



Western NGOs representation of “Third World women”

- A comparative study of *Kvinna till Kvinna* (Sweden) and
Women for Women International (USA)

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Bachelor's thesis in Political Science 15 ECTS

International Politics and Economics

University West

Spring term 2013

Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive study is to examine how two Western women's NGOs represent women in the "Third World". The examined cases are the progressive NGOs *Kvinna till Kvinna* (Sweden) and the American counterpart *Women for Women International* (US).

Qualitative research methodology has been utilized throughout this study. This thesis is also based on the social theory of constructivism and its ontological assumptions. Since both Sweden and USA are said to be strong promoters of gender equality- a comparative study design, examining two progressive NGOs is one suitable way to analyze the specified research questions. The analysis is based upon the article "Under Western Eyes" (1986) in which Chandra Mohanty discusses Western feminists' representation of "Third World women", summarized in six main stereotypes. Mohanty's six claims regarding Western representation of "Third World women" designed the framework that has been used to analyze the collected data, which consists of the two organization's own material that is available on their individual websites. The formulated research questions asks whether *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* represent "Third World women" as a homogeneous group sharing a similar experience of oppression in the ways described by Mohanty and if there are any differences in the ways of representation when comparing *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International*.

As the analysis shows, it is evident that four out of six claims, or stereotypes, made by Mohanty can be found in the material from both organizations. "Women as victims of development process" is the only claim that could not be found in any of the two cases. The stereotype of "women as victims of colonial process" could only be found in the material of *Women for Women International* and is not mentioned at all by *Kvinna till Kvinna*. There are no major differences in the two NGOs' practices of representing the women they seek to assist, but they do however in some cases tend to focus on different aspects within the main stereotypes.

Keywords: "Third World women", representation, generalization, stereotype, NGO

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. PREVIOUS LITERATURE ON THE REPRESENTATION OF “THIRD WORLD WOMEN”	7
3. THEORIES OF REPRESENTING “THIRD WORLD WOMEN”	10
3.1 MOHANTY’S CLAIMS ABOUT WESTERN REPRESENTATIONS	11
3.1.1 WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF MALE VIOLENCE	12
3.1.2 WOMEN AS UNIVERSAL DEPENDENTS	12
3.1.3 WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF COLONIAL PROCESS	13
3.1.4 WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF THE FAMILIAL SYSTEMS	13
3.1.5 WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES	14
3.1.6 WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES	14
3.2 THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK	15
4. SPECIFIED AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION	16
5. A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF <i>KVINNA TILL KVINNA</i> AND <i>WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL</i>	16
6. ANALYSIS OF HOW <i>KVINNA TILL KVINNA</i> AND <i>WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL</i> REPRESENT “THIRD WORLD WOMEN”	20
6.1 DO THE ORGANIZATIONS PORTRAY “THIRD WORLD WOMEN” AS A GROUP ALL SUFFERING FROM MALE VIOLENCE?	21
6.2 DO THE ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENT “THIRD WORLD WOMEN” AS UNIVERSAL DEPENDENTS?	26
6.3 DO THE ORGANIZATIONS PORTRAY “THIRD WORLD WOMEN” HOMOGENOUSLY AS VICTIMS OF COLONIAL PROCESSES?	32
6.4 DO THE ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENT “THIRD WORLD WOMEN” AS A GROUP ALL VICTIMS OF FAMILIAL SYSTEMS?	34
6.5 DO THE ORGANIZATIONS PORTRAY “THIRD WORLD WOMEN” AS A GROUP ALL SUFFERING FROM DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES?	40
6.6 DO THE ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENT “THIRD WORLD WOMEN” AS ALL OPPRESSED BY RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES?	43
6.7 SUMMARY	48
7. CONCLUSION	50
REFERENCES	53

1. Introduction

In her groundbreaking article “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” (1986), Chandra Mohanty provided a critique of the prevailing assumptions about “Third World women” found among predominant Western feminists. She rebuked the categorization of “Third World women” as a homogeneous group and argued that there is no such coherence. After the publication of Mohanty’s article, a new debate within feminist scholarship emerged (Ong, et, al, 1988; Radcliffe, 1994; Doezema, 2001; Bergeron, 2003; Kapoor, 2004; Stoeber, 2006; Narayan, 2009; Jamal, 2011; Wilson, 2011; Sandoval, 2012). Since Mohanty’s revolutionary writing in the mid-1980s, scholars are adopting her discourse and bringing up the issue of generalizations of women in the “Third World” and representing them as a monolithic and coherent group. Rather than a binary division between “First World” and “Third World” women, Mohanty argued that we must look at the multiplicity of social factors that affect women in complex ways. We must also open up for the possibility that some women in Western countries may share experiences with some women in the “Third World”. The feminist debate has been taking a new direction the last thirty years. However, what is not yet evident is whether and how Western NGOs that claim to represent “Third World women” have adapted to the change in the debate.

The number and scope of NGOs have increased in both Western and “Third World” countries during the last three decades. In 2006, there were 27472 International development NGOs operating on the international arena, which is an enormous increase since the end of the 1940s when there were only 832. When counting keywords current in the International NGOs’ titles in 2009, it became clear that, within UNs Economic and Social Council, women’s issues were the most frequent issues dealt with by development NGOs. Women’s NGOs were introduced already in the 1940s, yet 84% of all NGOs addressing women’s issues were registered after the year of 1995 (Turner, 2010, p.84).

NGOs play an important role and are influential actors in world politics. Numerous NGOs are participating in international conferences to bring their specific issues on to the world agenda (Brown et. al, 1992). NGOs’ interaction with the UN has increased significantly, with the objective of influencing decision-making and policy implementation (Martens, 2006). For

instance, in 2009 there were over 3000 NGOs that had consultative status in the UNs Economic and Social Council (Turner, 2010). Hence NGOs are significant actors in international development efforts, making an investigation of how Western NGOs are representing “Third World women” is essential. If NGOs are relying on an inaccurate, generalizing image of “Third World women”, the solutions they promote will be inadequate and distorted. This is not only problematic for the women the NGOs seek to assist, but also to the readers around the world coming across the NGOs material who will be influenced by a distorted image of women’s situation in the “Third World”.

