with Africa is that the stereotypes and myths of Africa present it solely as a place of negatives. Europe and the United States and even Asia and Latin America are seen as places worthy of involvement. There are few if any stories of hope, success, and happiness from Africa. It is due to the success of the colonial campaign to conquer Africa and the resulting myths and stereotypes that were created and continue to be advanced that Africa is still viewed through this negative prism.

Colonial Origins

The Western news media tend to portray Africa as a violent, poverty-stricken, backward place that is of little interest to most Westerners.ⁱⁱⁱ The root of these views is an oversimplified and stereotypical picture of Africa. These stereotypes have been reinforced by media representations of Africa, but the Western media did not create them. Instead, they

ⁱⁱⁱ Surveys show that the media reinforced view is widespread. "A national survey taken in 1979 . . . asked "What comes to your mind when you think about Africa and the people who live there? Some 25 percent of respondents mentioned animals and primitive natives, 37 percent mentioned racial issues, 16 percent mentioned poverty and hunger, and 14 percent failed to respond at all." Clough, Michael. *Free at Last?: U.S. Policy Toward Africa and the End of the Cold War*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1992. 20. Another more recent survey found "many widely held misconceptions such as the following: Africa is just one large country; Africa is all jungle; Africans share a single culture, language and religion; Africans live in 'grass huts;' Africans mainly hunt animals for their subsistence; and Africa has no significant history." Keim 4-5.

originated in the efforts of the major European colonizers to justify their imperial initiative in Africa and around the world. These colonizers sought to create ideas that justified exploitation and appropriation. In doing so, they created stereotypes and myths that still define how Westerners and the Western media view and portray Africans.

There were two main concepts which the colonial powers introduced to justify their imperial power. The first was the creation of the “Other.” This concept separates Europeans from Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans by creating artificial categories and enhancing certain cultural differences. The Europeans also invented the concept of tradition both as it applied to Europeans, or approved traditions such as Christian ritual and educational ceremonies, and the supposedly inferior traditions of the colonized. These ideas focus on the concept of difference. Whereas in reality difference is something that can only be judged in comparison to other things and along a continuum, the purpose of the colonial effort at “Otherizing” the colonized was to create distinct, easy to see and understand (artificial) categories to justify European domination. The Europeans invented traditions for themselves and sought to classify African practices as traditions as well. Essentially, the Europeans were trying to make African practices, which were adaptable, into inflexible rituals, thus forcing them into another European category.³³ However, even when they were trying to make them European by encouraging inflexible traditions, they were also pointing out their differences by calling attention to how African rituals were different from and inferior to European ones.

From these two efforts arise the myths that still permeate American society and the U.S. media. The concept of the “Other” has made it possible to view Africans as people who

are primitive or exotic and, therefore, technologically backward. The concept of tradition has made it possible to see Africans as unchanging or less historically important prior to colonization. The history of Africa is often viewed as solely a response to European and American events. Furthermore, the focus on tradition and the primitive combine to make it seem as if Africans live in a condition called the “timeless present” where they are never changing and always seem ancient. Additional myths from the colonial period include those based on geography. Because the climate and wildlife was very different from that of Europe, this was used as one way of “Otherizing” African people. Furthermore, since colonization influenced the entire African continent, it is common for media to represent Africa as one undifferentiated place. The colonizers also tried to represent Africa as a whole as different from Europe while paying as little attention to the differences between Africans as possible. The reason for this was that by refusing to recognize the cultural variety in Africa, the colonizers could more effectively create distinct categories that reinforced colonial superiority. Finally, the end result of colonization has been to prevent Africans from creating their own governments, economic systems and ways of living as free people. When Africans gained this right through the struggle for decolonization, they were left with nations that had been stripped of wealth and people that were very poor. It has been very difficult to ameliorate these conditions, especially without significant international support. Therefore, poverty is a major problem. Because Africa and poverty seem to go hand in hand, it can be difficult to realize that not everyone who lives there is poor. Additionally, the poor are often viewed unsympathetically as a burden or as people who are not trying to better themselves. These prejudices make the gut reaction to Africa negative. This creates the

overarching myth that Africa is a lost cause beset with only poverty, violence and disease. Due to this myth, it seems hopeless to try to help remedy these problems. Thus, the creation of the “Other” and the invention of tradition combine to create negative attitudes toward Africans that are difficult to extricate from Western society.

The colonial program of “Otherizing” was particularly successful and acceptable because the concept of the “Other” was not invented for the purpose of colonialism. As Roger Bartra notes, the concept of the “Other” was first an internal distinction within man. There was the civilized aspect within an individual and there was the “Other” portion—the wild man.³⁴ The wild man would eventually be capable of the adventurous, heroic, and masculine deeds of colonialism. This “Other” portion needed to be controlled because there was a certain amount of savagery associated with it; however, it was essentially a fundamental part of all good civilized men. With the impetus of the wild man to explore and colonize, the idea of the wild man and the “Other” shifted to being something that was projected onto those who were found in the colonized regions. It was widely acknowledged that the colonized were not civilized because they were not part of the civilizing culture. Often those who were being colonized also thought of themselves as superior to the invaders. Both groups had a sense of group loyalty or even early patriotism. Additionally, the “Other” was not only originally an internal personal distinction; it was also originally applied to groups which would eventually be considered part of Europe and Western Civilization. The “Other” was defined in Europe primarily by the use of the category “Barbarians.” This general term was used by the colonizing group to insult those being dominated. Most early colonialism focused on control within modern-day Europe. Thus, the Greeks and Romans

established empires by calling the Britons, Gauls (French), Prussians and other eventual African colonizers Barbarians. However, since there were thousands of years over which these groups could assimilate and form a dominating culture known as Western Civilization, the concept of the “Other” was no longer applied within European civilizations, but was used to categorize those outside of the European continent and its traditions. Western Civilization is not confined solely to land association, but is also set of ideas. It also includes, and now is often led by, the United States which is heir to many of its traditions since its early settlers were predominately Europeans. The use of “Otherizing” has a well-established history in Western society and is easily adaptable to different situations. Therefore, it would not be alarming for European colonizers to use the concept of the “Other” to justify the colonization of Africa.

The methods in which the colonizers introduced the notion of the “Other” in Africa were adapted to each colonial territory. One of the primary ways in which the colonizers established that African society was distinct from European society was by the use of the term “tribe.” Europeans saw tribes as distinct ethnic or cultural entities similar to the European concept of nation. The political notion of nation is based on the right of ethnically unified people to rule themselves. Nationhood does not determine any more specific political understanding than the right of self-government. African tribes, however, had political means that were distinct from or overlapped their religious and ethnic associations. One person could belong to several tribes because these distinctions could be equivalent to a European being a “Tory, an Anglican, and Scottish”.³⁵ For many Africans, the main tribal identifier signified political allegiance to a King or leader. The colonizers, however,

attempted to define tribes as cultural units based on religious and ethnic practices and physical similarities. Two examples demonstrate the different ways in which the colonizers redefined African tribes.

The Hutu and Tutsi of Rwanda

The colonizing power in Rwanda was originally Germany, which withdrew in 1916 during World War I. Belgium became the official imperial power over Rwanda in 1919 when it was recognized by the League of Nations.³⁶ The Hutu and Tutsi were tribes that existed within Africa. The origins of the Hutu and Tutsi are difficult to ascertain; some believe that there is no difference between them. Any differences that did exist are limited to artificial categories such as types of labor or wealth.³⁷ Others claim that they had different bloodlines and one or both migrated to the area.³⁸ Even if they had different origins, at the time of colonization they “did not live as separate cultural communities.”³⁹ They “spoke the same language, practiced the same religion, and lived on the same territory.”⁴⁰ In spite of these similarities, the colonizers made them into separate racially based classes: one fitted for rule, the other fitted for subservience. The method used to create this dichotomy was the introduction of the Hamitic Hypothesis. The Hamitic Hypothesis had various interpretations, but in its basic form it is the story of how Noah’s son Ham was cursed by God. A possible twist on this is that it was Ham’s son Canaan that was cursed. The end result was that because of their curse the Hamites became associated with darker skin. While they had darker skin and were lesser because of their curse, they were still of Christian heritage and therefore better than the Negroid races which were “beyond the pale of humanity.”⁴¹ The Tutsi, they claimed, were descendants of Ham. Because they were considered closer to the

Caucasian ideal, they were fit for positions of indirect rule in the colonial system. The Tutsi became the privileged African class within the colonial system. They were still discriminated against in comparison to the Europeans, but they were considered superior to the Hutu. The underlying theme of the Hamitic Hypothesis was that any positive element in African society, especially “evidence of organized state life,” was considered by Europeans to have origins outside of Africa.⁴² Therefore, the Tutsi must be Hamitic migrants to the area. The Europeans created another element of superiority in the creation of the Tutsi ruling class by creating a racial classification for the Tutsi and Hutu. The Tutsi were considered to be naturally closer to Caucasians. The ideal Tutsi was, therefore, considered lighter skinned, taller, and sleeker figured than the Hutu. Thus, the colonial power created a racially defined chieftaincy that separated the Tutsi as a superior settler class and the Hutu as inferior natives.

