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Constructing Connectivity: A Qualitative Analysis of the Representation of the Connected and Unconnected *Others* in Facebook's Internet.org Campaign

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MSc in Media and Communications

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Minji Lee

ABSTRACT

This research examines the representation of the distant 'others' in Facebook's Internet.org campaign. Drawing on the constructivist notion of representation, it explores the visual language and discourse that is used to project them as being in need of connectivity. Through a mixed-method approach of visual semiotics and critical discourse analysis, the analysis suggests that the distant 'others' are constructed through 'a dualism of "oneness" and "difference"' (Dogra, 2012: 25). Moral proximity is established through a process of humanisation, which involves their voice in the form of a self-confessional genre, while othering occurs through the manifestation of ethnic and cultural features. This study contributes to the area of ICT development on how the concept of connectivity and digital divide is applied while raising concerns over a simplified and glossed-over depiction of technology adoption. On a broader scale, it adds to the field of humanitarian communication on how strategies aimed to benefit the 'other' can ironically undermine their positioning. It consequently highlights the role of consumers as 'social readers' (Dyer, 1982: 115) of advertisements and proposes the active establishment of an ethical relationship with the represented through increased 'vigilance' or self-reflexivity (Spivak, 1990: 11).

INTRODUCTION

The loop. Information to information. Money to money ... It is as if a natural monopoly is beginning to emerge and that, *force majeure*, one global company is building all the roads on which the rest of us must travel (Silverstone, 1999: 24-5)

A quarter century following the invention of the World Wide Web and a decade after the foundation of the world's biggest social media platform Facebook, our everyday lives seem to be embedded in and shaped by a globally imagined space called the Internet. We search for information on Google, for jobs on LinkedIn and for love on Tinder. We build our identities as well as construct those of others in a cyber version of what Appadurai (1996) called the 'mediascape' where narratives and images are incessantly circulated and interpreted. Central to this technological and cultural juggernaut is social media. Roughly 1.1 billion people were estimated to use Facebook on an average day in March 2016¹, while the total number of social network users around the globe was forecast to reach 2.72 billion in 2019².

In 2013, Facebook founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg unveiled a highly contested plan that may accelerate this growth by connecting two-thirds of the world who remain unconnected. The company pledged to bring 'voice' through connectivity: 'Imagine what they could contribute when the world can hear their voices. The more we connect, the better it gets.'³ Facebook teamed up with global and regional technology companies and mobile carriers to provide connectivity through *Free Basics*, a mobile app that enables users to access certain registered sites such as Facebook, BBC News and UNICEF, without data charges. Three years into the campaign, it has so far succeeded in providing access to some 25 million people across 37 countries (Bowles, 2016).

However, the notion of providing a limited version of the Internet has caused criticism that it disrupts net neutrality and confines users to 'a walled garden' (Best, 2014). On a bigger scale, critics have condemned it as a rendition of 'digital colonialism' in which a single, Western company is claiming connectivity as a necessity and leading the mission to provide it, in a form it can control. Ethan Zuckerman of the MIT Centre for Civic Media describes the initiative as 'both colonialist and deceptive' in which it posits access as a 'solution' to problems in the global South and benefits by locking in Facebook as a dominant platform

¹ See <https://investor.fb.com/investor-news/press-release-details/2016/Facebook-Reports-First-Quarter-2016-Results-and-Announces-Proposal-for-New-Class-of-Stock/default.aspx> for details [Last consulted July 3, 2016].

² See <http://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/> for figures and estimates for the years 2010-2019 [Last consulted July 3, 2016].

³See <https://info.internet.org/en/mission/> for the full statement [Last consulted July 7, 2016].

when developed markets are saturating (Zuckerman quoted in Lafrance, 2016). Such criticism has consequently botched Facebook's attempt to roll out the initiative in countries such as India and Egypt. Nonetheless, the campaign is still under way in the global South with recent additions including Myanmar and Nigeria.

While Facebook has distanced itself from claims of digital colonialism, the way it depicts access as a life necessity and represents people before and after acquiring connectivity can be potentially misleading. It also incurs questions such as: What are the benefits of connectivity? Can voices be heard once they are connected? Is access an indispensable of human life? In fact, do the unconnected even want to be connected? Fundamentally, the Internet.org campaign is not just a corporate humanitarian campaign but a site of controversy that demands the rethinking of representation, development and Internet as basic needs. As Silverstone (1994: 30) notes:

The world and its players appear in the media, and for most of us that is the only place they do appear. Appearance itself becomes, in both senses of the world, the world.

In this context, the magnitude of the rhetoric and representation that Facebook delivers as one of the world's biggest media powers is unfathomable. The values that it prioritises, in this case, connectivity, and the way that it imagines 'others' thus carry the risk of constructing flawed imaginations of the distant 'others'. Through a mixed-method approach, this research explores how the Internet.org campaign builds the myth of Internet and imagines the unconnected and the global South through visuality and discourse. The results demonstrate that advertisements that allegedly claim to benefit the 'others' can paradoxically widen the gap between the dominant 'us' and the distant 'others' by merging them into a new hierarchy of 'our' world where their ethnic difference is utilised as a cultural and emotional resource. It also suggests that humanising distant 'others' may function to de-politicise and de-historicise critical issues that should further be scrutinised, glossing over socioeconomic issues with a sentimental emphasis on care and humanity.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter aims to explain the theories utilized to analyse the Internet.org campaign with a focus on connectivity, representation and advertisement. In the first two sections, I explore how the Internet has become a controversial social commodity and how the debate on its indispensability has evolved. I then proceed to study the framing and representation of the

'others' and how advertisements reinforce the underlying structure of power and ideology referring to historic examples.

Control in the Culture of Connectivity

From 1991 when Tim Berners-Lee launched the world's first web site, the Internet has transformed itself from a technological tool to a quotidian social fabric. Castells (1996: 501) observes that through connectivity we have become 'nodes' of a 'network' in which being connected enables us to transcend physical, socioeconomic, political and cultural distances that exist offline. Web enthusiasts have embraced the positive aspects of this notion, asserting that the Internet contributes in improving our closeness with each other and with strangers by 'augmenting our people skills as well, widening our social networks, and creating new possibilities for strangers to share ideas and experiences' (Johnson, 2005: 124). It is no wonder that Facebook, as the world's biggest social media platform, states its mission as helping people 'to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them'⁴.

Indeed, connectivity has increasingly shifted from a technological term to a virtue that empowers users to reinforce their social capital, especially in line with the explosive growth of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. But as technology companies advocate, does connectivity only involve the human element? Do we really become social when we are active on social media? Van Dijck (2013) questions this notion by defining two layers of connectivity – one that refers to human connectedness and one that refers to automated connectivity – and argues that companies have emphasised the first while minimising the latter. She further asserts that automated connectivity 'renders people's activities formal, manageable, and manipulable, enabling platforms to engineer the sociality in people's everyday routines' (Van Dijck, 2013: 12).

Such acknowledgement of automated connectivity is a reminder that connectivity comes with a cost, in which our personal information and digital footprint may be compromised for corporate intentions, in a way we are unaware of. The more we are empowered, the more we are thrust into a 'consumer sphinx' in which our purchase decisions are logged and site access is tracked for personalised marketing (Silverstone, 1999: 24). In other words, highly-connected nodes such as social media platforms continue to expand their influence by feeding on the information of weaker nodes in a rich-gets-richer nature of the network

⁴ See https://www.facebook.com/facebook/info?tab=page_info for full mission statement [Last consulted July 11, 2016].

(Barabási, 2002). Beniger (1986: 434) acknowledges how this equips the dominant with heightened capacity to control other nodes in the network, rendering the weaker nodes as subjects of a control mechanism: 'Each new technological innovation extends the processes that sustain human social life, thereby increasing the need for control and for improved control technology'. In such sense, entering the culture of connectivity corresponds with entering the culture of consumerism where our need to be socially connected is utilised for commercial purposes.

This research draws on how connectivity is generally described as a tool of empowerment without details on how it is also used as a tool of controlling and securing new consumers for strong corporate nodes. Such literature provides a critical framework to scrutinise how a blatant promotion of connectivity is problematic for those who are insufficiently informed of its hidden costs.

Digital Divide

A metronome is a useful tool, but it does not make the concert musician (Toyama, 2016: 30).

The terminology digital divide rapidly popularised following a series of reports by the U.S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA, 1999) that defines it as 'the divide between those with access to new technologies and those without'. While 'new technologies' once referred to ownership of telecommunications devices such as telephones and PCs, it is now most used to refer to Internet adoption and usage. The concept posits the Internet and skills to use it as 'vital assets' (Van Deursen and Van Dijk, 2010: 894) that 'help them (users) advance economically and professionally' (NTIA, 1999). The lack of it is thus considered a drastic setback that 'has perhaps the greatest potential to doom the "have-nots" to the status of permanent underclass' (Mack, 2001: xii). The gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and its potential consequences have also been used to position the Internet.org initiative as an urgent imperative to empower the global South.