Today, in 2013, the debate of generalizing representations is hotly debated in Sweden. For instance, Sepideh Nekomanesh, a Swedish post-colonial feminist, brought up the controversy in an article as a result of a social democratic politician, Omar Mustafa, who was forced to resign due to his position as a chairman of the Islamic Association in Sweden. Nekomanesh’s arguments parallel the critique by Mohanty, claiming that white Swedish politicians and many feminists tend to “speak for the Muslim women”. They assume that a Muslim woman is not able to speak up for herself. Furthermore, Nekomanesh argues much like Mohanty, that there is a current discourse that generalizes Muslim women into one homogeneous group represented as the “immigrant woman” or “Muslim woman”. In this specific case, Nekomanesh argues that a stereotypical representation and idea of a “Muslim man” became a fundamental reason that the social democratic politician had to resign. If you are a Muslim social democrat, you have to prove that you are pro-equality, pro-feminist and pro-LGBT-rights, - these things are not assumed, as of other social democrats. Nekomanesh concludes her article wondering whether the burden of proof would have been the same if the politician was an ethnic Swede and a believing Christian (Nekomanesh, 2013). During the entire debate concerning Omar Mustafa the fact that he is a Muslim was central, and media and other social democrats assumed that his opinions therefore did not correspond with the social democratic ones. He became a “Muslim man” more than a social democrat, and judged by other criteria based on generalizing ideas of “Muslim men”. This is an example of generalizing representations, when representing certain groups as homogenous, ignoring all distinctions, which this thesis is to look for in two NGOs.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze how one Swedish NGO and one American NGO represent the

women in the “Third World” who they seek to assist. The organizations to be examined are the Swedish *Kvinna till Kvinna* and the American counterpart *Women for Women International*. Both *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* are grassroots organizations founded in 1993, during the Balkan war. The organizations support women in countries suffering from war and conflict. From a general world perspective, Sweden is seen as great promoters of women’s rights and gender equality, and women’s NGOs operating in the United States tend to be at the leading edge of promoting women’s rights as well. These two relatively large women’s NGOs in Sweden and the United States, both of which are operating to make real difference for women in war-torn countries, can be expected to be at the leading edge concerning their ways of representation. This thesis is to examine whether *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* represent “Third World women” as a monolithic group sharing a similar experience of oppression or not, and if there are any differences between the two.

Firstly, an overview of the existing literature concerning representation of “Third World women” will be presented. The thesis will then continue by describing Mohanty’s critiques of how Western feminists tend to portray “Third World women” in the mid-1980s. Her six claims of how women in the “Third World” often are portrayed as victims, regardless of class, origin or religion, are to be presented. Mohanty’s six claims will form the analytical framework, which is to be applied on the two organizations’ representation practices. The thesis will provide a qualitative descriptive analysis comparing the two organizations *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* to conclude whether they are generalizing in their representation or not.

2. Previous literature on the representation of “Third World women”

The scholarship on Western representations of women in the “Third World” is extensive (Ong, 1988; Doezema, 2001; Bergeron, 2003; Stoever, 2006; Jamal, 2011; Wilson, 2011; Narayan, 2009; Radcliffe, 1994; Sandoval, 2012; Kapoor, 2004). The literature can be divided into sub-fields concerning who or what actor is representing the “Third World women”. The fields in which the literature is divided differ in scope and scholars. The main field covers how Western *feminists* are representing the women. Other actors that also are common in this discourse are the representation made by tourists, media, IGOs and NGOs. It is in the field of NGOs representation where vital literature is lacking and in which this thesis will make a contribution.

The major topic within the broader field of Western representations of “Third World women” focuses on how Western *feminists* portray women in the developing countries. The line of scholarship is extensive and shows how the discussion concerning how Western feminists represent “Third World women” increased after Mohanty’s article (Ong, 1988; Doezema, 2001; Bergeron, 2003; Stoever, 2006; Jamal, 2011; Wilson, 2011). Some of those scholars deal with the fact that Western feminists need to change their way of portraying “Third World women” as a homogeneous group (Narayan, 2009; Radcliffe, 1994; Sandoval, 2012; Kapoor, 2004). For instance, a number of them have brought to light generalizing and stereotyping representations of all “Third World women” as being under some shared “religious oppression”. Among Western feminists there are a prevalent view that Muslim women generally are victims of Muslim men and a patriarchal religion (Jamal, 2011).

Another line of scholarship within the field of Western representation of “Third World women” focuses on *media* representation (e.g. Parameswaran, 1996; Stoever, 2006; Smeeta 2007). The literature in this category mainly derives from American scholars, among whom media has been debated for quite some time. Post-colonial scholars have claimed that a country like the USA, that describes itself as an advocate for women's rights, still reflects an oppressive colonial mentality through the circulation of fashion magazines and the general press (Smeeta 2007). “Third World women” have been presented in American media as victims and in a great need of liberation from the West. US media also focus on the restricted lives of “Third World women”,

representing them as forced to wear a veil or burqa and portraying their own national American women as the ideal. Veiled women are portrayed as a uniformly oppressed, unhappy, passive and primitive group that is something the West should feel pity towards (Stoever, 2006).

Parameswaran (1996) uses the framework of Mohanty's 'Under Western Eyes' and applies this to how journalists represent "Third World women" in newspapers. She mainly focuses on Western media representation of Indian women.

Continuously in the literature, there are also scholars bringing up how *Inter-Governmental Organizations* (IGOs) are trying to shift their thinking concerning gender development to include social and economic dimensions of development and to lessen their generalizing view of women in the Third World (Bergeron, 2003). Bergeron has written an article that is "...examining the significance of attempts to integrate social factors into economic theory on Bank projects aimed at promoting gender equity in development" (Bergeron, 2003, p.398). Meyer (1999) argues that the United Nations have such a big influence on the world arena, thus when the empowerment of "Third World women" is put on the agenda it is to be compared with economic development. It is "...thereby making the freedom of trade and not the freedom of women the central issue" (Meyer et.al, 1999, p. 218). State intervention is limited and can contribute to a "social, economic, and ideological process that subordinates women" (Meyer et.al, 1999, p. 218). However, the literature concerning IGOs' role in representing "Third World women" is limited - there are very few studies on this topic.

Furthermore, there are studies concerning how Western *travellers* see "Third World women" (Mabro, 1991). This line of scholarship describes how Western people see themselves as culturally and morally superiority when travelling. For instance, Mabro (1991) argues that Western travellers have a monolithic and ethnocentric view, which affects their interpretation of Middle Eastern women. A small part of the literature is focusing on how Western people are reflecting upon the mainstreaming view of "Third World women" (Mabro, 1991). Mabro has investigated this by looking at how tourists are generalizing those women.

Most important for this thesis purpose is the literature that analyzes how *NGOs* portray gender and women in the "Third World" (e.g. Dogra, 2011; Wilson, 2011). Dogra (2011) argues that

gendered representations are normally used to portray issues dealing with global poverty, identity and development from a Western point of view. The so-called “Third World woman” provides NGOs by undertaking global values of womanhood and projects the Western audience with a twisted worldview of reality. The NGOs’ dominant representation of women in the “Third World” is as caring mothers. Another mistaken claim is that when a woman in the “Third World” participates in some sort of development activities, it is due to compulsion and survival and not as an effect of ‘modern values’. When NGOs are portraying “Third World women” as victims and a homogeneous group, they reproduce these generalizing ideas (Dogra, 2011). Some scholars point out the existence of a so-called “positive”, but no less generalizing, representations of “Third World women” produced by development institutions (Wilson, 2011). This produced positive image of the “Third World woman” is a form of oppression and exploitation is necessary for the model of neo-liberal capitalism, Wilson (2011) claims.