The Tribes of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is generally thought to have two main tribes, the Ndebele and the Shona, and several other smaller tribes, such as the Manyika, Zezuru, Karanga, and Kalanga.⁴³ Terence Ranger notes that journalists describe these tribal identities as existing for thousands of years, but that this is technically impossible as they were effectively created by colonial conditions.⁴⁴ Unlike the Belgians in Rwanda who opted for a middle way between direct rule and indirect rule, the British in Zimbabwe vacillated between direct and indirect rule, finally settling upon indirect rule as their colonial policy. In the process of establishing indirect rule, the British wanted to forestall any unifying identity. Therefore, it was to their advantage to pit tribes against one another. At the same time, they were unwilling to spend the time to understand the real differences between any of these groups. The British method

of defining the tribes was very similar to the Belgian method in that they sought to typify tribal representatives through racial and other physical characteristics that could be used to define a “pure” specimen.⁴⁵ These techniques were anthropological in nature. Surprisingly, the colonial administrators were more sensitive to the African people than the anthropologists.⁴⁶ The administrators refused to grant many of the requests for samples of tribal skulls and skeletons for anthropological evaluation.⁴⁷ While anthropologists continue to study bones in order to study human evolutionary characteristics, the anthropologists working in colonial Africa were hindered in their analysis by a pervasive racial prejudice. They were looking to explain African inferiority. Working from this point of view, they were bound to enhance the ability of the colonial administration to justify their superiority rather than counter it. Therefore, colonial administrators and anthropologists, without realizing it, often worked together to promote the idea of European superiority and African inferiority through the concept of African tribal identity.^{iv}

Another way in which prejudgment was prevalent in European attitudes toward tribes was that because the Europeans had an understanding of the Zulu tribe which they appreciated because it upheld many European values—“authoritarian, militaristic, and disciplined,” and hierarchical in elevating elders and men above youth and women—they expected other tribes to hold the same values. The Ndebele, however, surprised them.⁴⁸

^{iv} Jeannette Eileen Jones briefly introduces one problem of anthropology especially in promoting the view of Africans as inferior. Anthropology has a tendency to view humans zoologically as animals. Thus, early anthropological methods were especially capable of subtly “animalizing” the subjects studied and making the culture of the anthropologist seem superior and non-animal or fully human in contrast. Jones, Jeannette Eileen. “In Brightest Africa:’ Naturalistic Constructions of Africa in the American Museum of Natural History, 1910-1936.” *Images of Africa: Stereotypes and Realities*. Ed. Daniel M. Mengara. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001. 195-208.

They did not have a system of deference and women were not kept “in their place” as “a girl [could choose] whom she likes, when she likes and as often as she likes.”⁴⁹

The response of the British to this freedom of the Ndebele, or in the opinion of the British the anarchy of the Ndebele, was to make them more like the Zulu. They created an Ndebele ruling elite. This new elite did not question their power, but naturally approved of these rights. In response, the ruled wanted to be part of the Ndebele rather than an opposing tribe and have less status as a foreign tribe. Those who could speak Sindebele could claim Ndebele tribal identity and did in order to adapt to the new colonial system.⁵⁰ This had the effect of creating a large Ndebele tribe that was the opposite of the original intent of the colonizers to divide and rule. However, once they established the Ndebele criteria, they had to honor it. In spite of this, they did not allow everyone who claimed Ndebele tribal identity to keep their land.

The Invention of Tradition

In addition to analyzing the colonial creation of tribes in Zimbabwe, Terence Ranger has also investigated the larger colonial project to define and invent African traditions. He notes that Europeans had invented traditions for themselves, especially in regard to military, government and sport related ceremonies, initiations, and accoutrements. Therefore, they saw other cultures through this lens of tradition. However, as in the case of the Ndebele, they did not understand that many African customs were not long standing. Additionally, these customs might apply to only a few families or a small area and while they might generally apply they were more flexible than European ideas of tradition.⁵¹ While the European concept of tradition influenced many aspects of African life, it left the most

significant impact in two areas. First, it influenced the creation of tribes because it helped Europeans define these tribes by newly invented “tribal traditions.”⁵² Second, it influenced the social order by creating and justifying the colonial distinction that placed white colonizers as masters and Africans as servants. This second distinction was crucial for defining Europeans as modern and Africans as traditional.

The invention of tribal traditions was responsible for creating African customary law, land rights and political structures.⁵³ While it is understood that these existed before they were invented in the colonial system, they were not “age-old African custom[s].”⁵⁴ The laws were more responsive to the people, the land rights were more usufructuary in nature, and political structures changed dramatically based on rulers and other conditions such as droughts, famines, and trade conditions. The importance of the invention of tradition is not to emphasize that Africans did not have practices prior to European colonization. Rather, it is possible, if not probable, that in many cases practices became like traditions in some ways. What is significant is the concept of change. Once the Europeans codified these practices as immutable traditions, it was extremely difficult if not impossible for change to occur.⁵⁵ Whereas African customs had been flexible and responsive, they became rigid and unyielding. This is important because even if the codified traditions were liberal at the time, they would soon seem to be opposed to modernity.

The creation of tribal traditions also involved the creation of codified ceremonies. This was significant because it helped to focus the attention of the people on the ceremonial aspects of their local leaders and allowed the colonizers to strip them of most of their real ruling power.⁵⁶ Each tribe had different ceremonies stirring pride in each tribal unit and

separating the ability of the colonized to unite against the oppression of their colonizers. When this tactic was understood, anti-colonial African leaders realized that to counter it they needed to create nationalist traditions that superseded the tribal differences that had been created.⁵⁷ The African nationalist movement was the primary force in decolonization efforts. Celebrating national unity while recognizing tribal customs became an important balancing act for African leaders seeking a way to lead African countries through decolonization and into a post-colonial era.

The creation of master and servant classes was based on race and colonial status, yet it was couched in terms of tradition. It began because the European colonial project needed people willing to go to Africa to become shopkeepers and farmers. However, those who went to Africa to establish shops and raise crops did not want to be considered peasants. Therefore, the colonial governments appealed to them to help in the colonial project as gentlemen farmers and businessmen. By creating this class of people who expected to be treated as gentry, the Europeans needed to create a hierarchy in Africa that would reinforce this privileged status. The most obvious way to do this was by reformulating the idea of master and servant on the basis of race and colonial status. Because of their already prejudicial views, it was possible for the Europeans to view all of the colonized regardless of their social position as lesser than any European regardless of his or her social position. Therefore, the main distinction for master and servant was along racial lines. They also emphasized the difference between being a colonizer as a bringer of education, civilization and religion and being a colonial subject, a person who should feel privileged to receive these gifts. Thus, as Terence Ranger explains, “for most Europeans the favoured image of

their relationship with Africans was that of paternal master and loyal servant.”⁵⁸ This attitude did not confine itself to the social aspects or traditional servant occupations of colonial life. African industrial employees were subject to the Master and Servant Acts.⁵⁹ This language was specifically employed to elevate the colonizers at the expense of the colonized. It was justified because it appealed to the longstanding European traditions that established hierarchies within social society and the workplace.⁶⁰ The effect was to reinforce the idea that Africans are traditional and Europeans modern because Africans were only allowed to work in traditional jobs such as agriculture.⁶¹ Those who were involved in industrial employment were in the most dangerous and difficult manual laboring positions in mines and construction. A few were allowed to govern under the system of indirect rule, but these positions lacked significant ruling power and represented tokenism designed to placate the population.⁶² The overall effects were to reinforce inferiority based on race and define Africans as backward peoples in need of colonial control for their own protection and betterment.

Racism

Racism was one of the most significant elements that allowed African colonization to maintain separate classes of privileged colonizer and oppressed colonial subject. Racism, unlike the invention of tribes or traditions, cannot be traced to a specific legal act or set of practices. Rather, racism was both “an ally and the partial product of colonialism.”⁶³ Therefore, racism was a set of ideas that was already part of Western perception yet it would never have become as pervasive and insidious if colonialism had not been founded upon maintaining negative attitudes toward “non-Whites.” Racism has a long history. It is most

simply viewing non-Whites as inferior. However, racism is not only a viewpoint. It is a viewpoint that becomes codified socially or legally, or in both ways, to privilege a group over another solely because of the racial classification of these groups. Racism was prevalent in the early applications of “Otherizing.” The distinctions were made between fairer haired and less swarthy Europeans and those with darker hair and olive completions or suntans. Over time, it became more difficult to divide people based upon these physical differences because the colonizers mixed with the colonized. Through marriage and living in a different climate, these physical differences became blurred. The physical differences between Europeans and Africans, however, were more obvious. There were, however, several groups of Africans and individuals within African groups who could blend into European notions of whiteness. Many people of African background were able to pass for white, especially in areas where trade had been established and mulatto children were more common. Yet the distinctions between black and white were easier to maintain than distinctions of whiteness within European colonial endeavors. The physical differences of color were enhanced by cultural differences that helped separate Europeans and Africans. The main allies of racism based solely on skin color were the European obsession with hierarchy and the idea of pure specimens representative of each race.