However, critics warn against understanding digital divide as a simplistic issue and reducing it to the conclusion that universal access is imperative. They argue that more reflexivity is needed in praising the Internet and its benefits. Dreyfus (2001: 2), for instance, notes that in contrast to the hype that 'the Internet will bring a new era of economic prosperity', it has 'produced a great deal of talk but few happy results'. Critics are also wary about the notion that access will serve as a panacea to social problems such as inequality, stressing that it should be understood as a secondary tool to a socioeconomic intention rather than as an

ultimate goal. Toyama (2016: 29), who has consulted ICT development projects, cites what he calls technology's 'Law of Amplification'. He argues that as technology 'amplifies existing human capacities', 'indiscriminate dissemination of digital technology tends to aggravate inequalities' as the richer and more educated are also more likely to better utilise their gadgets and skills. Such criticism underscores the need for fundamental efforts to address inequality rather than pursuing technology itself. Silverstone (1999: 112) similarly punctuates how increased access does not guarantee socioeconomic transformations: 'As if to see and hear is to understand. As if information is knowledge. As if access is participation. As if participation is effectiveness.'

Assuming access as a basic need and constructing the unconnected as needy of universal access is also problematic. User studies in the global North, where broadband penetration is higher, have identified groups who voluntarily opt out of access. They are the 'information want-nots' (Selwyn, 2003), who refuse to adopt technology due to ideological reasons, the 'critical consumers' (Frissen, 2003), who limit their access for personal reasons and the 'Internet drop-outs' (Katz and Aspden, 1998), who cease to use the Internet. While the history of user study in the global South is short, researchers have reaped meaningful findings on how much user needs and circumstances are fragmented. There are Trinidadians and rural Zambians who found the Internet and Facebook interchangeable (Miller, 2011; Wyche and Baumer, 2016) or rural Kenyans and Zambians who want access as a means to join the 'global village' (Wyche, Schoenebeck and Forte, 2013; Wyche and Baumer, 2016). Simultaneously, there are Kenyan slum residents who find the opportunity cost of mobile device theft or power linkage too big or female users who find sexual harassment on Facebook threatening (Wyche, 2015).

Such literature provides the theoretical framework to assess the Internet.org campaign in the context of ICT development and suggests that a holistic approach that encompasses technology dissemination as well as socioeconomic circumstances is desirable. It also highlights the need to break down the different demographic groups of the unconnected rather than addressing them through a top-down, uniform and simplified concept of digital divide.

Imagining 'the needy *other*'

Representation is an ongoing process of re-presenting the world around us and making meaning out of it. It involves 'the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the value we place on them' (Hall, 1997: 3). Such analysis construes

representation as being constructed, in contrast to the reflectionist approach, which perceives representation as a 'mirror' of reality. Central to the constructivist approach is the notion of 'binary opposition' which perceives 'difference' as imperative in representation. Theorists point out how power plays a dominant role in this differing, with one pole of the binary usually being dominant over the other (Derrida, 1974, quoted in Hall, 1997: 235). In this power dynamic, 'the Other is always constructed as an object for the benefit of the subject who stands in need of an objectified Other in order to achieve a masterly self-definition' (Pickering, 2001: 71). The 'other' is constantly represented as deviating from or deficient of what is perceived to be normative and conventional by 'us', thus establishing a hierarchy and further distancing the two poles. The media plays a substantial role in reinforcing this 'boundary work' between 'us' and 'them' by constantly producing and reproducing the difference (Silverstone, 2007: 19).

Such dichotomous categorisation and the use of normative rhetoric are also prevalent in the concept of 'basic needs' in the development sector. Critics problematise how policymakers and development experts from the global North impose a unilateral threshold that they argue are 'basic' to sustain life. In fact, critics like Kapoor (2008: 22) condemn how the word 'basic' is 'meant to conjure up something obvious, universal, primary, natural' as part of an attempt to set 'a minimum threshold required for people to become productive members of society'. He draws from what Baudrillard calls 'magical thinking' in which the myth of 'pure need' is established through the naturalisation of needs (quoted in Kapoor, 2008: 23), which consequently renders those without such 'need' as deficient of such values. Power again plays a pivotal role here, as 'the survival threshold is never determined from below, but from above' (Baudrillard, 1981: 81, quoted in Kapoor, 2008: 25). In practice, this may lead to a situation of othering, in which the mission to fulfil the basic needs threshold is 'best left to technical experts' (Streeten, 1981: 93) among 'us', whereas those deficient of basic needs are positioned as 'weak and inarticulate' (Streeten, 1981: 52) people who lack the capacity to help themselves. While such reification of difference may be effective in making meaning, it is also 'a rather crude and reductionist way' (Hall, 1997: 235) that carries the risk of dismissing 'local culture' and reinforcing the West's position as a site of progress (Kapoor, 2008: 35).

With web enthusiasts, including Zuckerberg, citing universal access as a fundamental need for life, the aforementioned literature provides reflexivity on assessing the practices of othering and naturalisation seen in the Internet.org advertisements. Despite efforts to benefit the unconnected, Dogra (2012: 3) asserts that such representations in development may 'project many colonial discourses even as they ironically erase the period of our connected history and its legacies that continue to shape existing global economic structures, power relations and the current state of poverty and prosperity across various regions'.

Furthermore, it evokes questions on for whom such connectivity is necessary. Is it 'them' (the unconnected) needing 'us' (technology provided by Facebook and other companies of the global North) as seen in the campaign videos? Or 'us' needing 'them'?

Advertising as an Ideology

Advertising, as a form of media representation, operates to 'make those properties *mean something to us*' by 'creating structures of meaning' (Williamson, 1978: 12). Meaning is intentionally built and delivered to the audience to create a reality as seen in the constructivist approach, with certain values depicted 'as "natural" and almost god-given' (Ramamurthy, 2003: 16). Due to this intentional nature of meaning creation that 'fetishes and mystifies' (Ramamurthy, 2003: 16) certain values and norms, theorists describe advertising as a 'sphere of ideology' (Goldman, 1992: 1) or a 'fantasy visual display of *signs and symbols*' (Hall, 1997: 240).

Such artificial and ideological meaning-making attempt is observed in modern development campaigns but also dates back to the imperial posters that sought to connect the British Empire with the domestic sphere. Advertisements reinforcing colonialism were embedded into the quotidian, pushing 'scenes of empire into every corner of the home stamping images of colonial conquest on soap boxes, matchboxes, biscuit tins, whiskey bottle, tea tins and chocolate bars' (McClintock, 1995:209). Soap advertisement, for instance, conjured up the paternalistic notion that soaps could wash black skin white and purify the distant 'unwashed poor' while keeping the 'imperial body' at 'home' clean (Hall, 1997: 241). Posters by the Empire Marketing Board (EMB), which were displayed throughout schools, football stadiums and public venues, similarly justified imperialism as a means of 'progress' and encouraged the British public to take part in this 'mission' by purchasing Empire-grown and -produced goods (Kothari, 2014: 154). Building on Silverstone's analysis (1994: 30), these advertisements were the 'only place' most of the British public could see and imagine the colonised in distant places and thus became 'the world' they construct. These examples thus demonstrate how substantially advertisements can influence the construction of the binary images of the 'needy' colonised and the 'benevolent' colonisers. The colonised were imagined as people who are in need of Western help, while the 'British people were represented as both father-like and mother-like, teaching their colonial family about progress and industry as well as supporting and nurturing its welfare and growth' (Horton, 2010: 45, quoted in Kothari, 2014: 161).

The dichotomous construction of 'us' and the 'other' and the emotional process involved in it extend to modern advertising. NGOs, for instance, try to induce a positive and warm feeling

in their campaigns to encourage donor support (Chouliaraki, 2013: 5) in a way that the EMB sought to imbue a sentiment of pride and responsibility among the British public through its posters. A study by Trentmann (2007), which compares the EMB posters with present-day Fair Trade campaigns, show that they similarly seek 'to promote a project of caring for distant others' while simultaneously using visual imagery to re-order relations between producers and consumers' (Kothari, 2014: 152). This carries the risk of the distant 'others' being exploited as *spectacles* for the Western moral actors to engage upon rather than them having their own agencies (Chouliaraki, 2013). It also shows how the distant 'others' are portrayed as 'industrious' workers who are not unwilling to work but who simply lack the 'necessary skills, expertise and technology' (Kothari, 2014: 164). In doing so, it bolsters the need to 'help' them while simultaneously reinforcing the power dynamic between 'us' and 'them', thus increasing their potential of being incorporated into the established Western system rather than building their own.

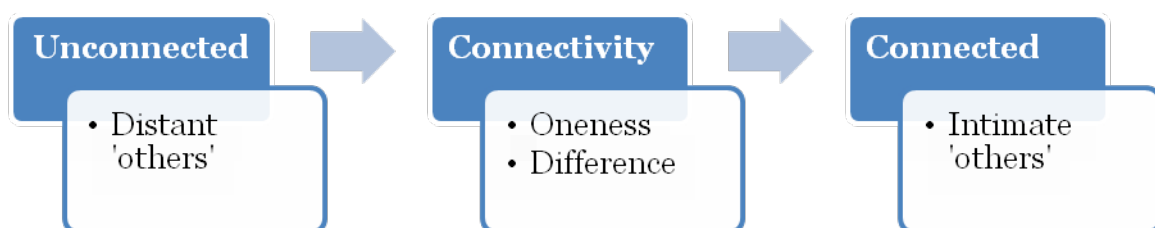
The aforementioned references provide the critique in analysing the Internet.org campaign regarding its use of sentiment in appealing to the global North audience and its depiction of the 'unconnected' as 'human resources' that can contribute to *our* world when they are given the necessary skills, expertise and technology, in this case, access to Internet and the skills to use it. It should also be observed whether these effects together contribute in supporting the existing power dynamic and the ideology hierarchy between the global North and South.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Warner (2002: 57) acknowledges how 'encounters with strangers are part of modern life: on buses, the streets and, centrally in the media'. I similarly argue that advertisements are an inescapable part of modern life. From mobile advertisements on mobile phones to billboard advertisements on highways, we incessantly encounter images that remind us of our status as consumers as well as construct our perception of ourselves and the world. This process is 'not coercive' but in a way more gripping as they 'appeal to our desires, fantasies and self-interest', engaging the 'self' in the process (Orgad, 2012: 27). In such sense, the Internet.org initiative is a campaign that appeals to already-connected consumers to contribute in 'connecting' the world. For those who are unconnected, it is a campaign that appeals to their desires to become part of the 'global village'. Beneath the optimistic ambience of the campaign, however, lurk questions on how the campaign's advertisement sculpts our perception of the unconnected and the technological promise of connectivity. Is connectivity really a 'basic need'? How is it different from other basic needs in the sense that it is advocated as a 'gateway to a better future' rather than an end in itself? How are the connected 'us' and the unconnected 'others' represented in this process? Can the unconnected 'others'

become 'us' once they are connected? While there are recent studies of user behaviour in the global South (Miller, 2001; Toyama, 2016; Wyche, 2015; Wyche and Baumer, 2016; Wyche, Schoenebeck and Forte, 2013) as well as meaningful journalism work on how the initiative can be interpreted as 'digital colonialism' (Lafrance, 2016), there is no research on the visual language and discourse of Facebook's advertisements, currently the most prominent universal access campaign which serves as a direct and official means of propaganda to both users and non-users.