Even though scholars are bringing up how Western actors are representing “Third World women”, there is still vital information lacking. Since NGOs play such a vital role on the international arena, it is alarming that the research concerning NGOs representation is so inadequate. The literature concerning Western representation of “Third World women” increased in the 1990s and 2000s, more or less one decade after Mohanty’s critique (1986). However, the research concerning how NGOs represent women in the “Third World” did not expand until more recent years (Dogra, 2011; Wilson, 2011). There are no scholars discussing if and how NGOs in Sweden, a country often mentioned as a role model when it comes to gender equality, are representing “Third World women”. Furthermore, the same gap concerns women’s organizations in the United States. This thesis will provide an analysis of two Western women’s NGOs- one Swedish and one American, in order to see how they represent women in developing countries and whether they differ in any way.

This thesis is a vital contribution to the already existing literature since it deals with a new angle of a significant topic. NGOs are having a huge influence on people’s opinions, so incorrect representation of “Third World women” might have a negative effect on peoples’ world views and points to actors having inaccurate solutions that can be applicable to all “Third World women” as a homogenous group. To examine NGOs representation practices concerning “Third

World women” is vital, due to the increase of International NGOs the last couple of decades and its important role as influential actors in world politics. The NGOs to be examined is the progressive Swedish grassroots organization *Kvinna till Kvinna*, and its American counterpart, *Women for Women International*. One can assume that *Kvinna till Kvinna* have fair ways of representing due to Sweden’s reputation of gender equality and the NGO’s progressive agenda and women’s NGOs operating in the United States tend to be at the leading edge of promoting women’s rights.

3. Theories of representing “Third World women”

This thesis is a descriptive study that will explore whether Mohanty’s general claims about Western representations of “Third World women” hold true in the case of progressive Western women’s NGOs. This chapter will provide an understanding of the theoretical approach and theoretical framework that form the essential foundation of the thesis. Theories of representation are central for this study and rests on social constructivism for the main with underlying ontological assumptions (Creswell, 2009). Chandra Mohanty’s six more specific claims about Western feminist representations of “Third World women” will be presented. The chapter will start with the basic assumptions of constructivism, to then move on to theories of representation and Mohanty’s framework.

This thesis is based on the social theory of constructivism and its ontological assumptions (Bryman, 2008). The basic premise of constructivism is that people act in the world based on the meaning that the world has for them. Human understandings of the world are, in turn, constructed with norms, ideas, knowledge and “truths” which are all set up by social forces. For instance, Bacchi (2010) argues that the way we understand problems is socially constructed, and therefore also how we acknowledge what is a ‘problem’ and not. How the category of “Third World women” is acted upon depends fundamentally on how this category is represented. When Western actors are representing a generalizing view of the “Third World women’s” problem and assume that all women are facing the same sort of oppression, it results in one overall solution that should be applicable on all “Third World women”.

The concept 'representation' means how language, images and signs are used to communicate and to give one's understanding of the world to other people (Donnelly, 2002). Hall (1997, p.28) puts it like this: "Representation is the production of meaning through language. In representation, constructivists argue, we use signs, organized into languages of different kinds, to communicate meaningfully with others". Representations therefore become a vital object of academic study. Representation also has implications for socio-political agency. When representing a group of people as "Others", for example based on gender or ethnicity, it gives this specific group a feeling of 'otherness' and creates an "us and them" -way of thinking and acting. Furthermore, representation includes unequal power relations where some actors are in a more privileged position in terms of impact of their representations than others.

3.1 Mohanty's claims about Western representations

According to Mohanty and the avalanche of scholarship that has followed her, many Western feminist scholars have in common that they categorize "Third World women" as a coherent and monolithic group with identical interests and needs. With no consideration of class, ethnicity or location, scholars assume that all "Third World women" suffer from the same type of oppression and that the inequalities in a patriarchal society have the same consequences for all women in the "Third World" (Mohanty, 1986, p. 337). Mohanty points out an interesting aspect by asking: "Would anyone write a book entitled "Women of Europe: Roots of Oppression"? What is it about cultural 'Others' that make it so easy to analytically formulate them into homogeneous groupings with little regard for historical specificity?" (Mohanty, 1986, p.340). Not only is this a sign of 'whiteness as a norm', it also gives the specific groups of women common dependencies and needs. When creating groups like those mentioned above, where the only criteria are gender and geographical origin/skin-color, the focus on gender comes first, not taking social status, class or ethnicity into account.

An allegedly average "Third World woman" is being portrayed based on her feminine gender and stereotypical notions of being sexually constrained, ignorant, poor, traditional, domestic,

uneducated and victimized. The “Third World woman” is represented as the “Other” to Western women. In contrast, the Western woman is represented as educated, modern, controlling of their own bodies/sexualities and freedom of choice. Mohanty (1986) seeks to pick out the main strands in the representation of women in the “Third World”. She claims that six different feminist discourses together constitute “Third World women” as a monolithic subject. In short, “Third World women” are being defined as victims of male violence, women as universal dependents, victims of the colonial process, victims of the familial systems, victims of development processes, and also victims of religious ideologies. Each of these will be discussed in turn below.

3.1.1 Women as victims of male violence

In the debate of men’s violence against women the main aspect and definition is ‘sexual oppression’. As an example, Mohanty brings up the act of female genital mutilation, mostly carried out in Africa and the Middle East. Even though there in many cases is a reality with male violence against women, there is a problem with defining all “Third World women” as victims of violence carried out by men. This inaccurate perception of “Third World women” creates a picture that Mohanty means divides every “Third World society” into strong, powerful men and weak, powerless women. It generalizes all women into a coherent group where all suffers from male violence and all men into a violent group.

3.1.2 Women as universal dependents

Secondly, Mohanty brings up the representation of “Third World women” as universal dependents. Mohanty means that “Third World women” tend to be represented as both economically and politically dependent. She illustrates this by taking ‘Women of Africa’, ‘Vietnamese women’ and ‘Black American women’ as examples. Mohanty claims that these groups of women are often being portrayed as three separate groups of women, all suffer from the same oppression due to ethnicity, sex and class. The diverse group’s common image of “otherness” causes generalizations that bind them all together as one monolithic group.

3.1.3 Women as victims of colonial process

Third, Mohanty argues that Western feminist scholarship represents married “Third World women” as uniform victims of the colonial process. The analyzed text in this field discusses Bemba women (people in Zambia) and how they are portrayed as victims in the effects of Western colonization. It focuses on marital exchange of women and argues that this leads to defining Bemba women as a monolithic and victimized group caused by Western colonization. Mohanty, in contrast, argues that it is not possible to talk about Bemba women as a monolithic group when it comes to the topic of traditional marriage structure. The power relation between the man and the woman that is soon to be married is said to have changed and that Bemba women have lost the protection of tribal laws after the effect of European colonization. In return for money, a man can take the Bemba woman away from her family. That would be to completely deny the socio-historical and cultural features, and also to treat initiation without political implications. As a result, women are seen as sexual-political objects prior to entry into kinship structures. Mohanty’s point is that, it is not possible to generalize Bemba women as a homogeneous group within the traditional marriage structure (Mohanty 1986, p.341).