The European obsession with hierarchy made it seem that the notion of hierarchy was natural. The entrenched idea that everything was hierarchical, and therefore value judgments could be made, reinforced the idea that everything different about a non-European culture must be inferior. Europeans ranked not only people, “but also artifacts and cultural practices (farming over nomadism, brick over thatch, melody over percussion).”⁶⁴ By ranking

everything, the colonizers further entrenched the idea that all things European were superior. Additionally, the obsession with hierarchy made Europeans, who were not in the highest group, seek ways to promote themselves either with real advantages or through symbolic acts that made them at least feel better about their lesser position. Thus, this explains why poorer Europeans were willing to ally themselves with the rich Europeans who exploited them. They were able to feel a part of the general class of European superiority even though they may have derived more tangible benefits from uniting with the colonized workers and demanding better treatment.⁶⁵ Moreover, even those colonizers in the highest class of European society needed to continually reinforce their superiority to maintain their status. Hierarchy preserved the position of the elite. Therefore, it was necessary to classify the cultural practices of the colonized as inferior. Then when something was similar, such as certain aspects of the Zulu tribe which Europeans admired, this admiration could merely be explained as a less developed sense of the ultimately superior elements of European society, thus proving, in a circular way, the idea that European society was the evolutionary pinnacle.

The focus on obtaining pure specimens of each race in the African colonies also helped entrench the notions of inferiority and superiority associated with racist attitudes. Europeans were not content merely to classify Africans. The impetus to classify Africans arose from the continual process of defining certain Europeans as indicative of the perfect physical features of their nation or group. The Aryan concept of superiority that rose to prominence with Hitler was also derived from the subtle notions of beauty and perfection that were associated with certain ideal European types. Thus, because Europeans had their own opinions of the best among them, they applied this idea to creating and defining the

racial models of certain groups. In Europe, most people did not resemble the European ideal. Similarly, the African types that were created were not fulfilled by the majority of people, thus making it possible for created tribes such as the Hutu and Tutsi to bear little similarity to the racial characteristics they were supposed to embody. The overall result was to make people race conscious and entrench general notions of African inferiority based on physical characteristics. This race consciousness and its corresponding artificiality had two results. During colonialism, the main distinctions were between the white colonizers and the black colonized. After colonialism, the notions of inferiority and superiority within the tribes as created and continually enhanced by the colonial power caused internal strife in certain instances between African groups that were in many ways, both superficial and substantial, remarkably similar. Thus, the effect of racism was to preserve white ruling power until the concept of colonialism was called into question and to make self-rule traumatic in many areas where tribal and racial differences were created by a persistent racist theory.

The colonization of Africa by Europeans was a time of great misunderstanding, adaptation, and political strategy. The assumption of inferiority based on race that the Europeans subscribed to influenced most of their stereotypes and opinions about Africans. They combined their racial attitudes with their limited understanding of tribes to create groups that would be best for the colonial endeavor. In the process, they created tensions and invented traditions that would mark Africans as primitive, war-like people opposed to modernity. Because African traditions were not codified as European traditions had been, Africans were also thought to be without the kind of significant history that Europeans had. This reinforced the view that Africans were inferior and culturally ignorant. The results of

colonization were many and forever changed African life. One of the lingering effects of colonialism is that it is still difficult to confront and eradicate the stereotypes and myths that have become ingrained in Western culture. The complexity of the various colonial efforts makes it difficult to understand the unnatural and invented origins of these prejudicial ideas. The effects of colonialism are still felt in the representation of Africa and Africans in U.S. media outlets, which do not see or choose not to notice that their characterization of Africa and Africans is beholden to the stereotypes and myths, which are the result of colonial prejudice.

Media Structure: Bias

The misrepresentation of Africa and Africans in the media is usually an unconscious practice. Yet at the same time, “the negative portrayal of Africa by the American [and European] media is a deliberate and systematic process that is created and sustained by the bias in the way American [and European] media select foreign news stories.”⁶⁶ The two main factors that allow Africa and Africans to be misrepresented are the success of colonialism in creating myths and stereotypes that are difficult to extricate from language and thought patterns and the structure of the media which makes it difficult to present news from Africa in ways that counter stereotypical ideas. Thus, while many journalists may not intend to misrepresent or perpetuate the negative image of Africa, the unacknowledged stereotypes and myths which the individuals hold, as well as the journalistic processes in constructing the news, preclude an alternative. In *News: The Politics of Illusion*, W. Lance Bennett discusses four structural media biases. These are:

1. The Personalization Bias
2. The Dramatization Bias

3. The Fragmentation Bias
4. The Authority-Disorder Bias⁶⁷

Bennett explains that the personalization bias is the media's focus on human-interest stories and the tendency to identify emotionally with these stories rather than present the larger social, economic, or political issues involved.⁶⁸ Additionally, the focus on emotion hinders analysis of the event and its implications in the political, economic and social arenas. Bennett notes that "the reasons for this are numerous—from the journalist's fear that probing analysis will turn off audiences to the relative ease of telling the human-interest story as opposed to explaining deeper causes and effects."⁶⁹

The dramatization bias is evidenced in what will subsequently be called "crisis" news. The media, as Bennett notes, is predicated on a narrative storytelling format. Narratives require drama or more accurately plot.⁷⁰ The plot of many news stories is either personal identification or "melodrama."⁷¹ If it is possible to combine both, this is also done. Examples of this will be seen in the case study of the famine in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The crisis news model captures drama well. As Bennett notes, crisis news follows a typical movie-like pattern that includes the "rising action [often of breaking stories], falling action, sharply drawn characters, and, of course, plot resolutions."⁷²

The crime story is the archetype of the crisis news model. Because of this, the media attempts to frame most crisis news in the same way as crime news by "focusing on arrests, number of injuries, and related statistics. Equating violent resistance with crime makes the 'event' easier to explain."⁷³ Crisis news is news primarily because the "dominant formula of journalism in the world is a journalism of exception."⁷⁴ Crises are exceptions to the normal order. However, the media is self-defeating in employing this approach because by focusing

primarily on crisis it normalizes crises and makes the exceptional seem not just average, but often only the tip of the iceberg. Thus, “pictures of violence often produce terrifying multiplication effects. Audiences tend to believe that the violent acts shown are merely a tiny sample.”⁷⁵ Bennett notes the importance of this type of imagery to television and print news in that “there is often, however, tension between not reporting important stories that are hard to picture and reporting possibly unimportant stories simply because they offer great visual images.”⁷⁶ The images of crisis become stand-ins for explanations of events and processes. Thus, TV news, in particular, as well as still images “construct a particular way of looking at the world.”⁷⁷ These “visual messages encode and, in turn, reinforce prevalent cultural attitudes and values” which are often stereotypes undergirded by myths.⁷⁸ “Coverage of foreign affairs is especially important since the viewing audience is less likely to have direct experience with life and issues in these societies and [is] therefore less able to assess the validity of the messages [it] receive[s].”⁷⁹ Furthermore, the lack of direct experience makes it difficult for audiences to realize that there might be other stories which are being neglected. “The very labeling of some situation as a ‘crisis’ [and therefore newsworthy] is in itself an ideological and political act. So is the failure to attribute crisis status to a particular situation.”⁸⁰ “The tendency is, therefore, for media to seek out crisis where it does not exist, and to obscure the actual forces of change. . . Paradoxically, this means that media will tend to pay even more attention to a fabricated crisis than to one that can stake a material claim to reality.” Thus, important political, economic and social concerns are neglected in favor of celebrity crisis news such as the O. J. Simpson trial or the death of Anna Nicole Smith.⁸¹

Bennett summarizes the fragmentation bias as “the isolation of stories from each other and from their larger context so that information in the news becomes fragmented and hard to assemble into a big picture.”⁸² Additionally, Bennett notes that “the fragmentation of information begins by emphasizing individual actors over the political contexts in which they operate.”⁸³ The fragmentation bias is a significant problem in the reporting of African news because it makes crises seem like “events rather than processes.”⁸⁴ Furthermore, the actors involved are usually limited to a few government spokespersons. Sweeping generalizations are often made in an attempt to explain an issue. Catch words and phrases such as corruption and communism are used as stand-ins for an analysis of the historical factors and persisting concerns. Decontextualized news “strip[s] it of its social relevance and value.”⁸⁵ The overall impression many Westerners feel after reading or watching news regarding Africa is a general sense that the Africans have a lot of problems that they either can’t or don’t want to fix and there is little anyone else can do to help.

One of the primary reasons for the overgeneralized coverage of Africa that reveals how little the Western media understands Africa is the “safari tradition” of the media in Africa.⁸⁶ This refers to the tendency of the media to plunge into African issues when they become a hot news item and then leave a few weeks (or days) later. This is particularly a problem for the U.S. media. The European news agencies tend to dedicate more journalists to representing Africa and stationing them there. The U.S. journalists, however, feel that Africa may be a place to start a career or break a great story, but it isn’t worthy of the dedication of a lifetime. Therefore, these journalists who present news from Africa do not have the time (or often the inclination) to investigate the context for the events. The result is

reports focusing mainly on what is happening and not why. It is then easier to close the story by focusing on the emotional aspects. This reinforces the idea that the situation is hopeless. The appeal to emotion substitutes for a real understanding of the situation, which would reveal that there are possible remedies.