To address these questions, this work builds on theoretical frameworks deriving from areas of representation and technology, most notably the constructivist tradition of representation presented by Derrida (1974) and Hall (1997). It studies how advertisements, as a prominent marketing instrument, functions to increase the moral proximity between 'us' and 'them' through emphasis on sentiment and humanity. Simultaneously, it analyses how depictions of 'otherness' reinforce the asymmetric power relations between the two sides. Regarding this research, it posits that despite the optimistic message for connectivity, the advertising is likely to reinforce the frame of the dominant 'us' by promoting connectivity, a value which the global North already possesses and is more apt at further advancing it, as normative. In this process, the campaign functions as a tool of persuasion to incorporate the distant 'others' into the existing system by promoting connectivity as a desirable value. In such sense, connectivity becomes a 'condition' for the unconnected distant other to enter *our* boundary. It is advocated as a 'condition' for 'them' to become 'us' regardless of whether such mobilisation is feasible, or even necessary. This research thus posits that the 'others' can be categorised into three phases: the state of no connectivity where they are distant 'others', the gray stage where they are trying to accept connectivity and represented through both oneness and difference and the state of connectivity where they have become 'intimate' to 'us' but are still objectified in certain ways as 'others'.



The objectives of this research are:

- To identify representations of 'difference' among the distant 'others'
- To identify representations of 'oneness' through humanisation
- To analyse changes in representations of the connected who were formerly unconnected

- To examine how connectivity serves as a tool for distancing as well as associating

To achieve the objectives, the following research question was established:

How does the construction of connectivity in the Internet.org campaign function to reify the 'difference' between 'us' and 'them'?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This work employs a qualitative mixed-method approach to assess the representation of the unconnected and the newly-connected. A visual semiotics analysis was primarily used to identify the connotations of still images extracted from video advertisements. While a content analysis was considered due to its strength of being 'less prone to subjective selectiveness and idiosyncracies' (Hansen, 1998: 91) and providing 'the needed scientific ground' (Krippendorff, 1980: 5), it was concluded inappropriate due to a need for a flexible, open-ended analysis. The analysis of non-visual factors, such as editing and sound, were excluded due to the length of this project and the limited resources to interpret the nuance of the featured foreign languages in the manner of a native speaker. More importantly, I decided to focus on images as they are considered as 'the key factor in guiding our perceptions of the action' (Bordwell, 1997: 293) as well as the tool for receiving more than 80 percent of the information we encounter (Berger, 2008: 1). A critical discourse analysis was additionally applied for a deeper understanding on how language is used to naturalise and reinforce certain values, thus replicating 'the formal relations of pre-existing systems of differences' (Williamson, 1978: 27) through the 'world' that advertisements construct.

Visual Semiotics Analysis

Like fish, we 'swim' in a sea of images, and these images help shape our perceptions of the world and ourselves (Berger, 2008: 1)

Berger's observation rings true for advertisements that establish structures of meaning through 'images', whether they refer to visual artifacts or the identity of the advertised product or service. Such 'visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies' (Rose, 2001: 6), with the scope of its influence rapidly expanding around the globe through the diversification and globalisation of media channels. Among different methods of visual analysis, visual semiotics provides an effective lens to

unmask how symbols and signs in advertisement images function to convey meanings and motifs. While the term semiotics and semiology were each coined by American philosopher Charles Peirce and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, my primary insight derives from French writer Roland Barthes whose works have extended such academic tradition into images. Barthian semiotics goes beyond *denotation*, the literal interpretation of images, to highlight *connotation*, the second layer of what is being signified. By focusing on connotation, Barthes (1977: 165) studies how ‘myths’, which he argues transformed ‘the social, cultural, ideological and historical into the natural’, were constructed. We may at this point question how a myth instills itself into the consciousness of consumers. Van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001) offer a helpful hint by observing how photographs are used to minimise social friction in diffusing ideology. They assert that the act of seeing persuades the audience to think they are actively engaging with the images rather than passively accepting the messages of powerful disseminators. Such logic also applies to advertisements. Williamson (1978: 53) notes how through the process of interpreting advertised images, we come to replace ourselves with the beliefs implied in the advertised commodity and feel obliged to support it by purchasing. This procedure incurs the false sense of independence in which ‘we are told that we *do* choose, we *are* free individuals’ but end up succumbing to the mechanism that ‘we *will act accordingly*’ (Williamson, 1978: 53). Such interpretation provides an insight into how connotations are central to the process of myth construction; consumers identify themselves with what is connoted and unconsciously participate in producing and reproducing the underlying structure of meaning through the act of purchasing (products) or endorsing (campaigns). This shows how a visual semiotics analysis is crucial in identifying the connotations of the advertisements and the myths it creates to persuade consumers. There are, nonetheless, drawbacks to this method, such as the flexibility of the identification and interpretation of connotation. While such characteristic may contribute to a richer analysis, it may vary by individual researcher, thus undermining the objectiveness, replicability and representativeness of the research (Leiss et al, 2005). Despite such drawback, visual semiotics is the only means that allow the researcher to match the visual language of the material with underlying connotations and navigate the myths producers of the advertisements have sought to establish.

Critical Discourse Analysis

In the preliminary stage of the research, I solely used visual semiotics analysis to grasp the representational elements of the material, which proved to be effective in exploring the ‘feel’, or the ‘expressive content’ (Rose, 2001: 46). However, in order to fully develop the constructivist notion of representation, an analysis of the language (which appears in English subtitles and is audible through narrations in local languages) and its functioning was

deemed necessary. Thus a discourse analysis was deployed as it is in line with the constructivist tradition in rejecting 'the idea that language is simply a natural means of reflecting or describing the world' and 'arguing that discourse is always constructed from particular interpretative resources and always designed for specific interpretative contexts' (Gill, 1996: 141, 155).

Central to discourse analysis is French philosopher Michel Foucault who asserts the relationship between knowledge and power and how this connection is applied and implemented through discourse. For Foucault (1977: 27), knowledge constructs power because 'not only (it) assumes the authority of "the truth" but has the power to *make itself true*'. He thus concludes that:

There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations.

What produces and reproduces such knowledge is discourse, which defines the objects of knowledge and governs how a topic can be meaningfully talked about and how it can be applied to the real world to regulate others (Hall, 1997: 44). It is through discourse that topics exist in certain ways; in other words, knowledge and power cannot exist outside of discourse. Such acknowledgement provides the methodological framework to construe how certain norms and values are naturalised as *truth* and how they come to be perceived as important and necessary.

Discourse analysis is an area where the methodological procedure is less structured and fixed and 'is never quite captured by descriptions of coding schemes, hypotheses and analytical schemas' (Gill, 1996: 143). To get a more systemic understanding of the relationship between language and underlying social structure, I draw from the works of Fairclough (2013: 1) who views the objective of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as 'to develop ways of analysing language which address its involvement in the workings of contemporary capitalist societies'. He argues the significance of the emphasis on capitalist societies derives from its ubiquity that affects social life, which stands valid for this research entailing the development of the Internet. Similar to visual semiotics, CDA is perceived to be weak in producing empirical generalisations. However, it is exactly this trait that enables the researcher to complement and narrow down the vast findings of visual analysis and comprehend how images and texts are mobilised and established as meaning for the maintenance of relations of domination (Thompson, 1984: 5).

Methodological Procedures

Step 1: Understanding Data

Facebook operates an account dedicated to the campaign in which 3.1 million have subscribed as of July 18, 2016. The account features 19 campaign videos posted between August 2013 and February 2016, including 10 which zooms in on the personal narrative of the protagonists, 7 of them in the form of self-confessionals⁵. This research focuses on these 7 advertisements, ranging from 31 seconds to 83 seconds, as they are consistent in format and best capture the transformation from being unconnected to connected. An ethical approval was obtained in this stage during a preliminary research.