3.1.4 Women as victims of the familial systems

The fourth point concerns representation of women in familial systems. Western feminist scholarship represents “Third World women” as a wife, mother, sister or daughter. It is in the family where women are constructed and defined. Many feminist scholars contend that the patriarchal structure within the home can be compared to the vision that Arab and Muslim societies have on women in general. Women are uniformly represented as attaining a value and a form of status within their families, which are portrayed as uniform structures that make women an oppressed group. However, according to Mohanty, this would be to totally deny the historical or contextual variability of the power structures that is the family and to again assume that women are nothing but sexual-political subjects prior to their entry into the family (Mohanty, 1986, p. 342). There are very few discourses that actually focus on the practices within the family and what it means for women to be mothers, wives, sisters and daughters in terms of status and

power. Many of the scholars also argue that the patriarchal family in, for instance, Arab and Muslim societies does not change over time, representing these structures to be constructed from the time of prophet Mohammed until present and affecting all women as an oppressed group (Mohanty, 1986, p. 342).

3.1.5 Women as victims of development processes

Fifth, Mohanty looks at how “Third World women” are represented in relation to the development process. Many feminist scholars have looked into the effects that development policies have on “Third World women” and the commitments that exist to improve the lives of women in Third World countries. The scholars that Mohanty examines have in common that they all describe development as synonymous with economic development or economic progress and that this similarly affects women as a group (Mohanty 1986, p.344). For instance, one of the scholars claims that the problems, or needs, that “Third World women” have in common include education, work, access to health/services, political participation and legal rights. These needs are explained through a lack of relevant development policies, which tends to exclude women as a group. Again, women are seen as a coherent group with the same problems and needs. What Mohanty argues is that development policies do not affect differently positioned “Third World women” in the same way- they vary depending on class, culture, religion, other ideological institutions and different social frameworks. The interests of urban, middle-class, educated Egyptian housewives, to take only one instance, could surely not be seen as being the same as those of their uneducated, poor maids” (Mohanty 1986, p.344). Feminist scholars tend to focus on the problems and needs of women in the “Third World” and few tend to notice if they have “choices” or freedom to act.

3.1.6 Women as victims of religious ideologies

The sixth way in which “Third World women” are uniformly represented is as victims of religious ideologies. For instance, Mohanty looks at a cross-cultural analysis of women and Shi’ism in Iran, which represents Islam as an ideology that is separate from outside relations. The

analyzed text describes Islam as a justification for the purdah (a social system practiced in South Asia where Muslim and Hindu women are segregated in the home and are forced to be fully covered outside). It also argues that the main explanation for purdah is the control that men have over economic resources, and the personal security that it provides to women. “Third World women” are represented as a monolithic group, oppressed by religious ideologies and traditions. Lack of specificity, denies that women are differently positioned within religious communities.

3.2 The analytical framework

Mohanty’s six claims about Western representation of “Third World women” can be summarized in an analytical framework. The six stereotypical representations will be the tools for interpreting the material and data found on the NGOs.

Table 1, Mohanty’s claims about Western representation of “Third World women”

	Victims of male violence	Universal Dependents	Victims of colonial process	Victims of the familial systems	Victims of development processes	Victims of religious ideologies
Kvinna till Kvinna and Women for Women Int.	“Third World women” represented as a group all suffering from male violence	“Third World women” represented as universal dependents	“Third World women” portrayed as victims of colonial processes	“Third World women” represented as a group all victims of familial systems	“Third World women” portrayed as a group all suffering from development processes	“Third World women” represented as all oppressed by religious ideologies

With this analytical framework (Table 1), based on Mohanty’s claims about Western representation of “Third World women”, this thesis will provide a descriptive analysis concerning *Kvinna till Kvinna’s* and *Women for Women International’s* representations of “Third World women”.

4. Specified aim and research question

The aim of this thesis is to analyze and compare how the national branches of the progressive Western women's NGOs *Kvinna till Kvinna* (Sweden) and *Women for Women International* (US) represent "Third World women", using the theoretical claims of Chandra Mohanty.

More specifically, the thesis asks:

1. Does *Kvinna till Kvinna* (Sweden) and *Women for Women International* (US) represent "Third World women" as a homogeneous group sharing a similar experience of oppression in the ways described by Mohanty?
2. Are there any differences in the ways of representation when comparing *Kvinna till Kvinna* (Sweden) and *Women for Women International* (US)?

5. A comparative study of *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International*

During the up rise of NGOs in the last couple of decades, numerous Western NGOs focusing on gender equality and women issues were established. Since both Sweden and USA are said to be strong promoters of gender equality, a comparative study of two progressive NGOs is one suitable way to analyze the specified research questions. Both *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* are grassroots organizations focusing on helping women in conflict zones in the "Third World" and work to increase women's representation in peace processes. *Kvinna till Kvinna* is one of the largest women's organizations in Sweden, with around 90 employees stationed in Stockholm's central office, West- and Central Africa, Middle East, Southern Caucasus and the Balkans, while supporting around 100 co-operation organizations around the world (*Kvinna till Kvinna*, 2012). It is a fund-raising foundation and it therefore has no members. The organization receives financial support from authorities, institutions, foundations, organizations, companies and individual donors. Their by far largest contributor is Sida, which made up 65 percent of their total financial support in the year of 2012 (*Kvinna till Kvinna*, 2012).

The headquarter of *Women for Women International* is stationed in Washington DC, with executive offices in New York and London. More offices are placed in eight post-conflict countries (Women for Women International, n.d). The major financial contributors are individual donors, community organizations, corporate and foundation donors as well as government and multilateral donors. The main contributors are however individual donors, which differ from *Kvinna till Kvinna* where Sida is the main funder (Women for Women International- Annual report, 2011).

Kvinna till Kvinna and *Women for Women International* are “least likely critical cases”, meaning that if the cases are chosen from a context that is favorable for the theoretical framework, we can assume that the outcome can be applied elsewhere (Esaiasson et.al, 2003). *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* are least likely to reproduce Mohanty’s generalizing stereotypes. If these organizations generalizes in the way that Mohanty describes there are reasons to believe that this is the case with other Western women NGOs as well, due to the fact that *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* are progressive organizations that should be at the leading edge when representing “Third World women”. On the other hand, if the analysis shows that they are not generalizing in their representation of “Third World women”, it is not possible to generalize to a wider population. Once again, *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* are critical cases, meaning that if there are any NGOs that are expected NOT to represent “Third World women” as a homogenous group, it should be these organizations.