The authority-disorder bias concerns the media's intense concern for order and their reliance on authority and official sources. In order to present emotionally charged crises, the media focuses on disruptions of order. The news relies on government leaders and field experts to comment on situations. Often political leaders, police, and scientists merely state what they know to be the case. The media then layers this with an increasingly challenging and critical tone.⁸⁷ The Western media is often held to be a watchdog. This challenging and critical tone seems to be in keeping with this role. However, the critical tone often covers a lack of actual investigation and in foreign news studies have shown that the media primarily reports the official stance of the government.⁸⁸ As Asgede Hagos notes, in many instances the media seems to act "like a lapdog whose main mission is to protect, legitimize and reinforce the status quo."⁸⁹ One of the interesting results is that the media challenges the officials it cites, but ultimately relies on their information to close the news story.⁹⁰ Thus, while Bennett demonstrates that the authority-disorder bias is an interrelated problem, there are two simpler biases that form this more complex problem. First, the media relies heavily on official sources about which it is selective in questioning. Second, the media focuses on issues of order and disorder to the extent that it seems that order is valued above other concerns such as fairness. This is particularly prominent in foreign news where disagreement is seen as threatening and the primary goal is to maintain stability rather than

resolve the issues. When issues reach the stage of conflict, blame must be assigned. While in some conflicts it is clearly possible to see a good and an evil (a common example being the extermination of the Jews during World War II), many conflicts start because there are two legitimate or, at the very least, understandable concerns that it is difficult to resolve. The Cold War Framework within the media addresses these issues.

Media Structure: The Cold War & Good vs. Evil Framework

As mentioned in the introduction, when the media has a paradigm for viewing an event it is very difficult to see that the paradigm ignores essential information. The Cold War framework, through which most foreign news was reported from the end of World War II through the 1980s, involved seeing all conflicts outside of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. as East-West battles over influence, territory, or “the hearts and minds” of the people in those areas.⁹¹ In the Western media, which is generally thought to be Europe (not Eastern Europe) and the United States, this battle meant that the West was right and good epitomizing freedom while the East as represented by the U.S.S.R. was wrong and evil. The opposite of freedom in this case was not enslavement but communism, Marxism, or socialism. These three words were often used to encapsulate the complex ideas of evil, fear, and threat and the need to thwart them. When the media drew the outlines of a conflict and called one side the Marxists or noted that a certain group was using Soviet weaponry, the implication was that these were the bad guys. No further explanations were needed and usually none were given.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the U.S.S.R., however, the Cold War framework no longer exists. However, the remnants of it remain in the media’s need to find heroes and villains in each conflict. Additionally, since the attacks on the World Trade

Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001, the substitute for the Cold War Framework has been terrorism. Although the Obama administration recently decided to discontinue the use of the term “War on Terror,” the media’s interest in terrorism and related topics is still high.⁹² Overall, the post-Cold War structure for understanding not only conflict but disagreement globally is the new more generalized structure of good vs. evil.⁹³ This presents an additional challenge both for the media and the media consumer. First, the media must identify the side it is going to take, whereas during the cold war this was easier to determine. This is still relatively easy when the national government is involved and has its stance, as the Western media generally supports its national government. However, the media sometimes reports on issues in which the government is not actively promoting a side. The challenge for the media consumer is greater in that it was relatively easy to notice the bias against other groups by the labels used, such as the references to their socialist tendencies or their known associations with communists. It is now more difficult as a news consumer to determine why the media chooses its heroes and its villains. The overall effect is that the news regarding these events is presented as an argument. The sides have been taken. The news is not allowing the media consumer to make an informed choice based on equal information. It has been argued that it is extremely difficult to present all the facts or present them without personal opinion or influence. This is not disputed. However, it is possible to present both or multiple sides of an issue and give the pros and cons of each within one’s understanding. Additionally, the media is not presenting itself as trying to persuade the media consumers. The news media is supposed to be an information outlet. If it was widely understood and accepted that the news was taking sides and presenting an

argument rather than hailed as “objective,” these methods would be less objectionable. However, the media is able to seem “objective” because of its presentation of sources.

The interesting point about the use of sources is that it enables news media to claim impartiality and objectivity while manifesting partiality; that is, impartiality in the professional journalistic sense (not making personal comments on events being reported) is preserved by quoting a source who is able to present simultaneously a partial account of the event (pass subjective judgment on the event about which he has been approached for information). The selection and quotation of the source is the main strategy by which a news reporter, bound by the principles of factuality and impartiality in his own formulations, can add political opinion or bias to a news story without ostensibly violating the formal rules of professional objectivity.⁹⁴

As Bennett noted in his explanation of the personalization bias, analysis is difficult and journalists worry that it will be uninteresting to media consumers. In order to simplify the process of conveying complex news stories, especially those concerning disagreement or conflict, the media often unwittingly chooses sides and creates heroes and villains. This approach to foreign news in addition to the structural biases makes it difficult for the media to notice that they are perpetuating stereotypes and myths in presenting African news.

Statistical Analysis of Coverage of Africa in the Western Media

In addition to the problems of misrepresentation, one of the major issues regarding African news is underrepresentation. For many years, journalists have attempted to justify the lack of coverage of Africa because of the expense and difficulty of obtaining information. As new technology, increased democracy, and less censorship within Africa makes access

and transmission easier, these arguments are more difficult to sustain. The following statistical information demonstrates that underrepresentation in the Western media continues. Table 2 shows the number of stories for each country appearing in the International section of the *New York Times* for one week. Table 3 shows the number of stories for each country appearing in the World section of the *Economist* for one week. Both tables demonstrate that Africa receives the least coverage of any continent. In both news sources, Africa accounts for only 9% of international news. There are other interesting trends worth noting. As the *New York Times* is based in the U.S. and the *Economist* is based in the U.K., it is clear that although these are both Western media sources, their different locations influence their news priorities. The most heavily covered international news topic for the *New York Times* was the mid-east. However, this was the least covered area in the *Economist*. Of the three continents considered to be part of the Third World (Asia, Latin America, and Africa), Africa received substantially less coverage than the other two areas in the *New York Times*. The numerical difference in the *Economist* is less pronounced, but it is clear that Africa is not a significant priority.

Table 2

The New York Times									
Section	Number of Articles by Date							Section Total	
	3.1.10	3.2.10	3.3.10	3.4.10	3.5.10	3.6.10	3.7.10		
Mid-East	5	6	6	6	5	6	2	36	31%
Africa	2	2	2	0	1	2	1	10	9%
Americas	2	3	5	2	5	1	3	21	18%
Asia	1	2	2	5	2	2	1	15	13%
Europe	2	8	2	4	6	3	1	26	22%
U.S.	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	2%
Other*	0	3	0	1	0	1	1	6	5%
Total	12	24	18	19	19	15	9	116	100%

These statistics were gathered from the online version of the International section of the print edition of the *New York Times* distributed via the Adobe AIR Times Reader. As this content is continually changing, a direct link to this content cannot be provided. *The New York Times* online is available at www.nytimes.com.

* The Other section includes articles which are difficult to categorize such as those concerning countries from different sections. The articles for March 6th and March 7th included in the Other section concerned Iceland.

Table 3

The Economist		
Section	Number of Articles	Percentage of Articles
Middle East & Africa	2	4%
	5	9%
Americas	6	11%
Asia	6**	11%
Britain	8	14%
Europe	9	16%
U.S.	17	31%
International	2	4%
Total	55	100%

These statistics were gathered from the online version of the World section of the February 18, 2010 print edition of *The Economist*. As this content is continually changing, a direct link to this content cannot be provided. *The Economist* online is available at www.economist.com.

** This section contains an article from the Africa section since it concerns both African and Asian countries. Therefore, it is a duplicate. The unduplicated total number of articles for Asia is 6.

Case Studies: Coverage of African News

In addition to increased coverage, however, African news must also challenge the stereotypes and myths which cause current coverage to misrepresent Africa. The following four examples demonstrate the history and evolution of this misrepresentation from the 1950s to the present.

The Mau Mau in Kenya

One of the defining moments in journalism in Africa was the media's representation of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya in the 1950s. The images and language used to portray this movement set the stage for further coverage of national liberation struggles in the following decades. It is important to stress again the crucial role of language since "political events are largely creations of the language we use to describe them."⁹⁵ This is clearly evidenced in the media's descriptions of the Mau Mau movement. In addition to defining the parameters of discourse on national liberation struggles, the media's coverage of the Mau Mau movement also created "ways of seeing" Africa in the post-colonial period.⁹⁶ The combination of the already entrenched stereotypes and myths regarding Africa and the media's framework for viewing Africa made it possible to continue to see a negative, mythical Africa several decades after most African countries had achieved independence.

The Mau Mau movement was essentially an armed peasant revolt. The reason for the revolt was land rights. The colony of Kenya was a white settler colony focusing on commercial farming. The issue of land rights was paramount because of the "intolerable economic conditions of the African masses."⁹⁷ However, "the colonial government was not at all convinced that these problems required a radical and urgent solution to the question of

land ownership. A consistent view of the government was that white settlers' occupation of the highlands had to be protected at all costs."⁹⁸ It would be very important once the conflict started that the British strongly disassociate the Mau Mau from any economic motivations. "If the revolt was not 'the child of economic conditions,' then the settlers and the government were not to be seen as the heartless villains whose policies had triggered the revolt, but rather as victims of unprovoked barbarous assault by Africans under the spell of magic and foul oaths."⁹⁹

The Mau Mau revolt began in 1952 with peasant warriors committing themselves by oath to fight the British. Their weaponry consisted primarily of knives and sometimes included pistols. In comparison to the British arsenal, they "were no match for Bren guns and automatic rifles."¹⁰⁰ However, the revolt was not short-lived, ending in 1956 with the capture and death of Dedan Kimathi, an essential leader.