Step 2: Sampling and Visual Semiotics Analysis

Collier (2001: 39) asserts that visual analysis should begin with an ‘open-ended’ process for the researcher to ‘observe the data as a whole, look at, “listen” to its overtones and subtleties, to discover connecting contrasting patterns’. Ahead of an in-depth analysis, I therefore observed the data focusing on who the protagonists of each advertisement are and how they are being represented. I then classified them according to the ‘themes or the attitudes and feelings they are meant to appeal or to mobilize’ (Dyer, 1982: 92), which leads to the four claimed benefits of connectivity: money, pride, family and a future. Such classification is in line with what Dyer (1982: 92) identifies as prominent themes in advertisements, a list that includes ‘happy families, success in career or job, childhood and self-importance and pride’. Then what criteria are used to extract the sample still images? Researchers suggest selecting images based on ‘how conceptually interesting they are’ and how much they contribute ‘in the reproduction and contestation of contemporary ideologies’ (Rose, 2012: 109). While this may fail to generalise patterns, it is the most efficient method in capturing the profound connotations of the visual language. Therefore still images from the 7 videos that are most appropriate to answering the research objectives were chosen. Specifically, since the synopsis of the advertisement centres on conveying their transformation through connectivity, 3 images that each portray the protagonists before acquiring connectivity, using connectivity and acquiring its ‘benefits’ was chosen, leading to an analysis of 21 images.

⁵ Filipino Riza Mae Tachado, the protagonist of the most ‘liked’ advertisement that was endorsed by Zuckerberg, said in an interview that she was contacted by Facebook staff to film the self-confessional campaign clip for 4 days. She used the *Free Basics* app (formerly *Internet.org* app) to access Wikipedia, Facebook and Ask.com to write her thesis. See <http://technology.inquirer.net/44835/zuckerberg-video-on-mai-mai-goes-viral> for full interview. (Accessed on July 19, 2016).

For an in-depth analysis, a Barthesian semiotics was applied with a focus on both denotation and connotation of elements such as physical features, facial expressions, clothing, body movement, gaze, background and composition. Additionally, Jewitt and Oyama's (2001) social semiotics model was applied for a more structured analysis. They extract three layers of meaning: representation (the depiction of people, places and things), interactivity (how images create 'particular relations between viewers and the world') and compositions (the structural layout or framing), which provide how each layer functions to create meaning.

Step 3: Critical Discourse Analysis

To begin a discourse analysis, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002: 21) suggest 'exploring patterns in and across the statements' rather than getting 'behind' the discourse or selecting the right material to be analysed. They argue that discourse itself should be the objective since even reality is constructed upon discourse. Thus a CDA of the transcripts for the whole data were implemented rather than extracting certain verses that were visible as subtitles in selected images. Fairclough (1993: 136) offers three complementary dimensions of CDA – textual, discursive and societal – for reading discourse. Textual involves the structure, vocabulary and cohesion of the text, discursive uses the concepts of intertextuality and genre, while societal employs knowledge forms and identities of the wider social context. All three facets are helpful in reading the discourse to identify 'questions of power and identity' (Fairclough, 1993: 137) and how the circularity of power 'produces new discourses, new kinds of knowledge, new objects of knowledge', thus shaping 'new practices and institutions' (Hall, 1997: 261). While an audio analysis of the spoken narration in foreign languages may be helpful in understanding the power structures of the discourse through the background music or articulation and nuance of the spoken words, it was excluded due to a constraint on length and the decision to concentrate on the visual analysis of the campaign videos. Therefore, only the subtitles that appear as part of the sample stills were considered as a CDA material.

FINDINGS

An in-depth visual semiotic analysis of the sample still images and a critical discourse analysis of all subtitles were conducted. However, due to the limited length of this paper, an abbreviated interpretation of the analysis appears here. The analysis takes a thematic approach involving four themes: money, pride, future and family. Each advertisement is named after the protagonist. A full synopsis and transcript of the advertisements are provided in the appendix.

Theme 1: Money

Fig 1.1: Paula. 2015 (0:01). Courtesy of Facebook.



A white house that is assumed to be Paula's house is seen at the centre of the image. It stands out in contrast to the overall dark and muted hues. The slope and the rocks on the hill suggest that this is a mountainous and perhaps an isolated area. No other signs of buildings, cars or living creatures – both human and animals – are visible on the screen, further reinforcing the geographic isolation of the house. The fog that covers the horizon creates a mystic ambience that is far from the quotidian. Such visual language functions to represent an isolated, lifeless and distant place that is not connected to civilization.

Fig1.2: Paula. 2015 (0:48). Courtesy of Facebook.



Paula is seen using her mobile phone. The way her finger points to the screen rather than holding it in both hands and the way the device is tilted against a curtained window rather than in her own hands connote that she may be a novice mobile phone user. The closeness of Paula's face and the way the direction of the spectator's gaze is identical to her own creates a strong sense of identification and intimacy (Bal, 1991: 158-160, quoted in Rose, 2001: 45). The soft light from outside and from the mobile phone and how they are shed on Paula's face creates a warm and optimistic ambience and connotes the opening of a new world through

connectivity. However, while the appearance of the device is clear, Paula's own facial features are deconstructed and remain in darkness, rendering her as an object rather than a subject of the image.

Fig1.3: Paula. 2015 (0:55). Courtesy of Facebook.



The bright and vivid hues of the golden and orange flowers create a sense of optimism and abundance. The green stems and leaves pointing upwards also connote progress. The stretched arm, the folded sleeve and the bulging blood vein depict Paula as a healthy person who is actively working to sustain her life. The visibility of the human body and flowers as well as the clarity and brightness of the image starkly contrast with Fig 1.1 that symbolises a barren land where life is void, thus functioning to portray connectivity as a means for productivity and life.

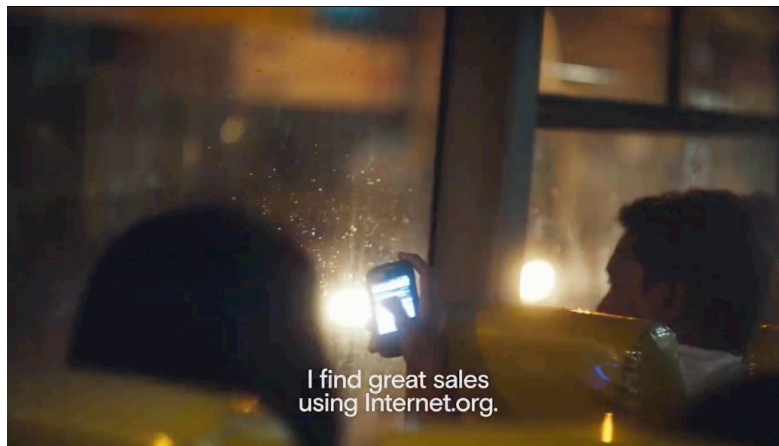
Fig 2.1: Marissa. 2015 (0:05). Courtesy of Facebook.



Marissa is seen in a factory. She is wearing a white t-shirt and a yellow apron which is also worn by a male in the rear of the picture, connoting a uniform culture. They are both wearing

masks on their faces which functions in two ways: a connotation of a rigorous work environment and their inability to speak, the latter rendering them as voiceless people. The visible half of her face shows that her gaze is looking sideways and downwards, avoiding direct eye contact with the spectator and thus connoting detachment. Such use of gaze is considered as a key element of analysis in understanding social positions and power relations (Lister and Wells, 2001: 85). Her eyes are empty, implying that she is exhausted or unhappy with her circumstance. These negative elements depict the state of no connectivity as an 'underdeveloped' situation where diversity and voice is absent.

Fig 2.2: Marissa. 2015 (0:43). Courtesy of Facebook.



Marissa is seen seated in a dimly-lit vehicle. Light and darkness is in play with all other features in the image in darkness except for the mobile phone and some outdoor lighting. The contrast of the light works to highlight the mobile phone while decontextualising other features of the image. The spectator cannot identify who the people in the image are or where they are. Such decontextualisation disables the viewer's ability to 'locate, pin down, domesticate, classify' the subject and thus contributes to enhancing a sense of proximity (Lister and Wells, 2001: 75). Another interesting feature is how the spectator sees the pictured people from the back, with the top of the seats showing on the bottom left side of the image. This induces the spectator to feel as if one is on the same vehicle with the pictured people, creating a sense of intimacy.

Fig2.3: Marissa. 2015 (0:52). Courtesy of Facebook.



Marissa is seen lying on her bed surrounded by stuffed toy dolls. The old fan, the stained walls and the fenced window imply her economic state. However, the light coming from the window and the colourful dolls create a sense of comfort. In comparison to Fig 2.1, Marissa looks more relaxed with her posture changed from standing to lying. Her facial expression is more neutral and softer compared to Fig 2.1 where she is tense and unhappy. She is seen as an individual with a choice and taste compared with Fig 2.1 where she is part of a uniformed workforce. However, in another sense, this image works to belittle her as a child. Her being surrounded by dolls and fondling one reminds the spectator of a playing child. In terms of spatiality, the cramped room and the lack of white space connote low-class life (Berger, 2008: 77).