The thesis will include a comparative research design, with the goal of searching for similarities and variations between the two chosen NGOs (Mills et.al, 2006). A comparative design with few cases is preferable compared to a superficial statistical analysis of many cases, since it gives the thesis a more intense analysis, more suitable to this qualitative study (Lijphart, 1971; Collier, 1993; Esaiasson et.al, 2003). The use of qualitative analysis means that the most essential substance in a text is analyzed through close reading of the texts different parts and its contexts (Esaiasson et.al, 2003; Bryman, 2008). Instead of a quantitative study with only shallow knowledge, the qualitative analysis consists of a deeper understanding of a few cases. Human

expressions and use of language in a text distinguishes a form of reality, and has a contributing effect on how humans understand the world (Esaiaasson et.al, 2003).

In order to get the most suitable material and collection of data, we need to see how the two NGOs represent “Third World women” through their own material, which will be our primary data. The material is to be collected from their own archives, press releases and publications such as reports and debate articles, which has been found from the year of 2003 to 2013. These documents are regularly posted on *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International*’s own websites and concern the issues that they work with. Annual reports that are posted each year will also be analyzed because they describe what the organization has achieved and what issues they have put focus on each year. It will give us first-hand information straight from the source that is to be analyzed without any secondary opinions.

The available material from the two organizations is structured in distinctive ways. *Kvinna till Kvinna* tends to have shorter reports, while most of *Women for Women International*’s own material is their journal “Critical Half”, which contains numerous articles. *Women for Women International* also provides more reports, consisting of academic articles with many different authors on specific topics. *Kvinna till Kvinna* instead provides more material written by the organization itself.

The primary way of analyzing the gathered material will be through our analytical framework. “...How ‘problems’ are represented has important effects for what can be seen as problematic, for what is silenced, and for how people think about these issues and about their place in the world. Problem representations (the ways in which ‘problems’ are represented) therefore are political interventions that constitute policy ‘problems’ *in the real*” (Bacchi, 2009, p.112). Due to the large amount of different material, it is important to be cautious of how to interpret the texts and its implications, and to look at the overall context instead of selected parts that easily can be misinterpreted.

Bacchi (2009) provides an approach to policy analysis called “What is the problem represented to be?” She highlights that depending on how you represent the problem of gender inequality; it affects which solutions appear to be feasible (Bacchi, 2009, p. 115). Basically, Bacchi suggests

posing systematic questions to texts to discern how a problem is represented. It is therefore possible to turn our analytical framework into questions posed to the material as Bacchi proposes (Bacchi, 2009, p. 117).

	Victims of male violence	Universal Dependents	Victims of colonial process	Victims of the familial systems	Victims of development processes	Victims of religious ideologies
Kvinna till Kvinna and Women for Women Int.	Do the organizations portray “Third World women” as a group all suffering from male violence? Or some other way?	Do the organizations represent “Third World women” as universal dependents? Or some other way?	Do the organizations portray “Third World women” homogenously as victims of colonial processes? Or some other way?	Do the organizations represent “Third World women” as a group all victims of familial systems? Or some other way?	Do the organizations portray “Third World women” as a group all suffering from development processes? Or some other way?	Do the organizations represent “Third World women” as all oppressed by religious ideologies? Or some other way?

This approach to policy analysis is highly important in the tradition of social constructivism and more importantly gender (Bacchi, 2009). The approach is therefore suitable for this thesis as it helps unearth the underlying meaning of the problem representations of the two NGOs.

In order to determine whether the organizations generalize or not, it is important to examine the ways they are expressing themselves and analyze the words used to portray the women in their material. It is also important to see if they are using generalizing words and if they claim that all the women in war-torn countries are victims as described in Mohanty’s six stereotypes. An example of how not to be generalizing would be if they are more specific in their argumentation and formulate themselves with words such as “many women” or “some women” and describe the women’s situations in a more specific manner. To clarify geographic areas, socio-economic circumstances and even to bring up statistics are favorable ways of representing, which gives a nuanced picture of the problem many women in war-torn countries faces. Generalizing representation is for example when a problem, situation or explanation is applied on a wider

group of people than it concerns. For instance if “all women” or just simply “women” is used when describing a situation.

6. Analysis of how *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* represent “Third World women”

The following chapter will analyze the material from *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* in order to answer the research questions asked. The chapter will be structured by Mohanty’s six ways of generalization- separate as subtitles. Each of the six subtitles will provide an analysis starting with the evidence found in *Kvinna till Kvinna*, followed by the findings in *Women for Women International* and concluded by a short summary concerning the similarities and differences found between the two NGOs. A longer, more detailed summary will be provided in the end of the chapter to conclude the many findings of the analysis and to answer the previously stated research questions.

After examining both organizations it is evident that four out of six claims made by Mohanty can be found in the material from both organizations. One generalizing stereotype, “women as victims of colonial process”, could only be found in the material of *Women for Women International* and is not mentioned by *Kvinna till Kvinna*. “Women as victims of development process” is the only stereotype that could not be found in any of the two cases and is therefore not represented in the generalizing way described by Mohanty.

Kvinna till Kvinna provides articles and reports primarily written and published by the organization itself. Their larger reports “Equal Power-Lasting Peace” concerns different countries individually, such as DR Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armenia and Azerbaijan which are the major countries they work with. *Women for Women International*, unlike *Kvinna till Kvinna*, provides more outside reports and have its own journal, named “Critical Half”, consisting of academic articles with many different authors on specific topics as for example “The role of religion in the lives of women in the new Afghanistan” and “Global Women’s Movements and Transnational Feminism: A View from the South”. Like *Kvinna till Kvinna*, they

do also provide reports of countries individually but put more focus on Iraq, Afghanistan, DR Congo and Kosovo. Both *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* mainly provide material concerning women's exclusion in different ways. Most common are the issues of women's exclusion in politics, religious structures, peace processes and education. Stereotypical generalizations are evident in all of these types of problems. As we will see in the upcoming part of the analysis chapter, most of Mohanty's six types of representation can be seen in both *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International*.

6.1 Do the organizations portray "Third World women" as a group all suffering from male violence?

Mohanty argues that when talking about men's violence against women, Western feminists focus on "sexual oppression" as the main aspect. She also claims that even though it is a reality with male violence against women in many cases, there is a problem with defining all "Third World women" as victims under the control of men, since it generalizes all women as a coherent group, all suffering from male violence similarly and positions all men into a violent group. *Kvinna till Kvinna* is partly using similar stereotypes in their way of representing male violence against "Third World women". The organization almost exclusively deals with sexual oppression and sexual abuse when covering the field of male violence against women. However, the organization deals with the issue of generalizing stereotypes, especially when it comes to portraying women as victims. Meaning that they in one of their reports are in depth discussing the importance of not generalizing (*Kvinna till Kvinna, Vi rapporterar om kvinnor i krig och konflikter, 2006*). Even in *Women for Women International's* material it is evident that they are generalizing in their way of representing women suffering of male violence. However, just as *Kvinna till Kvinna, Women for Women International* make clear that they are aware of the importance of not generalizing.