The media representation of the Mau Mau movement focused on several aspects intended to discredit the rebels. First, the revolt was framed as a criminal enterprise. Second, the media gave a great deal of attention to the oath taking practice. Third, the Mau Mau was imagined as a secret society with links to communism. Finally, the rebellion was described, but never properly explained. Therefore, the rebels were considered to be fighting "without cause."¹⁰¹

The first tactic by the British colonial government which was supported via the media was to describe the rebels as criminals. The British government never recognized the Mau Mau as a liberation movement. The British government accused the "most prominent nationalist leader," Jomo Kenyatta, of collusion with the rebels and brought him and his

associates to trial in 1952-1953. While Kenyatta's lawyers attempted to argue that "their clients had no criminal case to answer [and]... African nationalism [was] on trial" rather than any criminal activity, this failed and "the judge sentenced Kenyatta and his associates to seven years of imprisonment with hard labor."¹⁰² The publicity of the trial further cemented the links between criminality and the Mau Mau movement. In order to remain viable political representatives, Kenyatta and his associates were required to distance themselves from the Mau Mau movement.¹⁰³

One of the primary interests of the media was the Mau Mau oaths. These oaths were discussed extensively as evidence of a "reversion to [a] primitive barbaric mentality."¹⁰⁴ The media was clever in its discussion of the oaths, as Wunyabari O. Maloba notes:

[They] found details about these oaths to be so nauseating and objectionable as to be 'unfit for general publication.' Leaving the details unpublished was just as effective as publishing them for the public (local and foreign) was left to indulge in extravagant imagination as to how foul these oaths really were and also to believe any stories or rumors that sounded incredible.¹⁰⁵

Additionally, the media made the act of oaths seem like a barbaric custom. This was particularly skillful in that oath-taking is a common practice in European society. Oaths are part of legal proceedings in pledging to tell the truth while swearing on a Bible. Additionally, many societies, fraternities and men's clubs required initiation ceremonies and secret oaths. Furthermore, the British concept of the honor of a man's word is predicated on the accepted belief that a verbal promise is equivalent to an oath or pledge. Thus, the ability to make oath-taking seem like a foreign and barbaric practice was a particularly clever

accomplishment of the British in their use of the media for propaganda purposes. The oaths themselves were initially “deemed harmless by the government because ‘it did not require the initiate to do anything, it merely demanded his silence and sympathy.’”¹⁰⁶ The oath involved a night ceremony in a hut with the oath-taker pledging to support the Mau Mau. The oath-taker held a ball of damp soil against his or her stomach while taking the oath. “The initiates were expected through this ceremony to be blood brothers and so they licked each other’s blood or ate a piece of meat on which each initiate’s blood had been smeared.”¹⁰⁷ While this may be unhygienic, the concept of blood brothers is a part of Western society as well.¹⁰⁸ These oaths were by far the most common; they were known as unity oaths. However, the tide of British feeling regarding the oath-taking practice changed with the introduction of the advanced oaths which allegedly involved “sexual symbolism.”¹⁰⁹ Since each initiate was required to keep the ceremony and oath details a secret, it is important to note that these details are known because the initiates were captured and tortured, intimidated or intensely interrogated.¹¹⁰ Other means of gathering this information include spying and bribery.¹¹¹ Therefore, the reliability of this information is questionable. The information regarding the unity oath described above is probably more accurate than accounts of the advanced oaths which were fewer and varied greatly.¹¹² Overall, however, the media represented the concept of oaths as barbaric which was a significant propaganda accomplishment for the British as it created a highly negative image of the Mau Mau movement at the same time that it distracted media consumers from interest in trying to understand why the Mau Mau were rebelling.

There were two ways the media framed the reasons for the rebellion. First, they associated the rebels with communism and secret societies. This assumed that the revolt was due to either the external influence of communism (which was not actually a factor) or a lust for secrecy and a return to primitive collusion, as embodied in the media interpretation of the oaths. Second, the media side-stepped explaining why the rebels were fighting by focusing on how they were fighting.

As Wunyabari Maloba explains, “occurring against the background of Cold War between East and West, it was easy and expected for the settlers and their supporters to see communist plots behind every form of nationalist agitation.”¹¹³ This was not only due to the Cold War framework, but also to the still prevalent idea that Africans did not have ideas of their own. Therefore, the idea of African nationalism or a real sense of understanding and desire for freedom and self-government must be inspired by some external (white) foreigners. Additionally, the focus on secrecy was essential to creating the conditions to prosecute the political leaders as part of “an unlawful secret and criminal society.”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, secrecy played well into the idea of not disclosing the actual content of the oaths and fostering generalized fear. While linking the Mau Mau movement to communism and focusing on aspects of secrecy helped the media shy away from covering why the rebels were fighting, by far the most significant way in which they were able to divert attention from the reasons for conflict was through descriptions of the fighting.

The media reduced the Mau Mau to two elements: “oaths and atavism.”¹¹⁵ This was accomplished by emphasizing particular acts during the conflict. Wunyabari Maloba provides the following example:

In its issue of November 10, 1952, *Time* magazine devoted two pages of pictures to Mau Mau. On one page was the picture of a dead cat ‘left hanging from a bent sapling in a forest clearing’ which bore a threat ‘written in blood that any person who works for whites will be destroyed by the power of the Oath.’ The magazine also suggested without proof that Mau Mau were in the general habit of ‘nailing headless cats to their victims’ doors.’¹¹⁶

These details helped the media portray the Mau Mau as a group senselessly motivated to cruelly destroy the benevolent white settlers. However,

the foreign press did not stop at merely showing that the revolt was senseless. Most of the coverage consistently described in emotive and graphic imagery the killings attributed to the Mau Mau. As far as possible, the stories never failed to mention that the victims had been ‘hacked to pieces.’ This tendency toward an emotive and graphic imagery was particularly employed if the victims were white.¹¹⁷

The *New York Times* focused primarily on the difference in technology of the rebels in saying that the cause of revolt was primarily “the frustrations of a savage people neither mentally nor economically able to adjust itself to the swift pace of civilization.”¹¹⁸ The Mau Mau’s less advanced weaponry and different agricultural methods were viewed as behind the times and evidence of British superiority. What all the attention on the fighting neglected was the fact that during the entire “state of emergency only thirty-two settlers were killed by Mau Mau, although the general impression created by the press and government propaganda machinery seemed to suggest that the ‘highlands were strewn with eviscerated bodies of white settlers.’”¹¹⁹ The media was also able to focus primarily on the fighting tactics of the

Mau Mau. The methods of the British were not examined. However, the “chief characteristic of the war against the Mau Mau was brutality.”¹²⁰ The media focus was on the brutality of the Mau Mau instead. Yet the British killed over 11,500 Mau Mau while the Mau Mau killed less than 2,100 British security forces and European, Asian and African citizens.¹²¹ The vast majority of the 2,100 killed by the Mau Mau was non-Mau Mau Africans and totaled over 1,800.¹²²

The overwhelming effect of media coverage for the Mau Mau movement was to delegitimize African nationalism and liberation movements and to define the terms in which to do this. The discourse for presenting African national liberation movements would continue to be in terms of the primitive versus the civilized. Moreover, the Cold War framework would be employed to rationalize these distinctions. What was lost in media coverage of the Mau Mau and subsequent African national liberation movements was the real reasons Africans were willing, after decades of colonialism, to finally take up arms.

Ethiopia and Eritrea: Media Coverage of Conflict and Famine

In 1952, the former Italian colony of Eritrea became a part of Ethiopia with UN sanction. The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was formed in 1958. For over 30 years the Eritreans fought against the Ethiopians for an independent government. In 1991, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front, which had split from ELF in 1970, captured Asmara, the capital of Eritrea and established a government. In 1993, the Eritreans voted nearly unanimously for full independence from Ethiopia.¹²³ The causes and issues involved in a thirty year war are complex. During this time the leaders changed as well as the attitudes of various groups.

These changes influenced not only the direction of the conflict but also the perception of the conflict in the Western media.