A Discourse of Economic Prosperity

<Paula>

6 We think it's a very dignified activity.

7 But it has not been easy

8 It has been very useful to access *Internet.org* for free.

9 The financial planning page of Su Dinero has taught me to save.

10 I read success stories of women on YoAprendo.

11 *I grew up on a farm in rural China.*

12 *Since I had no money for publicity, I took charge of marketing myself.*

13 They motivate and inspire me to persevere when everything is difficult.

14 With *Internet.org*, I have the tools to follow my dream.

<Marissa>

15 Every day at the factory is the same.

16 I work long hours.

17 But I also have dreams of my own.

18 Someday, I'll be a businesswoman.

19 And I'm already saving what little I earn from the factory as capital.

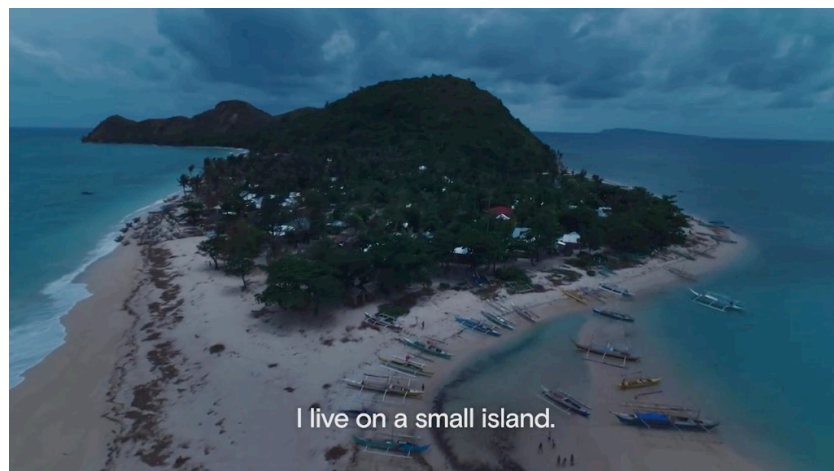
20 I find great sales using *Internet.org*.

21 One day, I'll have my own doll store.

The clips 'Paula' and 'Marissa' convey connectivity as a means to economic prosperity. The two women are portrayed as being determined but deficient in achieving their goals in the state of no connectivity. Their current conditions are 'not easy' (7) and a repetition ('the same': 15) of 'long (working) hours' (16). However, their aspirations are presented as something 'dignified' (6), as 'dreams' (17) that they can 'own' (17). Connectivity is depicted as 'tools' (14) that will help them reach 'success' (10) such as opening one's 'own doll store' (21). It teaches them how to 'save' (9) or to find 'great sales' (20) and even becomes a source of motivation, inspiration and perseverance. The advertisement stresses that this is all 'free' (8), appealing to the unconnected others jump on the bandwagon for success. However, in creating this myth, it leaves out the cost of connectivity, such as issues of automated connectivity and the financial resources needed to purchase and sustain mobile devices. For the audience of the global North, it can create a misleading notion that providing access will serve as a panacea to inequality by eliminating the technical context.

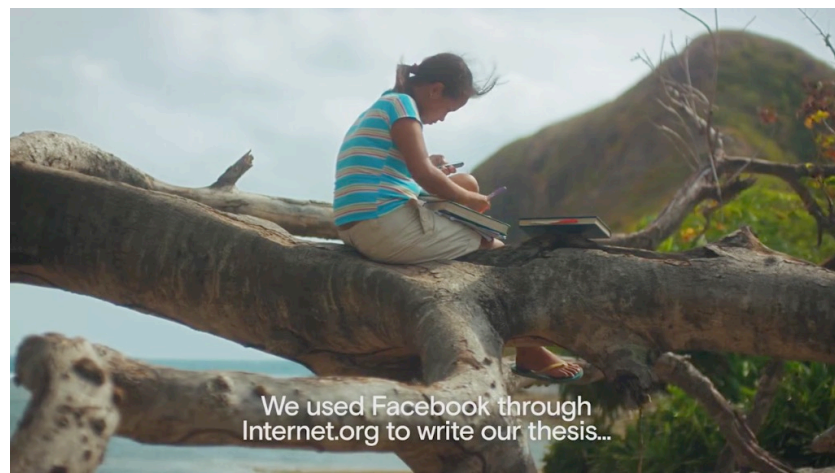
Theme 2: Pride

Fig 3.1: Riza. 2015 (0:03). Courtesy of Facebook.



A small island is seen at the centre of the image. The island's size and the small boats parked along the beach signals it as a fishing village rather than a resort island or a port city. Some houses are visible on the hills of the island and some people are seen near the bottom of the image. However, the island is mostly vacant, connoting a distant and isolated location. Sunlight is not visible on the image and it is instead filled with dark blue and gray hues, creating a lonely and forlorn ambience. Such visual language resembles how a distant, unconnected place is imagined in Fig 1.1.

Fig 3.2: Riza. 2015 (0:48). Courtesy of Facebook.



Riza is seen sitting on a tree branch. She is seated slightly above eye-level, causing the spectator to look up at her. The difference in height functions to put her in power over the spectator, thus empowering her (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996: 146-148). The hill and the upward-pointing branches reinforce this sense of empowerment. She is dressed in a t-shirt and shorts and wearing slippers as her hair blows in the wind. This instills a care-free atmosphere and simultaneously implies that she lives in a tropical region. The lush green tree and glimpses of the ocean in the background bolster this geographic distance. Yet spectators can relate to her due to the way she is casually hunched over mobile phone while using it, a posture seen among mobile phone users around the world. Such visual construction works to bring the spectator closer to her, implying connectivity as a tool to narrow distance.

Fig 3.3: Riza. 2015 (1:00). Courtesy of Facebook.



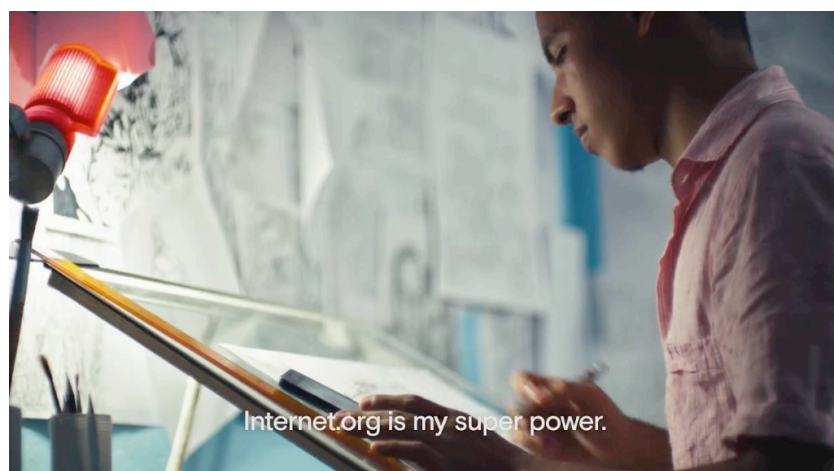
Riza is seen standing at the head of the boat in the middle of a sea. The fact that she is seen leading the journey and stands above eye-level again functions to empower her. She is wearing a Western-style graduation gown and holding the cap in one hand and the certificate in another hand. The sea foams, the turquoise hue and the abundant sunlight reinforces a sense of achievement and signals that she is moving forward and determined to take on new challenges. Her confident stature is juxtaposed with the man steering the boat. He is seen dark-skinned, topless and skinny, with his hair tied on the top of his head in a way that is unconventional in the West. The two peoples' height also plays a critical role, with the difference between the crouching man and standing Riza creating an unseen hierarchy of class – Riza as a member of the civilised and educated 'us' and the man stereotyped as the distant and exotic 'other'. Such 'positional communication' (Dyer, 1982: 101), which uses the relationships between subjects within the frame, connotes connectivity as a means of class mobilization and raises questions on who we accept as 'us' and who we continue to exclude among the distant 'others'.

Fig 4.1: Jesus. 2016 (0:30). Courtesy of Facebook.



Jesus is seen standing by the lakeside. His physique is hardly visible except for the white top and the blue pants he is wearing. His presence stands out in the vast nature surrounding him where no other living creature is visible. Scale plays a symbolic role as 'shapes and objects are indeterminate in size until placed into a relationship with some other shape or object whose size is known' (Berger, 2008: 77). The image portrays Jesus as a small and insignificant being by contrasting him to the vast nature that surrounds him. The fact that he is standing without taking any action connotes him as a passive being. Meanwhile, as seen in Fig 1.1 and Fig 3.1, the lack of signs of civilisation functions to highlight isolation and thus underscore the need for connectivity.

Fig 4.2: Jesus. 2016 (0:52). Courtesy of Facebook.



Jesus is portrayed as a professional illustrator who is using his mobile phone to work. Equipment, such as the tilted desk and the pens and brushes, reinforce such depiction. The sketches on the wall and his focused gaze connote him as a skilled and able artist. Composition-wide, as seen in Fig 3.2, spectators are forced to look up at him, rendering him as a figure of authority. His pink buttoned shirt, the modern equipment and the bright ambience of the room works to decontextualise him. He is no longer a vulnerable being in a distant place but is instead recognised as an illustrator working on his job in an urban setting. Such portrayal may be effective in creating the myth and persuading the connected that the distant others have the potential of becoming ‘us’ when they are given the necessary resources.

Fig 4.3: Jesus. 2016 (0:54). Courtesy of Facebook.



This image shows one of Jesus’ drawings. Two men wearing tight leotards are shown flying forward with one arm stretched. Their pose reminds the Western spectator of superheroes with supernatural power who fly in similar postures to save the world. Meanwhile, a round submarine is also shown in the centre. The protruding head of the submarine and the water foam bubbling near the rear signals its speed and power. The deployment of quasi-superhero figures and their powerful movements as well as the genre of sketch create a surreal fantasy that transcends reality and the authority of state power (Miettinen, 2011). This functions to depict connectivity as a transnational superpower and problem-solver that will transform the unconnected into ‘superheroes’, persuading the unconnected to become part of such myth.