Kvinna till Kvinna

We will show both generalizing and not generalizing statements to demonstrate how the ways of

representing differ. First, to show one example where it is not possible to accuse *Kvinna till Kvinna* to be generalizing is:

“Gender violence in armed conflicts increases. Sexual violence is used as a strategy of war. [...] Threats about sexual violence, makes *many* women refrain from engaging in promoting women rights. Activists in conflict areas mention the threat of sexual violence as one of their biggest problem" (*Kvinna till Kvinna, Sexuellt våld som vapen, 2012, p.2*).

Here they are writing “many women”, which of course is a matter of definition what “many women” is. A paragraph like the one above could be formulated differently to explain; what do many mean, more specifically?

When *Kvinna till Kvinna* brings up the problem of male violence, it almost exclusively concerns sexualized oppression and violence. This shows more of a stereotype than a generalization. Sexual violence is indeed a huge issue to deal with, yet the organization might put more focus on other aspects of structural violence as well. Violence against women occurs also in Western countries, and many women in for example Sweden are victims of male violence. The point here is that when discussing violence against women in Sweden, other aspects of violence than sexual violence are usually brought up and there is more focus on exact numbers and statistics. In Sweden, there is a focus on structural violence and men’s violence toward women within the homes (Hensing, 2004), unlike when discussing “Third World women” in war-torn countries it almost exclusively deals with sexual violence, and other aspects are marginalized. Instead of bringing up a more nuanced image of sexual violence, with for instance numbers, *Kvinna till Kvinna* describes the issue in more generalizing terms. An example is when discussing Afghan women and claiming that all Afghan women are always at risk of being raped:

“The instability in Afghan society affects women disproportionately. Women are constantly at risk of becoming victims of sexualized violence” (Jacobsson Söderberg, 2009, p. 27).

Still, as already mentioned, the focus lies almost exclusively on sexual violence, which is a stereotype in itself. What is frequently mentioned while talking about sexual violence is the “family honor” and how rape is used to insult an entire family. In one of *Kvinna till Kvinna*’s reports where they are discussing the oppression of Afghan women, they state:

“Girls and women are the carriers of family honor and as such constantly watched, assessed and judged by family members, as well as the surrounding society”
(Wilkens, 2012, p.19).

Which “girls and women” are, is not evident. *Kvinna till Kvinna* could in this case be more specific and clarify which “girls and women” they are talking about, not to generalize all Afghan women. Here they are not only claiming that women are constantly victimized by always being watched and judged, but also that it is their responsibility not to be raped. This is stereotypical in the sense that it gives the impression of all women being powerless defenseless victims. It is a lose-lose situation, and the women can never win. Furthermore, their material gives the impression that all women are victims of male violence. In the annual report from 2012 *Kvinna till Kvinna* starts off with:

“Women are victims to mass rape, they suffer from female genital mutilation and are getting killed. Women are prisoners in their homes and girls are not allowed to go to school. Women's voices are silenced” (*Kvinna till Kvinna, Verksamhetsberättelse 2012, 2013, p.4*).

These kinds of formulations generate very generalizing sentences, ignoring all distinctions between the different countries and the different classes in society. To add “some” or “many” before “women” should have been an easy way to make this less generalizing. This impression (that all women are victims of male violence), along with the focus on sexual oppression, fits well into the context of what Mohanty mean is stereotypical for Western representations. Basically, the organization is quite specific in their reports with empirical evidence to strengthen the issue in some cases, yet there are many cases where they are making generalizing statements.

“When women are seen only as victims, their roles in society are diminished. But it cannot stop there with women as victims in need of protection. Women must be seen as actors and obstacles for their active participation in the decision making process have to be removed. Women need to be in power to formulate their needs and views on society for the security threats to be dealt with” (Jacobsson, Söderberg, 2009, p.20).

This citation above is from one of *Kvinna till Kvinna*'s report's named "Security on whose terms". This shows *Kvinna till Kvinna*'s awareness when it comes to stereotypical representation of "Third World women" in the countries they seek to assist. Yet, even though they are pointing out that women should not only be seen as victims, they are still talking about "women" as a homogenous group, which "need to be in power to formulate their needs". Additionally in one other report, that contains interviews with numerous journalists, they claim:

“The image of women as victims is especially clear in reports from Africa. Vulnerable women (and men) may symbolize the image of Africa as a hopeless continent without any future. Over the past ten years, the image of Africa has become increasingly stereotyped” (*Kvinna till Kvinna, Vi rapporterar om kvinnor i krig och konflikter*, 2006, p.5).

The two recent quotes show that *Kvinna till Kvinna* actually deals with the typical representation of "Third World women" as victims of male violence and that they point out the issues of being generalizing.

Many Afghan women do suffer from male violence, and it is probably true for a majority of the women, but the organization lacks a class perspective or any effort to take other women's perspective into account. To provide an example: In Afghanistan there are some women, in a city in eastern Afghanistan called Khost, where women are in higher positions in their clans. They wear "male" clothes and act "manly". This kind of diversity is a perspective missing in *Kvinna till Kvinna*'s reports (Cristiansson, 2010).

Furthermore, one must not reduce the problem of sexual oppression. It is an important issue to deal with. Even though *Kvinna till Kvinna* actually do, to some extent, generalize “Third World women” as victims, they do consider the problem with stereotypical representation, and do to some extent realize that their incentive with the organization is based on stereotypical assumptions.

Women for Women International

Women for Women International covers the area of male violence in their material and tends to be generalizing. They are partly concrete in their ways of describing the issue. The problem of representing all women in the countries they are assisting as victims is also evident in *Women for Women International*, however in a similar manner as *Kvinna till Kvinna*, the American organization also talks about the importance of not stereotyping. In the reports where the issue of male violence against women is brought up, it seems like the organization has been careful not to generalize. They are usually concrete and bring up examples and statistics in their own journals.

To illustrate, in one of *Women for Women International's* annual journals, called “Critical Half”, one article written in 2007 is entitled “Engaging Men in “Women’s Issues”: Inclusive Approaches to Gender and Development”. Here some vital aspects of stereotyping women as victims of male violence are brought up.

“[...] because the issue can play into unfortunate stereotypes of all men as violent perpetrators and all women as passive victims.” (Powely and Pearson, 2007, p.16)

This extract describes the essence of the entire article. The incentive is to engage men when working against male violence. In this matter, *Women for Women International* shows an awareness of stereotyping women into passive, defenseless victims, and tries instead to picture the situation without strengthening the stereotype. Sentences that are formulated in a very generalizing way are nonetheless also evident. The organization is probably writing in terms of generalizations in order to simplify, nevertheless this reproduces an incorrect stereotype, which is

exactly what they are trying to avoid. An example of such a generalizing section is from *Women for Women International's* annual report from 2011, which is introduced with the sentence:

“In many of the communities where WfWI works, from the Balkans to Africa, the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war creates emotional devastation in women survivors that lasts long after physical injuries heal” (Women for Women International- Annual report, 2011, p.1).