The Western media did not pay much attention to this 30 year conflict. The conflict presented a major difficulty for the media in that it was difficult to apply the Cold War framework to the Ethiopians and Eritreans because both subscribed to Marxist ideas. Robert Kaplan noted this in *The Atlantic Monthly* when he said “the fact that the rebels—like the government—are themselves Marxists, takes the sting out of the story. How can you tell the good guys from the bad?”¹²⁴ One of the major concerns of the media is defining the sides. The media tends to limit stories to two sides. This is presented as “balanced” journalism, but it is lacking in several ways. First, there are often more than two opinions. In this situation, the opinions of the U.S. were covered significantly more than what would seem to be most relevant—the concerns of the Ethiopians and Eritreans. Additionally, the motivations of the U.S.S.R. were also a factor as well as other countries linked to the U.S.S.R. such as Cuba. Furthermore, the need to create heroes and villains dismisses and delegitimizes certain views before they have even had a chance to be explained. In the Ethiopian and Eritrean conflict, there was no saintly hero. Everyone, including the external governments of the U.S. and U.S.S.R., made mistakes and acted self-interestedly or with little concern for issues such as human rights. Because the conflict lacked easily identifiable heroes and villains, the media neglected to explain the competing causes for the conflict. The Ethiopians were committed to unity for two primary reasons. They viewed their territory as having thousands of years of history. Therefore, Italian colonialism was “merely a temporary, artificial interruption of a pre-existing cultural and territorial unity” with Eritrea.¹²⁵ The second and equally important

reason why the Ethiopians were committed to unity was because if Eritrea was made an independent state it would block Ethiopian access to water and could disrupt trade.¹²⁶ The Eritreans' primary reason for desiring independence stemmed from a feeling that they were united by their experience of struggle during colonialism. "Eritrean nationalist discourse contends that shared experiences of Italian colonialism unified various ethnic groups in Eritrea and that this experience is comparable to that of other colonized areas that later became independent states."¹²⁷ These fundamentally differing views were at the heart of the conflict and desire for either independence or unity. These issues were not discussed by the media. The primary concern of the Western media was the impact the conflict had on the East-West dynamic and in particular the stance the U.S. government should take. As the U.S. government had several leaders during this 30 year period of conflict, the decisions regarding the government's stance changed with the changes in leadership. The main trends in coverage of the conflict were to deny the legitimacy of the Eritrean national liberation movement in the 1970s and then to focus primarily on the famine in the 1980s. As Asgede Hagos notes, "the *New York Times* continually refused to recognize the Eritrean people's right to self-determination. In fact, both newspapers [the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*] labeled it "secessionist" and never even seriously considered the political issue behind the armed struggle. The Eritrean issue was discussed only as part of the larger East-West conflict and the *New York Times* raised the legitimacy of the movement and concluded that it was not a "tribally-based secessionist movement" and therefore, delegitimized it as a national liberation struggle.¹²⁸ Additionally, the media has difficulty in presenting conflict between different groups of black Africans as understandable.¹²⁹ There is

an assumption that all black people should be united. This same assumption does not apply to white people, as Eastern Europeans are allowed to disagree and want different homelands as demonstrated by the Balkan conflict. Thus, “diversity of nationhood is accepted for the white world” but not for others.¹³⁰ This underlying assumption of black unity made it difficult for the press to present the conflict as legitimate. Their only context for legitimizing black disunity was through the concept of tribe and since neither group was claiming to be tribally different as there were many tribes that composed each group, this made the claim for national unity as Eritreans difficult for the media to grasp and even more difficult for them to explain and show to news audiences. This understanding of the conflict and the limited coverage of it provides context for exploring the media’s role in presenting the famine which received significant coverage in the 1980s. The key to these two stories was that “the media viewed the Horn according to either a famine or a war frame, which were consistently kept separate.”^{131v}

To understand the coverage of the famine, it is essential to understand what famine is. “Absolute food shortages are less an explanation for famine than reduced accessibility due to pricing, inflation and transportation. Famine is a catastrophe caused by human agency although often triggered by environmental factors. People starve not because food is unavailable but because they cannot afford it.”¹³² Therefore, famine is necessarily tied to politics since it is often political tactics that are the human agency that create famine conditions. The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea was not linked to the famine by the media. The famine was “a slow-building disaster that had arisen over a period of years and

^v The Horn of Africa is the Northeastern peninsula of Africa. The countries included in this designation are not always clear, but it always includes Ethiopia and Eritrea.

had been predicted long before starvation occurred.”¹³³ Ultimately, intervention could have prevented the famine. However, the media chose not to cover the story until it reached a crisis point. “Relief agencies had approached the media repeatedly throughout the previous year, urging them to publicize the impending disaster, there was little interest in Africa, and warnings of imminent starvation were ignored.”¹³⁴ In September 1983, images of the starvation were given to CBS which declined to run the story because they “did not depict people actually dying of starvation.”¹³⁵ “Famine in Africa was dismissed from the news agenda [at this time] because it was considered low in entertainment value.”¹³⁶ “It was only when a crisis had been reached and when the most sensational scenes of suffering were available for the cameras that famine became a news item.”¹³⁷ This was possible because it could engage audiences emotionally and had the requisite crisis elements. In October 1984, the famine was presented as “inexplicable” and “an emergency that struck without warning.”¹³⁸ One of the primary concerns of the media was to lay blame for the famine. First, they blamed the U.S.S.R. for not providing relief. Then they placed more culpability on the U.S.S.R. because of Marxist agricultural practices.¹³⁹ The idea of “African failures” was prominently used to explain that Africans had brought this on themselves and if they had only subscribed to capitalism instead they would be all right.¹⁴⁰ The West, in contrast to both the U.S.S.R. and the corrupt and greedy Ethiopian government, was seen as a charitable hero coming to the rescue.¹⁴¹ This simplistic view neglected the reasons for African poverty and the fact that capitalism creates further disparities between rich and poor. The Ethiopian government was particularly vilified for using starvation as a tactic against the Eritreans. “However, there was little criticism of Western attempts to manipulate famine for political

objectives, such as the deliberate 1982 decision by the U.S. National Security Council to withhold food from Ethiopia in order to destabilize the . . . regime and force changes in its policies.”¹⁴² The ultimate message is that the same standards do not apply to the U.S.—what is okay for us is not okay for you.^{vi} The trend is to emphasize certain external factors such as the influence of communism while ignoring equally or more important external influences, especially those that concern historical information or processes.¹⁴³

The media coverage of the famine was as a spectacle of crisis. Because those suffering were Africans, it was possible to objectify their suffering and wait until they were dying to bother to cover it. One journalist even acknowledged that had the photographs been less graphic there may not have been coverage even though people were starving to death. “In other countries the situation may be just as desperate but it’s not quite as graphic;” therefore, these people starve and die without the press considering it newsworthy and without international intervention.¹⁴⁴

The coverage of the Eritrean national liberation movement followed the mechanisms the press had established with the Mau Mau movement. “The elite newspapers saw [national liberation movements] as products of the radical and communist influence that threatened American interests in the continent during the post-[World War II] period in general and during the seventies and eighties in particular.”¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, as the Mau Mau movement was characterized as senseless, both sides of the Ethiopian-Eritrean issue were characterized in this way because it was difficult for the media to choose sides when both groups were

^{vi} The U.S. food aid strategy was to provide “just enough food to enable Eritreans to survive and pressure the Derg [Ethiopian government], simultaneously giving most of its aid to the latter, and presenting itself as a charitable humanitarian. Western aid to Eritrea, provided through nongovernmental organizations and restricted to relief rather than developmental assistance, was kept at minimal levels. Most aid went through the Derg, which was unable and unwilling to feed Eritrea.” Sorenson 159.

Marxists.¹⁴⁶ Africans were of secondary or even tertiary importance “in events that occur[ed] within [their] own borders.”¹⁴⁷ Regarding the famine, the press seized this as an issue that could be presented to fulfill its paradigms. It could be presented as a personalized emotional issue. It was fragmented in that it was separated from the conflict as well as historical and contemporary processes. Additionally, the story was not dramatized until it had reached a crisis point. Finally, the authority of Western governments was invoked to calm people and let them know that the Western hero was doing everything it could to return order to the lives of the famine victims. The media had subscribed to two important myths in their coverage of the conflict and famine. The first is the myth of the lack of progress. The media equated capitalism and technology with progress toward an undefined goal that would have prevented famine. Because the Ethiopians and Eritreans chose socialism instead, they were failures. Additionally, the hopelessness myth is present in that Ethiopia was presented as a lost cause. The West was going to intervene to bring food, but it could not save these people from themselves. The result is that “Ethiopia now serves as a symbol for disaster.”¹⁴⁸ These underlying mythical structures, in addition to racism, stereotypical notions of savagery and perceptually limiting news frameworks, help to explain why media coverage of both the conflict and the famine was superficial and misguided.

Cell Phone Use in Africa

This case study involves a primarily economic issue focused on a technological item. The *New York Times* and CNN reported on cell phone use in Africa in 2005 and 2008 respectively. While each of these articles offers valuable information, they both presented language and ideas which reinforce certain mythical notions regarding Africa. The *New*

York Times article begins this by its very title: “Cell Phones Catapult Rural Africa to 21st century.”¹⁴⁹ This presents the myth of the timeless present. Regardless of the technology Africans use, they are fundamentally a part of the 21st century. They do not need to be “catapulted” into a time where they already live, work, eat, and sleep. This is a denigrating way of speaking about people. It promotes the idea that technology makes people better than those without that technology.

The main focus of the article is Bekowe Skhakhane who lives in Yanguye, South Africa. The article further states that “Bekowe Skhakhane does even the simplest tasks the hard way.”¹⁵⁰ It seems like she has a choice to do them some other less challenging way, but does not choose to do so. Furthermore, there seems to be an equivocation between simple and unimportant. But this is not so. She gathers water, cooks, and lights a fire. These are essential tasks and they are difficult, but not unimportant. What is actually easy is using her mobile phone, although this is made to seem like it is more important than her other activities because it involves technology.

The myth of the lack of progress is felt throughout the article’s focus on rural Africa. While some mention of non-rural cell phone use is made, the focus is on usage by rural Africans. This is not an unworthy story. However, the fact that most news stories from Africa do not concern urban Africa makes it difficult for Western audiences to see that Africa is not entirely rural. There is a distinct difference between the lives of city-dwelling Africans and rural Africans and these differences are not often acknowledged. Images of urban Africa are few. Therefore, this promotes the idea that Africa is developmentally incapable of growth, stagnant, static and therefore technologically unprogressive. The use of

cell phones in rural Africa is met with surprise primarily because the author is operating under the assumption that Africa is inherently technologically backward.