A Discourse of Humanisation

<Riza>

23 I live on a small island.

24 The only job for women here is gathering seashells.

25 But I wanted something greater for myself.

26 So I decided to study computer science in town.

27 I travelled by boat every day just to go to school.

28 When I was writing my thesis, there was a strong typhoon.

29 I could not leave the island for weeks.

30 My phone became a classroom to communicate with my groupmates.

31 We used Facebook through Internet. Org to write our thesis...

32 I am proud to be the first person in my family to earn a computer science degree.

<Jesus>

33 The people of my town don't have a lot of money...

34 but what they do have is dignity.

35 I have never left my home town.

36 I learned to draw completely on my own.

37 I feel proud because I am the first person here drawing professionally.

38 Sometimes I have to draw things I've never seen before...

39 like a submarine, for example.

40 What is a submarine?

41 How should I know?

42 So I looked it up on *Internet.org*.

46 *Internet.org* is my super power.

In the clips 'Riza' and 'Jesus', connectivity is depicted as a catalyst that helps the protagonists overcome physical, economic, social, educational distances to obtain pride. The campaign begins by stressing their limitations through geographic features ('small island': 23, 'not leave the island': 29, 'never left home town': 35), economic circumstances ('don't have...money': 33) and social situations ('only job': 24). However, despite such hurdles, they are humanised as people who 'wanted something greater' (25) and who have 'dignity' (34). By zooming in on their personal narratives, they become people who have the potential to become us once they are connected rather than the anonymous members of 'the "teeming masses" of Third World' (Escobar, 1995: 70). Such efforts to humanise the distant others as people who deserve recognition and help – or in this case, connectivity – works to establish a 'moral proximity'

between the audience and the protagonist (Chouliaraki, 2006), thus justifying the need for connectivity. The campaign further develops this strategy by presenting a positive scenario in which the distant others ‘feel proud’ (32, 37) and empowered with ‘superpower’ (46) and have the potential to spread the positivity in their communities by becoming ‘the first person’ (32, 37) to acquire pride.

Theme 3: A Future

Fig 5.1: Kenner. 2015 (0:24). Courtesy of Facebook.



Three boys, including Kenner, are seen playing soccer. The coloured walls in the background show they are playing the sport in the school ground but the sand and their bare feet imply their poverty compared to the children of the developed world who are more likely to be seen wearing soccer shoes and playing on grass. Their torsos are cropped out, encouraging the viewer to concentrate on the movement of their legs. Such cropping is often used to ‘draw attention to certain parts of the body’, fragmenting the body ‘as if their bodies were made up of spare parts’ (Dyer, 1982: 107). In terms of movement, they are seen running forward and actively engaging in the sport, constructing the feel of energy and progress.

Fig 5.2: *Kenner*. 2015 (0:33). Courtesy of Facebook.



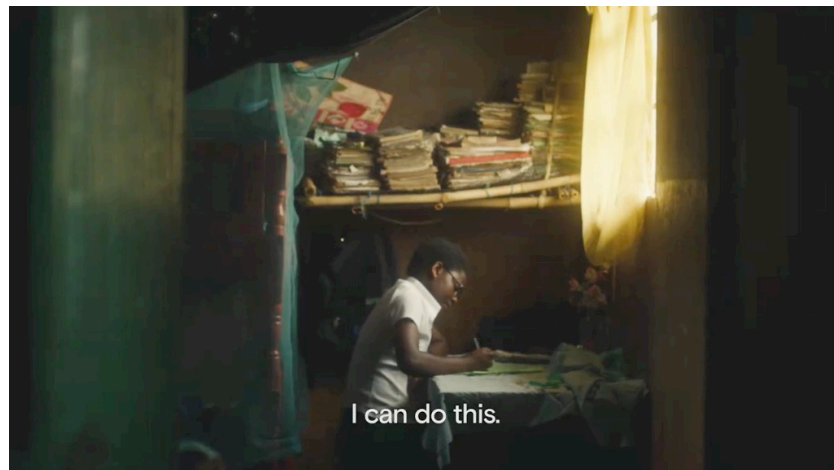
Kenner is seen looking at the screen of a mobile phone held by an adult. His intent gaze, serious facial expression and the pen and notebook in his hands imply that he is concentrating hard for an academic purpose. Kenner's proximity with the viewer reveals his 'individuality and personality' and suggests that he 'belongs or should belong to "our group"' (Jewitt and Oyama, 2001: 146). Meanwhile, the dark background makes it difficult for the viewer to construe the spatial setting while the white light reflected from the screen highlights Kenner's facial features. The emphasis on the centre of image also invites the audience to follow Kenner's gaze to the mobile phone. Such use of light creates an almost sacred ambience of 'enlightenment'. In contrast, the adult who is holding the mobile phone remains mostly invisible. Except for the bigger hand that implies him as a male adult, the figure is, overall, blurred. Such difference in representation incurs the question of who is included and who is excluded in connectivity and furthermore whether the adults of distant others are being silenced for the children of the developed world to take charge.

Fig 5.3: *Kenner*. 2015 (0:43). Courtesy of Facebook.



Kenner and his friends are seen cycling. In contrast to the first image where their torsos are cropped to emphasise their legs, the boys appear in a complete form that shows their smiling faces. The tilted bicycles, which create an asymmetrical balance, create a vibrant and dynamic ambience (Berger, 2008: 80). Compared to the first image where their feet are bare, they are donned with colourful clothes, bags and shoes. The movement, facial expression and colour create a peaceful and playful ambience that ‘make the viewers identify with them ... as if they could come from anywhere in the world including the developed world’ (Dogra, 2012: 36). Nonetheless, difference is presented through their darker skin colours, the tropical background and the simple houses of a rural town.

Fig 6.1: Elisha’s Daughters. 2015 (0:12). Courtesy of Facebook.



Elisha’s daughter is seen studying at her desk. While the darkness of the room makes it difficult to distinguish the features of the room, the viewer can assume a state of poverty through the bare wall and the scarce furniture. She is looking downward on her notebook and is seated sideways. Such lack of eye contact creates a psychological distance in which the viewer is observing her rather than interacting. Her concentration and the heaps of books displayed above her imply a yearning for learning. Like Fig 5.2, the insufficient light and the child’s intent focus creates a solemn atmosphere. Lighting here functions as ‘an extremely powerful aesthetic device’ in the fact that it “‘makes us” see and feel in certain ways’ (Berger, 2008: 81-83).

Fig 6.2: Elisha's Daughters. 2015 (0:38). Courtesy of Facebook.



Elisha's family is seen seated in their living room. While light is still not obvious, it is more airy and lighter than Fig 6.1 due to the light coming in from the windows and the cracks of the door. Despite the stark decorations of the room, the vivid colours of the children's attire and their smiling faces create an optimistic ambience. While Elisha is holding the mobile phone, it is his daughters who are more visible due to their bright outfits. In fact, Elisha's figure is almost covered by his daughters, highlighting the presence of the children rather than the adults. Meanwhile, the traditional family of a heterogeneous couple and their children gathered in the living room create a sense of familiarity for the Western audience.

Fig 6.3: Elisha's Daughters. 2015 (0:52). Courtesy of Facebook.



Elisha's daughter is seen running across a forest. Her folded knee and stretched leg as well as the blurred setting implies that she is running at a fast pace. Similar to Fig 5.1, the torso is cropped to emphasise her movement, which contributes to an energetic and dynamic ambience that connotes progress. However, the natural setting and the colourful skirt

functions as a reification of otherness and a reminder of the cultural and geographic distance with the Western viewer.

A Discourse of Children

<Kenner>

47 Being a kid is cool.

48 We are learning about the continent of Asia.

49 And it's really difficult.

50 In our school, we don't have books for this type of work.

51 We have to look things up on Internet. org.

54 With the Internet, you never feel lost.

55 There are still many good things to learn.

<Elisha's Daughters>

60 Girls are ready to stand up and be counted.

61 People here view girls as a burden.

62 When I visited Girl Effect on Internet.org, I learned many things.

63 *Being born a girl shouldn't mean living with less freedom and rights than a boy.*

64 *Girls can also become leaders.*

65 *Do you have dreams?*

66 *Make them happen.*

67 *Yes, I have dreams.*

68 I can see that if I teach my girls...

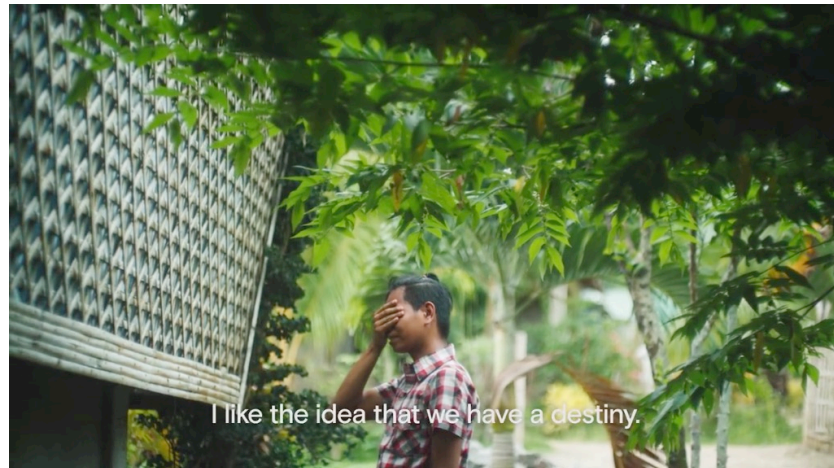
69 ... they can become free.