Women for Women International is in many ways similar to *Kvinna till Kvinna* in their way of portraying women as victims of male violence. They focus on sexual oppression, just as *Kvinna till Kvinna* does, which in a way reproduces a stereotype. However, compared to *Kvinna to Kvinna*, *Women for Women International* focuses more on other aspects of violence as well, meaning that they to a greater extent focus on other kinds of violence against women. When discussing male violence against women, *Women for Women International* primarily focuses on both domestic physical abuse and sexual violence, different from *Kvinna till Kvinna* that mainly considers sexual abuse and does not talk as much as *Women for Women International* about physical abuse.

6.2 Do the organizations represent “Third World women” as universal dependents?

As mentioned earlier, Mohanty argues that Western feminists describe “Third World women” as both economically and politically dependent, all suffering from the same oppression due to ethnicity, sex and class. It is evident that *Kvinna till Kvinna* partly represents the women they work with as “women in need of” economic and political independence and therefore assumes that all women in these countries are subordinate in this aspect. Reports regarding women’s economic status, political knowledge and educational opportunities are a common factor throughout their material. They continuously point out the problem of the lack of women’s participation in policy-making and their influence in peace processes as if women were a coherent group with similar problems of dependence. *Kvinna till Kvinna* is, however, careful with

their use of language and states the importance of not generalizing the women they work with. Just like *Kvinna till Kvinna*, *Women for Women International* also repeatedly talks about “women’s needs”. They focus on the issues of economic empowerment, skill development as well as female education and tend to represent these struggles as the same in most countries, which therefore group women together, sharing the same problems.

Kvinna till Kvinna

It is evident that *Kvinna till Kvinna* represents women as a coherent group that is generally dependent, but there are also many cases where they point out the importance of not using stereotypes to describe women’s economic and political situations. They describe different situations with focus on individual countries, one at a time. Their reports deal with their work in different countries and describe the situation in Iraq, Bosnia, Liberia, Afghanistan, DR Congo, Armenia and Azerbaijan, but they portray women as having the same economic and political problems that groups them together as a common image of “otherness”.

In order to change the situation for women in war-affected countries, *Kvinna till Kvinna* pushes on the importance that women need to be seen as not only a victim, but needs to count as an actor that can be part of the conflict just as much as men and be of equal influence when it comes to building sustainable peace. They also argue that economic independence is very important for women to be able to participate in the political arena. Like in the next paragraph, cited from one of *Kvinna till Kvinna*’s reports, they argue that financial independence is a very important factor when it comes to women in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“Financial independence is also one of the issues that both groups discussed as being crucial for a woman deciding to enter politics. Both Armenian and Azerbaijani laws support the principle of women’s financial independence whereby women and men have the same right to property. [...] With less income and less influential contacts, women stand very little chance of actually advancing to political positions with leverage: election campaigns are becoming increasingly expensive and women can hardly ever cover those costs” *Armenia & Azerbaijan Report* (Mannergren et.al, 2012, p.9).

By referring to all women in Armenia and Azerbaijan as financial dependent, it positions all women as a subordinate group. It is very problematic to refer to women in two different countries as sharing the same issues and all being financially dependent.

Women are also represented as lacking political influence and as politically dependent on male decision-makers. In one of their pamphlets, they focus especially on women's participation in peace processes. Without any specific geographical origin, *Kvinna till Kvinna* uses the headline "Half without voice", referring to women's exclusion in peace processes and that half of the populations' experiences and knowledge are being lost in the process of rebuilding a new society in the aftermaths of war. If women are excluded in peace treaties, that are often the foundation to a new constitution, women's rights might be ignored. With this quite confusing heading, not referring to any specific country or statistics, one has to assume that women are excluded equally from the political process all around the world. As in the next example, *Kvinna till Kvinna* refers to all Liberian women as a submissive group all hindered to participate in political processes due to poverty.

"For Liberian women poverty and lack of security are closely interconnected, and poverty not only affects women's security but also hinders their possibilities of participating in the democratic process" *Liberia Report* (Mannergren et.al, 2012 p.13).

In their reports that individually refer to different countries, it is evident that political exclusion and women's subordination in power structures are common factors throughout. Women have limited possibilities for participation due to insecurity in both domestic and public spheres. Like Mohanty's examples of "Women of Africa", "Vietnamese women" and "Black American women", *Kvinna till Kvinna* tends to group women together by country of origin, while describing them as victims of the same type of oppression with the same solutions. We are to see three examples of this as extracts from their reports concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liberia and DR Congo where they describes women's dependence referring to Bosnian women, Liberian women and Congolese women alike:

“The three, conjoined with atrocious consequences of war, exclude and isolate Bosnian women in many effective ways. Women who engage in women’s rights and peace building across borders and attempt to challenge the nationalistic agenda are considered “double traitors”, because they are expected to uphold the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’” *Bosnia and Herzegovina Report* (Mannergren et.al, 2012, p.7).

“Liberian women assumed the role of peacemakers partly out of desperation. In order to be able to take care of their families, the women had to convince the warring parties to put an end to hostilities” *Liberia Report* (Mannergren et.al, 2012, p.6).

“When financial means were available, women activists participated in international fora and showed the Congolese women’s suffering to the world.” *DR Congo Report* (Mannergren et.al, 2012, p.11).

An aspect that is used to explain women’s economic and political exclusion is poverty and corruption. Keeping women poor is used as a strategy planned by men with power, and little is done to improve women’s economic situation (Kvinna till Kvinna, Equal Power- Lasting Peace, 2012, p.3). In reference to Mohanty, by describing women’s situation as the same, they are grouped together as a common image of “otherness”.

However, *Kvinna till Kvinna* does also acknowledge that a gender perspective is important when dealing with the exclusion of women and not to be generalizing. Often in the debate of women and security, the focus lies on the issue of how to protect women instead of dealing with ways to make them safely be part of the society (Kvinna till Kvinna, Kvinnors säkerhet ignoreras, 2012).

“Women are activists, decision makers, breadwinners and soldiers [...] Even if women don’t participate in the actual battles, they are actors who live in and has opinions that affect the conflict” (Kvinna till Kvinna, Rapport om kvinnor i krig och konflikter, 2012).

Kvinna till Kvinna acknowledges the fact that women are active actors in war-affected countries. This tends to contradict the previous image of women being victims and represented as universal dependents. When *Kvinna till Kvinna* argues that women are decision makers and breadwinners, they seem to deny the problems they have described earlier as well as their representation of women as victims and their exclusion from the political process. It is also interesting to argue, who these women are, when throughout their material points to evidence explaining the exclusion of women.

Women for Women International

Stereotypical representation of the general dependence of women is also evident within *Women for Women International*. Focus is mostly put on the issues of economic empowerment, skill development and female education. By representing these struggles as the same in all of the countries they work with, the representations group women together and imply that there is one solution to all of these problems. As an illustrative example, the next extract states that women as a group are important in the decision-making process in DR Congo. It therefore implies that Congolese women are excluded and victims of traditional patriarchy.