The third myth that is prevalent is the notion of African continuity. The *New York Times* article, however, mentions that South Africa is the richest African nation, but does not make this understandable in the context of Bekowe Skhakhane's rural lifestyle. Both the Congo and Nigeria are mentioned as other African countries to note their cell phone usage. While it is noted that the Congo was experiencing a war and a cell phone tower had to be made locally because foreign companies were not willing to deliver towers to the rebel guarded airport, the vast differences between these three nations are not mentioned. It is noted that Nigeria lacked the infrastructure for a significant amount of the construction that was required for the towers, but the reasons for this were not mentioned. Africa is a highly diverse continent. The differences between these countries are crucial to understanding the differences in implementation of cell phone towers and reasons for cell phone usage. However, the media often feels that it is possible to discuss Africa as one place.

The second article is from CNN and also presents the myth of the lack of progress and extends the myth of African continuity. The article reinforces the idea that Africans are technologically backward through the idea that Africans are catching up with Western countries in their use of cell phones. The numbers of African cell phone users are "startling."¹⁵¹ While Westerners view cell phones as a "fashion accessory" they are a necessity for Africans who lack other communications technologies.¹⁵² The main criticism is not in the factual differences between usage of cell phones in African countries and Western countries. The issue is that because these differences exist there is an implication that

Western countries are somehow better. The Western countries may offer more advantages to certain groups, who can afford cell phones, but this does not make Western people more valuable or worthy as the underlying notions seem to suggest. There is a sense that use and understanding of technology makes you a more valuable person. This is the main notion of this article that should be questioned.

The myth of African continuity is extended in this article by the many references to different African, Asian and Latin American countries. While the author may be trying to provide useful information by offering statements of what is going on elsewhere, the impression is that the Third World is very similar. The statements concerning rates of usage in different African countries are confusing, since little context is provided to understand why one million people use cell phones in the Congo, but only 200,000 use them in Chad.¹⁵³ The author explains that Chad is the fifth least developed African country, but no similar standing is given for the Congo or any of the other African countries mentioned.¹⁵⁴ The author then jumps to describing a program in the Philippines. The only connection to Africa is that a similar program is planned for Rwanda and Uganda, but this is the first mention of these African countries which are never mentioned again in the article.¹⁵⁵ There is a sense that this article is attempting to provide a wide overview of wireless technology use in the Third World, but in order to understand the conclusions it is necessary to know significantly more about these nations. Those with less background understanding of these countries would be left with a feeling that a bunch of poor countries are using cell phones without an understanding of how this is possible. Thus, the idea of African continuity has been extended to generalized Third World continuity.

Overall, the myths presented in these two cell phone articles range from the somewhat obvious characterization of the timeless present in the use of the phrase “catapult rural Africa to the 21st century” to the more subtle in regard to notions of progress and conceptual continuity. The importance of the subtle myths is that they create unconscious attitudes which define Africa as less important and less capable than the West. This disadvantages African nations and people as global political and economic actors and newsmakers.

Zimbabwe

In 2008 there were several issues in Zimbabwe that had reached crisis levels and therefore fit well into the media’s crisis framework. The media reported on the rising levels of inflation, the cholera epidemic, the disputed election results and overall concerns regarding hunger, poverty, and economic distress. The main concern the coverage of Zimbabwe presents is that these issues were stressed in such negative terms as to invoke the hopelessness myth. Additionally, the possibility of resolution was neglected. These are important issues and they should be addressed by the media; however, they should be analyzed for possible solutions, rather than concluding that the situation is hopeless. The media immediately framed these issues around the idea of crisis, noting that these issues were crises in the titles of articles and the captions for TV coverage.¹⁵⁶ When a resolution of the election problem was achieved, via a power-sharing agreement between the long-standing president (Robert Mugabe) and his prime rival (Morgan Tsvangirai), who would become prime minister, the news coverage shifted the story from a top story of interest to a minor mention or a back page, if they covered it at all.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, the focus was on

African failures and no mention of wider political or economic issues was given. That U.S. and European governments and international agencies (World Bank/IMF) failed to keep their promises was not seriously entertained. The only one to criticize the role of the West was Mugabe himself.¹⁵⁸ Since his credibility was effectively destroyed by his role in the election violence, the media's quoting of his criticism of the West was effectively a dismissal of any possible culpability of Western governments or agencies. Furthermore, the news media only presented authority points of view from Mugabe and Tsvangirai and these views were primarily from staged press conferences. The opinions of average citizens are unknown. Additionally, it is unclear why the opinions of average citizens are not given. Is it because the government was preventing access or because the journalists do not consider it worthwhile to ask the average citizen of Zimbabwe his or her opinion? The spotty coverage and focus on crisis news reinforced the hopelessness of the situation even when there was cause for hope in the power-sharing agreement. The focus on "African failures" painted the situation as an internal problem with the West once again trying to determine how this problem could have happened. If historical or economic analysis had been employed, the roots of these problems would not have been mysterious.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has touched on many aspects of media coverage of Africa. The specific stereotypes and myths that are perpetuated by the media and have their origins in colonialism have been examined. Statistical analysis demonstrates that Africa is underrepresented by the media. The structural media biases have been explained and explored in the context of several case studies. The myths of Africa have also been

confronted in specific news events that span the decolonization period and post-colonial eras. The undeniable conclusion is that the media reinforces a negative view of Africa by the way in which it presents news from Africa. Several factors combine to make this possible. First, the unexplored stereotypes of Africa form the basis of “knowledge” regarding Africans. The structural components of news coverage select coverage of African news so that it is negative, crisis based, fragmented, emotional, and dependent on sources of authority that neglect relevant points of view. Finally, the combination of general attitudes, structural bias and economic decisions have made Africa seem less important than other newsmakers. Coverage of Africa is, therefore, limited to the negative primarily because negative news is seen as the only legitimate type of news.¹⁵⁹ Because African countries are not considered as important, their story is solely negative, while European nations, the U.S. and occasionally other Third World countries (particularly those in Asia) are allowed a multi-dimensional view through an occasional positive story, this type of news is not considered as valuable. There is a false correlation between good news and propaganda. Additionally, good news is viewed as less critical and the media seems as if it is neglecting its “watchdog” duties if it is describing an accomplishment. However, as the preceding analysis has demonstrated, the sense of criticism far outweighs actual analysis and judgment rendered by the media in its reporting of negative news. Overall, the problem is that where it is possible to see the West as primarily accomplished but with problems, it is not even possible to see Africa as primarily struggling but with even a ray of hope. The idea that anything positive occurs in Africa is obscured by media coverage of the single negative story.

Therefore, the question is not has there been any coverage of Africa or an improvement of coverage from some previous period of even less representation or more pervasive misrepresentation. The questions are: Why is Africa still so poorly represented in the international news media and when the issues are covered why are they so often misrepresented? The answers to these questions have been provided by an analysis of historical processes. The overwhelming success of colonialism is not that the colonial powers have maintained direct control, but that their indirect influence through the way people use language and think about people and places continues to disadvantage Africa and Africans. Africa, home of an estimated 1 billion people in 2010, is not considered a significant international newsmaker.¹⁶⁰ News from Africa is based on its impact on Westerners, which is interpreted to be negligible. The overwhelming content of news from Africa is negative and portrays Africa in constant crisis and failure.

There are three ways in which it is possible to break free from these problematic representations of Africa. The first is to attempt to understand African events from the point of view of Africans and those experiencing them. The second is to carefully examine the language and story frameworks used to report these events. The third is to attempt to present a broader view of Africa and not limit Africa to a single negative story. The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Africa are linked problems. It is not helpful to Africa (or the world) to increase coverage that only continues to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and myths. The ultimate goal is to recognize the possibility to change these ingrained attitudes and work toward news which presents a multi-faceted view of Africa. If Africans were allowed as many dimensions as Westerners, the stereotypes and myths which

currently plague most Europeans' and Americans' understanding of the continent would no longer be tenable.