Children are the most visible characters in the clips 'Kenner' and 'Elisha's Daughters', lending support to a study which found that children accounted for more than 40% of development campaign messages (Dogra, 2012: 33). Such visibility is also distinctive in the discourse which specifically mentions them as 'kid' (47), 'girls' (60, 61, 63, 68) and 'boy' (63). The environment surrounding the children is presented in a negative light ('don't have books': 50, 'burden': 61). The campaign, however, proceeds that they can benefit from improved circumstances such as being connected and fulfil their potential through connotations of hope which are prevalent in 'many good things' (55), 'having dreams' (65) and 'becoming free' (69). It also conveys connectivity as a means of security, with Kenner remarking how he 'never feel(s) lost' (54). In a way, this discourse projects the global South as needy 'children' who are dependent on the 'adult' or the developed world (Shohat and Stam, 1998). Naturally, adults of the distant 'others' remain invisible or are given insignificant roles in improving the

welfare of their offspring. Such discourse serves to include the children while excluding the adult 'others'.

Theme 4: Family

Fig 7.1: Renald. 2016 (0:06). Courtesy of Facebook.



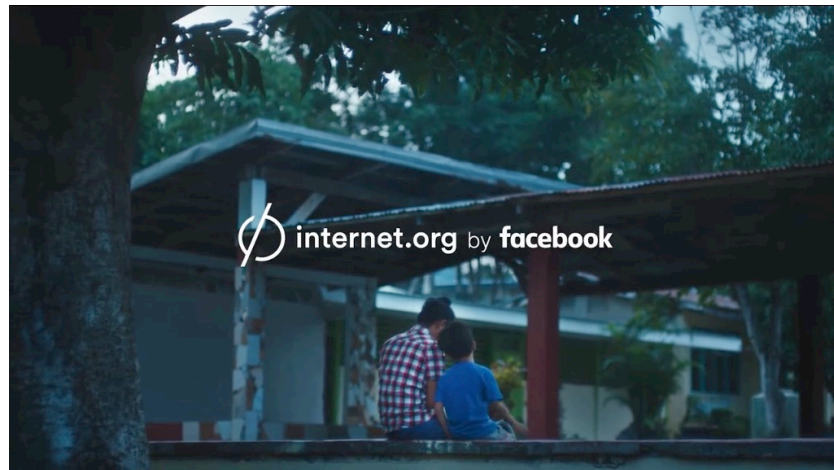
Renald is seen covering his face with his hands. While the viewer cannot see his face, one can presume his 'difference' through the rural surrounding, his darker skin and eccentric hair style. Dogra (2012: 69) suggests that closeness to nature 'predominantly establish[es] a generalised rurality and lack of or low level of skills'. The shot size which puts him in a distance and the eye level which puts him slightly lower than the viewer, meanwhile, weakens proximity with the viewer. The way he is facing sideways and blocking face with his hand connotes isolation and perhaps even ignorance. The fact that viewers can see him while his vision is disturbed further objectifies him while putting the audience in control.

Fig 7.2: Renald. 2016 (1:11). Courtesy of Facebook.



Renald's hand and his nephew's hands are seen holding the mobile phone. Only the hands are distinct among their physical features, rendering the mobile phone as the centre of attention. The light of the mobile phone and the darkness surrounding it further reinforces this effect. Viewers are invited to look down at the mobile phone with them, which increases intimacy. However, the viewer's position is slightly higher than the two, putting the viewer in a superior position than Renald and his nephew.

Fig 7.3: Renald. 2016 (1:22). Courtesy of Facebook.



Renald and his nephew are seated on a wooden bench. While the intimacy of the two people creates a sense of warmth, a certain distance is established with the viewer as only their backs are showing. Renald's slightly hunched posture suggests an unconfident and vulnerable character. Meanwhile, the bold white campaign and corporate logo stand out against the dim setting, with the sharp contrast of light against dark generating attention (Berger, 2008: 109). Its central location also seizes the viewer's attention. The use of contrast and positioning highlights the campaign logo while instrumentalising the protagonists as a backdrop.

A Discourse of Care

<Renald>

70 I like the idea that we have a destiny

71 I've been taking care of Justine since the week he was born

72 He's a little mischievous but I love him like my own son.

73 *-Uncle, can I speak to mama now?—Soon.*

74 His mother works out of the country.

75 But with the free and simple services available with Internet.org

76 they are able to communicate with each other every night.

77 *So what do you want to tell your mom?*

78 *I love you.*

Connectivity is depicted as a means of care in the clip 'Renald'. The text, which mentions how 'free and simple' (75) Internet enables 'communication' (76) promotes care rather than technological or economic advantages as the ultimate benefit of connectivity. Interestingly, it fails to inform the audience on how such 'free and simple' trait is relevant to long-distance bonding. To better engage the global audience, the advertisement heavily draws on the concept of universal kinship by emphasising vocabulary such as 'son' (72), 'uncle' (73) and 'mama' (73)/'mother' (74)/'mom' (77). Such effort epitomises in the 3 words 'I love you' (78), which the boy speaks in English rather than in his mother tongue as other parts of the transcription are spoken in. While improving audience engagement, the use of English simultaneously serves as a tool that incorporates the distant others into the realm of Western knowledge.

DISCUSSION

'Othering' through Imagery

The findings show that representations of the distant 'others' are not limited to a dichotomous categorisation of before and after acquiring connectivity. Features that differentiated them are still present after they have become connected. Physical elements (hair style and skin colour), lighting (darkness surrounding the distant 'others' and light surrounding the mobile phone), social settings (rundown houses and colourful outfits) and compositional tools (eye-level, scale and cropping which fetishises the distant 'others') are in play. Nature is also frequently deployed as 'an ideological category' to construct a 'rural', low-skilled, 'other-worldly' feel (Mitchell, 1989: 2, cited in Dogra, 2012: 70). Such elements function to objectify the 'others' as cultural or ethnic spectacles even after they have become 'us' through a connectivity-powered transformation.

Humanising through discourse

Rather than simplified and generalized stereotyping, the distant 'others' are constructed through humanisation. By using the protagonists' names as the title of the advertisements as well as deploying the self-confessional genre where the campaign message is narrated by the protagonist, the campaign aims to recognise the distant 'others' as dignified individuals who deserve the benefits of connectivity. Through dramatic narration that involves a description of their situation before and after acquiring connectivity, the protagonists become 'heroes' or 'survivors' who now share 'our' values such as 'pride' and 'dream'. However, while this

approach humanises the distant ‘others’, it simultaneously works to relegate the global South as a land void of advancement. To maximise the dramatic change connectivity had on their lives, the protagonists tend to negatively narrate their place of origin, describing its geographic isolation, lack of economic and social resources and absence of opportunities and rights. Development researches note how in situations where the subaltern speaks, ‘they (like anyone) may perform the roles they think are expected of them’ to ‘modify their speech...or exaggerate their praise to please the funder’ (Kapoor, 2008: 51). Such examples demonstrate that voice alone does not guarantee agency. In fact, such voice can be exploited to naturalise certain values and ‘perhaps also to further silence the less-privileged group’s own ability to speak and to be heard’ (Alcoff, 1991: 26, quoted in Kapoor, 2008: 46). Throughout this process, discourse functions as the primary method in this reproduction of power relationship, while imagery supports such discourse through ‘a visual language of care, interdependence and a common humanity’ (Kothari, 2014: 154).

Connectivity as a selective condition

In such narrative, connectivity is portrayed as a condition or a filter that transforms ‘them’ to ‘us’. The campaign conveys the message that connectivity will bring the benefits of economic prosperity, pride, a better future for children and kinship, naturally positing that the distant ‘others’ are currently deficient and in need of such values. While connectivity is depicted as a key ingredient for the transition from ‘them’ to ‘us’, the findings show that it does not function in such way for all members of the distant ‘others’. Instead, connectivity functions as a selective condition, enabling some to become ‘us’ while continuing to exclude and confine ‘others’ as can be seen in the clip ‘Riza’ where a new hierarchy is established among the distant ‘others’ and in the clips ‘Kenner’ and ‘Elisha’s Daughters’ where children are depicted as key beneficiaries of connectivity while adults remain in the background. Meanwhile, the depiction of connectivity as a humanising and feel-good feature fails to address the technological gains and losses that come with access, such as the cost for electricity and mobile gadgets and issues of privacy and control. While the advertisement shows how connectivity can be used as a tool that eradicates distance as Castells (1996) has acknowledged, the emotional approach fails to address structural issues that should be considered ahead of adopting connectivity.

CONCLUSION

This work lends support to researches on how development campaigns function through ‘a dualism of “difference” and “oneness”’, which constructs the global South ‘as separate from the West while still being like us through our shared humanity’ (Dogra, 2012: 25). The

emphasis on humanity and human rights as well as the depiction of connectivity as a humanising technology constructs the 'others' as those who can be or who are already part of us through connectivity. On the other hand, representations of otherness persist through visual language that highlights their distance, projecting them as 'others' even after they have become 'us'.

Such findings show that the 'others' are no longer projected through dichotomous frames of positive/negative or us/them. It also proves how the mechanic practice of naming or giving a voice does not suffice for a wholesome recognition, reflecting Spivak (1988)'s argument that the subaltern are spoken for rather than speak as the dominant dictate both capital and power. Even when they have voices, even when they are named, even when they have 'dreams', even when they become us, they continue to be 'others' who are incorporated into a Western system of ideology and knowledge. The emphasis on common humanity and selfhood, which manifests itself through personal narratives on success stories, is in fact utilised as tool to legitimise Western ideology and psychological imaging in which the self is pressured to continue to advance (Illouz, 2007; Yrjölä, 2011). The accentuation of the 'others' self ironically undermines them by 'failing to acknowledge, accept and respect difference' and instead merge them into 'our' established world (Orgad, 2012: 166).