End Notes

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- ¹ Adichie, Chimamanda. *The Danger of a Single Story*. 2009. TED. 20 March 2010. <http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html>
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Pickering, Michael. *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation*. New York: Pilgrave, 2001. 48. uses the term reductive and Sorenson, John. *Imaging Ethiopia: Struggles for History and Identity in the Horn of Africa*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 1993. 70. uses the term essentialize.
- ⁵ Pickering 3.
- ⁶ Ibid 25.
- ⁷ Ibid 54-55.
- ⁸ Ibid 26, 3. The importance of power is discussed on page 26. The importance of inflexibility is discussed on page 3.
- ⁹ McCarthy, Michael. *Dark Continent: Africa as Seen by Americans*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983. 13. introduces the “lazy” stereotype.
- ¹⁰ Megwa, Eronini R. and Ike S. Ndolo “Media Image and Development: Political and Economic Implications of U.S. Media Coverage of Africa.” *Development and Democratization in the Third World: Myths, Hopes, and Realities*. Ed. Kenneth E. Bauzon. Washington: Crane Russak, 1992. 274.
- ¹¹ Pickering discusses the “politics of belonging” and the “politics of not belonging” in Chapters 4 and 5 79-146.
- ¹² Ibid xiii.
- ¹³ Ibid 32.
- ¹⁴ Hawk, Beverly G., ed. *Africa’s Media Image*. New York: Praeger, 1992. 3.
- ¹⁵ McCarthy xvi. Discusses the topography misconceptions. Chimamanda Adichie notes how people are surprised to learn that she can speak English so well (where did she learn it) and shocked to discover that English is the national language of Nigeria.
- ¹⁶ Pickering 72.
- ¹⁷ Ibid 51.
- ¹⁸ Ibid 51, 55-56.
- ¹⁹ McCarthy 73 briefly discusses the notion of African timelessness.
- ²⁰ Pickering 51-60. Discusses constructing the primitive. Keim, Curtis, A. *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999. 9. introduces the exotic.
- ²¹ McCarthy 84. briefly discusses the notion of Africa as unchanging and therefore inferior.
- ²² Adichie.
- ²³ Keim 4-5
- ²⁴ McCarthy 150.
- ²⁵ Keim 9.
- ²⁶ Pickering 57.
- ²⁷ Keim 99.
- ²⁸ Hawk 4.
- ²⁹ McCarthy 150.
- ³⁰ Keim 113
- ³¹ McCarthy 13. introduces the stereotype of the “lusty” African.
- ³² Rosenberg, Matt. “Population Density.” *About.com Geography*. N. pg., 6 Jul. 2005. 21 Mar. 2010.
- ³³ Ranger, Terence. “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa.” *The Invention of Tradition*. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. 212, 247.
- ³⁴ Bartra, Roger. *Wild Men in the Looking Glass: The Mythic Origins of European Otherness*. Trans. Carl T. Berrisford. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. 3-5.
- ³⁵ Ranger. Tradition. 248.
- ³⁶ Shillington, Kevin. *Encyclopedia of African History*. New York: CRC Press, 2005. p. 1299.

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- ³⁷ Mamdani, Mahmood. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. 41.
- ³⁸ Ibid 44.
- ³⁹ Ibid 50.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid 50.
- ⁴¹ Ibid 83.
- ⁴² Ibid 80.
- ⁴³ Ranger, Terence. *The Invention of Tribalism in Zimbabwe*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1985. Mambo Occasional Papers—Socio-Economic Series No. 19. Lecture given at the University of Zimbabwe on Wednesday, August 22nd and again in Bulawayo on Wednesday, September 4, 1985. 3-4
- ⁴⁴ Ibid 3.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid 7.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid 7.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid 7.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid 8.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid 8.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid 11.
- ⁵¹ Ranger. Tradition. 212, 247.
- ⁵² Ibid 250.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid 251.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid 242.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid 243.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid 223.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid 224.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid 221.
- ⁶¹ Ibid 228.
- ⁶² Ibid 220.
- ⁶³ Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London: Routledge, 1994. 18.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid 23.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid 22.
- ⁶⁶ Ebo, Bosah. "American Media and African Culture." *Africa's Media Image*. Ed. Beverly G. Hawk. New York: Praeger, 1992. 15.
- ⁶⁷ Bennett, W. Lance. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. New York: Pearson, 2009. 40-44.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid 40.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid 41.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² Ibid.
- ⁷³ Kozol, Wendy. "Representations of Race in Network News Coverage of South Africa." *Television Studies: Textual Analysis*. Ed. Gary Burns and Robert J. Thompson. New York: Praeger, 1989. 169.
- ⁷⁴ Ebo 16.
- ⁷⁵ Graber, Doris. *Mass Media and American Politics*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2006. 135.
- ⁷⁶ Bennett 42.
- ⁷⁷ Kozol 167.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid.
- ⁸⁰ Raboy, Marc and Bernard Dagenais. *Media, Crisis and Democracy: Mass Communication and the Disruption of Social Order*. London: Sage, 1992. 3.
- ⁸¹ Ibid 4. Graber 144 discusses specific celebrity pseudo-crisis as well.

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- ⁸² Bennett 42.
- ⁸³ Ibid.
- ⁸⁴ Harris, Phil. *Reporting Southern Africa: Western News Agencies Reporting from Southern Africa*. Paris: UNESCO, 1981. 25.
- ⁸⁵ Ebo 20.
- ⁸⁶ Payne, W. A. J. "Through a Glass Darkly: The Media and Africa." *Africa: From Mystery to Maze* Ed. Helen Kitchen. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1976. 219. And Kitchen, Helen. *U.S. Interests in Africa*. New York: Praeger, 1983.
- ⁸⁷ Bennett 44.
- ⁸⁸ Hagos, Asgede. *Hardened Images: Western Media and the Marginalization of Africa*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2000. xiii.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁹⁰ Bennett 44.
- ⁹¹ The concept of the Cold War framework is discussed in Fair, Jo Ellen "Are We Really the World" Coverage of U.S. Food Aid in Africa, 1980-1989" *Africa's Media Image*. Ed. Beverly G. Hawk. New York: Praeger, 1992. 113-117. The term "heart and minds" is discussed in Dickinson, Elizabeth. *A Bright Shining Slogan: How "hearts and minds" Came to Be*. Foreign Policy. (Sept/Oct 2009). <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/13/a_bright_shining_slogan>
- ⁹² AP. "Under Obama 'War on Terror' Phrase Fading." *MSNBC*. N. p., 1 Feb. 2009. 21 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28959574/>>.
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- ⁹⁴ Harris 40.
- ⁹⁵ Hawk 5.
- ⁹⁶ Fair, Jo Ellen 109.
- ⁹⁷ Maloba, Wunyabari. "The Media and Mau Mau: Kenyan Nationalism and Colonial Propaganda" *Africa's Media Image*. Ed. Beverly G. Hawk. New York: Praeger, 1992. 55.
- ⁹⁸ Maloba. Media and Mau Mau. 53.
- ⁹⁹ Maloba, Wunyabari O. *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993. 102.
- ¹⁰⁰ Maloba. Media and Mau Mau. 56.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid 58.
- ¹⁰² Ibid 57.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁵ Maloba. Mau Mau and Kenya. 101
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid 103-104.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid 102.
- ¹⁰⁸ Oschema, Klaus. *Blood-Brothers: A Ritual of Friendship and the Construction of the Imagined Barbarian in the Middle Ages*. Journal of Medieval History 32.3 (September 2006): 275-301.
- ¹⁰⁹ Maloba. Mau Mau and Kenya. 103.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid 104.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid 104.
- ¹¹² Ibid 106.
- ¹¹³ Maloba. Media and Mau Mau. 56.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid
- ¹¹⁵ Maloba. Mau Mau and Kenya. 13.
- ¹¹⁶ Maloba. Media and Mau Mau. 58.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹²⁰ Maloba. Mau Mau and Kenya. 91.

¹²¹ Ibid 96.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ "Timeline; Eritrea." *BBC News*. N.p., 24 Dec. 2009. 20 Mar. 2010.

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¹²⁴ Kaplan, Robert. "The Loneliest War." *The Atlantic Monthly*. 262 (1): 58-65. (1988.) quoted in *Imagining Ethiopia: Struggles for History and Identity in the Horn of Africa*. John Sorenson. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 1993.

¹²⁵ Sorenson 43.

¹²⁶ "Eritrea Country Profile." *BBC News*. N.p., 24 Dec. 2009. 20 Mar. 2010.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1070813.stm>

¹²⁷ Sorenson 43.

¹²⁸ Hagos 103.

¹²⁹ Sorenson 56.

¹³⁰ Hawk 9.

¹³¹ Sorenson 113.

¹³² Ibid 109.

¹³³ Sorenson 77.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid 78.

¹³⁷ Ibid 1-2.

¹³⁸ Ibid 79 and 148. The use of "inexplicable" to describe the famine is found on page 148. The phrase "an emergency that struck without warning" is found on page 79.

¹³⁹ Ibid 6, 13, 147.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid 37.

¹⁴¹ Ibid 6.

¹⁴² Ibid 118.

¹⁴³ Ibid 45.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid 79.

¹⁴⁵ Hagos 166.

¹⁴⁶ Sorenson 121.

¹⁴⁷ Fair, Jo Ellen 117.

¹⁴⁸ Sorenson 183.

¹⁴⁹ LaFraniere, Sharon. "Cell Phones Catapult Rural Africa to 21st Century." *New York Times* 25 Aug. 2005: n. pag. 20 Mar. 2010.

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¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Farrar, Lara. "Africans Get Upwardly Mobile in Cell Phone Boom." *CNN*. N.p., 14 Aug. 2008. 20 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.cnn.com/2008/TECH/08/07/mobile.phone.poverty/index.html>>.

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¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ *New York Times* articles include: Dugger, Celia W. "South Africa Set another Meeting on Zimbabwe Crisis." *New York Times* 23 Jan. 2009: n. pag. 14 Mar. 2010.

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¹⁵⁸ “Mugabe Critics Predict Fraud in Zimbabwe Elections.” *CNN*. N. p. 28 Mar. 2008.

<<http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/africa/03/27/zimbabwe.election/index.html>>

¹⁵⁹ Bennett 154. Notes the rise in negative news.

¹⁶⁰ “Total Population of the Continents.” GeoHive. N. p., N. d., 21 Mar. 2010.

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