Connectivity in this sense not only serves as a tool of reinforcing 'digital colonialism' by infringing net neutrality and controlling what users can access online through the platform provided by Facebook but also as a tool that glosses over structural issues of acquiring connectivity. By utilising the voice and narratives of the distant 'others', it further dilutes the political debate on the necessity of universal access and promotes it as a panacea for inequality.

This analysis, however, is not a denial of connectivity. It is not an argument calling for the action of 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater by being uncompromisingly "anti-development" and arguing for "alternatives to development"' (Escobar, 1995: 215, quoted in Kapoor, 2008: 55) - or in this case 'anti-connectivity' and 'alternatives to connectivity'. In fact, it is about what Spivak (1990: 11) stressed about becoming 'vigilant' rather than making the 'totally counter-productive gesture of repudiating it'. While there are moral issues to be considered by dominant advertisers like Facebook in circumstances where they have 'power over the words of another' (Parker and Burman, 1993: 156), the emphasis on 'vigilance' leads me to turn to the audience, the average consumers.

As Dru (1996: 196) writes, 'only apt, intelligent, appealing, or funny images that speak to them and say something new will be worthy in their eyes'. Indeed, in the end, it is the audience who decides the fate of an advertisement. It is thus why as 'social readers' of advertisements (Dyer, 1982: 115), we have the responsibility to become ethical consumers to 'cast a keen eye on the familiar and the taken-for-granted' (Kapoor, 2008: 55) and to go beyond denotations to actively endorse or condemn the ideology embedded in marketing. In encounters with development campaigns and advertisements, it is about building an *ethical relationship* with those who are being represented as distant 'others'.

As Orgad (2012: 187) suggests, this could begin with acknowledging distance instead of ignoring it:

In other words, rather than eradicating distance, perhaps a more productive project for media representation today would be to acknowledge the inevitability of distance and focus on developing ways to engage and work *with* distance, in order to create fuller and more complex understandings of the world.

Rather than choosing the convenience of eliminating distance by incorporating 'them' into 'our' world, one should instead recognise their distance in 'making sense of the world' (Hall, 1997: 2) as a place where there are different roads to travel on rather than one road that everyone should travel on.

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APPENDIX

Transcript and synopsis of Internet.org campaign advertisements

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Internetdotorg/videos>

Title	Text/English subtitle	Synopsis/Denotation	Notes
<p>Paula (00:00-1:10)</p>	<p>1 We decided to come live here 2 at 3186 meters altitude in the mountains 3 so that our young children could grow up in this environment. 4 We didn't know anything about agriculture 5 but we decided to start a business making compost. 6 We think it's a very dignified activity. 7 But it has not been easy 8 It has been very useful to access <i>Internet.org</i> for free. 9 The financial planning page of Su Dinero has taught me to save. 10 I read success stories of women on YoAprendo. 11 <i>I grew up on a farm in rural China.</i> 12 <i>Since I had no money for publicity, I took charge of marketing myself.</i> 13 They motivate and inspire me to persevere when everything is difficult. 14 With <i>Internet.org</i>, I have the tools to follow my dream.</p>	<p>Paula and her family of four (including her husband and two sons) work at their rural family farm. They take care of the cattle and make compost. They are a happy family. The children run around and help with the work and Paula and her husband are affectionate about each other. Paula uses her mobile phone to supervise the financial planning or marketing of their family business. When she's not working, she tends to her garden where she grows flowers. The advertisement ends with the family returning to their home after a day's work.</p>	
<p>Marissa (00:00-1:04)</p>	<p>15 Every day at the factory is the same. 16 I work long hours. 17 But I also have dreams of my own. 18 Someday, I'll be a businesswoman. 19 And I'm already saving what little I earn from the factory as capital. 20 I find great sales using <i>Internet.org</i>. 21 One day, I'll have my own doll store. 22 If you see me in 10 years, you won't recognize me.</p>	<p>Marissa works at a textile factory with many other workers. After work, she takes a commuter bus to return home. Her dream is to open a doll store. During her commute, she searches the Internet for good sales and keeps them in her room. Her collection of stuffed animals includes a white rabbit, a purple giraffe and a pink pig. On a day she is not working, she looks at the passing cars and thinks about her dream of becoming a businesswoman.</p>	
<p>Riza (00:00-1:12)</p>	<p>23 I live on a small island. 24 The only job for women here is gathering seashells.</p>	<p>Riza lives on a small island. She sometimes collects seashells with her daughter for living. However,</p>	

	<p>25 But I wanted something greater for myself.</p> <p>26 So I decided to study computer science in town.</p> <p>27 I travelled by boat every day just to go to school.</p> <p>28 When I was writing my thesis, there was a strong typhoon.</p> <p>29 I could not leave the island for weeks.</p> <p>30 My phone became a classroom to communicate with my groupmates.</p> <p>31 We used Facebook through Internet. Org to write our thesis...</p> <p>32 I am proud to be the first person in my family to earn a computer science degree.</p>	<p>she decides to learn computer science in town and commutes by boat. When she cannot go to school due to inclement weather, she uses the Internet for her study. She sometimes uses her mobile phone as she studies in outdoor places such as the beach. She completes a dissertation and returns home by boat wearing her graduation gown and holding her graduation certificate.</p>	
<p>Jesus (00:00-1:03)</p>	<p>33 The people of my town don't have a lot of money...</p> <p>34 but what they do have is dignity.</p> <p>35 I have never left my home town.</p> <p>36 I learned to draw completely on my own.</p> <p>37 I feel proud because I am the first person here drawing professionally.</p> <p>38 Sometimes I have to draw things I've never seen before...</p> <p>39 like a submarine, for example.</p> <p>40 What is a submarine?</p> <p>41 How should I know?</p> <p>42 So I looked it up on <i>Internet.org</i>.</p> <p>43 I even use it to take care of my baby, who is about to be born.</p> <p>44 <i>She can already open her eyes and suck her thumb,</i></p> <p>45 Are you sucking your thumb, my love?</p> <p>46 <i>Internet.org</i> is my super power.</p>	<p>Jesus lives in a poor town, which he has never left. He draws professionally and is proud of it but sometimes he feels helpless when he has to draw things he has never seen. He goes to the lake to imagine but doesn't find an answer. Instead, he relies on his mobile phone for such work. His pregnant wife also uses the mobile phone to find information on infants as Jesus caresses her stomach.</p>	
<p>Kenner (00:00-00:49)</p>	<p>47 Being a kid is cool.</p> <p>48 We are learning about the continent of Asia.</p> <p>49 And it's really difficult.</p> <p>50 In our school, we don't have books for this type of work.</p> <p>51 We have to look things up on Internet. org.</p>	<p>Kenner gets ready to go to school. He studies at school and plays soccer with his friends. However, he sometimes needs the help of the Internet to find information for his studying, such as drawing a map of Asia. His friends gather in a group and get help from an adult</p>	<p>Kenner starts a conversation with his adult neighbour, but the adult's response is not audible in the advertisement.</p>

	<p>52 <i>Ralfi, a question...</i></p> <p>53 <i>How do I draw the map of Asia?</i></p> <p>54 With the Internet, you never feel lost.</p> <p>55 There are still many good things to learn.</p>	<p>neighbour who searches information for them.</p>	
<p>Elisha's Daughters (00:00-1:04)</p>	<p>56 Say to yourself...</p> <p>57 I am courageous.</p> <p>58 I am beautiful.</p> <p>59 I can do this.</p> <p>60 Girls are ready to stand up and be counted.</p> <p>61 People here view girls as a burden.</p> <p>62 When I visited Girl Effect on Internet.org, I learned many things.</p> <p>63 <i>Being born a girl shouldn't mean living with less freedom and rights than a boy.</i></p> <p>64 <i>Girls can also become leaders.</i></p> <p>65 <i>Do you have dreams?</i></p> <p>66 <i>Make them happen.</i></p> <p>67 <i>Yes, I have dreams.</i></p> <p>68 I can see that if I teach my girls...</p> <p>69 ... they can become free.</p>	<p>Elisha's daughters run through the forest and the fields. Elisha, who is a farmer, uses the Internet to find information about girls' rights. He and his family gather in their living room as he reads the information from the web site. Following this family time, he takes a walk with his children. His girls then again run through the forest.</p>	<p>Both Elisha and his daughters take part in narration.</p>
<p>Renald (00:00-1:23)</p>	<p>70 I like the idea that we have a destiny.</p> <p>71 I've been taking care of Justine since the week he was born.</p> <p>72 He's a little mischievous but I love him like my own son.</p> <p>73 <i>-Uncle, can I speak to mama now? - Soon.</i></p> <p>74 His mother works out of the country.</p> <p>75 But with the free and simple services available with <i>Internet.org</i></p> <p>76 they are able to communicate with each other every night.</p> <p>77 <i>So what do you want to tell your mom?</i></p> <p>78 <i>I love you.</i></p> <p>79 <i>What letter does "I love you" start with?</i></p> <p>80 <i>Ai... ah... ah... It starts with "A"!</i></p> <p>81 <i>No, it's the letter "I".</i></p> <p>82 <i>You liar.</i></p>	<p>Renald plays with his nephew Justine. They play hide-and-peek or tag each other. Justine gets excited when he sees a plane flying over his head since his mother is working abroad. At nights, Renald sits down with Justine to text her. When Renald asks Justine what he wants to write to his mother, Justine says he wants to tell her 'I love you'.</p>	<p>Renald is the key protagonist, but Justine also takes part in narration.</p>

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