“When women move from the kitchen table to the decision-making table, they bring important skills, attributes, and perspectives to governance and civil society initiatives by bridging divides, highlighting community concerns and facilitating consultative processes” *DRC Report* (Women for Women International, 2010, p. 27).

It is implied that women as a group, no matter what geographical origin, are dependents and in great need for international actors to help them get involved in the political and civil arena. This will benefit the whole society. *Women for Women International* repeatedly push on “what women needs”, referring to all women as a group. As in the next paragraph, where they refer to all Congolese women as a group in need of public welfare.

“Women in the DRC need health and well-being services to sustain their livelihood and that of their children. They need training on their rights in order to successfully advocate and mobilize community action. Congolese women require support to enhance their income generating activities, thereby increasing their self- sufficiency and ability to provide nutrition, health care, and education to the next generation”
DRC Report (Women for Women International, 2010, p.14).

The generalizing content is very unspecific and does not really say what “Congolese women” actually need other than awareness-raising from outside actors. They paint an image that all Congolese women need self-sufficiency and lack provision of nutrition, health care and education. And one can wonder whether these needs would not also apply for Congolese men, or indeed all human beings?

Women for Women International puts a lot off effort into skill development and working to engage women in income generating work and businesses (Annual Report, 2011). Based on the women’s own circumstances, interests, talents and physical strength as well as market demands, the women in the program will be put to work and generate an income. The skills that are distributed will result in traditional female activities such as handicrafts, rug weaving, food preparation, gem cutting and beekeeping (Annual Report, 2011, p.6). These kinds of jobs are provided for women in all the countries *Women for Women International* work with and one can argue why only these types of job skills are provided.

“When women in different countries become represented by global movements, the plight of women in individual developing countries may be ignored due to internal contradictions, differences, and the oversimplification of key class, race, gender and nationality factors” (Gouws, 2009, p.42).

Furthermore *Women for Women International* recognizes the significance of listening to the women’s own stories, and even more important, use those stories as material for their way of working. This is contrary to Mohanty’s critique of Western feminists. *Women for Women International* do to some extent represent women in a non-stereotypical way. One example is

when they are describing how the Global Women's Movements plays an important role for women and development in countries of war, and they claim:

“Different grassroots realities all over the globe give rise to individuals and groups with diverse methods, resources, communities, and supporters that are now informing and shaping the next phase of the Global Women's Movement” (Salbi, 2009, p.5).

Both *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* agree with the fact that women's participation is crucial in order to sustain recovery and reconciliation. Their way of representation in this case provides one solution to all women with no regard to country and therefore strengthens the stereotype of women as dependents. They promote skill development so women can generate an income, raise women's voices in politics and works to put more girls in school, thereby becoming more independent. They do however represent women's problems in each country individually, but describes their situation as the same in all regards, pointing to statistics and surveys proving their point. Even though the two NGOs provide legitimate statistics, they still represent the women as subordinate when it comes to economic and political aspects, just like the stereotype described by Mohanty. Unlike *Kvinna till Kvinna*, that mainly explains women's economic and political exclusion is due to poverty and corruption, *Women for Women International* tend to describe solutions to these issues as women in need of international actors.

6.3 Do the organizations portray “Third World women” homogenously as victims of colonial processes?

The third stereotype described by Mohanty concerns “Third World women” being portrayed homogenously by Western feminists as victims of colonial process. Mohanty brings up the example of laws concerning marriage. In this example she focuses on Bemba women (people in Zambia), and she argues that it is a wrong implication to claim that a man can “buy” a woman and take her away from her family, as a change of the marriage structure. It is misleading and

also denies the socio-historical and cultural features, to state that Bemba women lost the protection of tribal laws as an effect of European colonization changing the marriage structure, which is frequently portrayed by Western feminists. When researching whether *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* are generalizing women in war-affected countries as victims of colonial processes, we do not focus on marital structures, but also other aspects of Western colonization in the organization's targeted countries. How do *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* represent how women have been affected by colonization?

Kvinna till Kvinna

There is no material from *Kvinna till Kvinna* that focuses on the colonial process as such, so they do not portray women homogeneously as victims of colonial processes. The organization act in the present, deals with oppression against women today and in countries of war, which might be the reason for them not focusing on changes for women due to Western colonization.

Women for Women International

Women for Women International does not discuss the colonial process in a high extent either, yet in one of their reports (The Impact of Religion on Women in the Development Process), they do cover some parts of the colonial process. When *Women for Women International* is discussing the subject, many parts are highly generalizing and can be compared to Mohanty's example with "Bemba women". As an example from their report, they explain how "Igbo women" have been affected by the colonial process (the Igbo people live in southeastern Nigeria and tens of millions of people are Igbos). In the early 20th century, the British colonized Igboland, putting in place a new political system in Nigeria that was not very beneficial for women (Slattery, 1999). When *Women for Women International* discuss this issue, they ignore potential distinctions between "Igbo women" and instead portray "Igbo women" as passive victims:

“A number of scholars have pointed to the loss of traditional Igbo egalitarian political institutions that accorded women a more integral role in pre-colonial Nigeria than exists

now. This indicates that silencing women's voice and limiting their exercise of leadership, as observed in many Igbo communities within and outside" (Uchem, 2003 p.27).

Firstly, it is surely to generalize all women into one homogenous group, when speaking about "women's voice" as one, instead of all women's own individual voices. Secondly, they claim that British colonization silenced women (all women, since they talk about "women" as a group), which gives the reader the impression of women becoming pacified and suppressed. What could have been mentioned by the organization is that many Igbo women actually organized and were in November and December 1929 campaigning against the British colonization. Dissatisfaction among women led to mobilization. In November 1929, they had had enough so, they began to pass through towns and cities to demand that the political leaders should resign (Bernhardt, 2010). In her research, Arielle Bernhardt found that "The campaign was forced to come to a halt. Yet, the women had still managed to gain significant victories before the British administration turned to violence" (Bernhardt, 2010).

Due to the lack of focus on women's situation caused by the colonial process, this example from *Women for Women International* is the only one to be examined. Just as Mohanty explains how the Western representation of Bemba women is generalizing, *Women for Women International* are indeed generalizing when portraying Nigerian women during the colonial process. They reproduce an image of passive women, which is shown not to be entirely true.

6.4 Do the organizations represent "Third World women" as a group all victims of familial systems?

Mohanty describes the fourth stereotype as women being represented as a homogenous group, which shares experiences within the familial system as a wife, mother, sister or daughter. This stereotype includes claims that it is in the family where women are constructed and defined. *Kvinna till Kvinna* partly represents the women they work with as victims of the familial system. An aspect that all women in the countries *Kvinna till Kvinna* works with seem to have in common is that they all are subordinate in power structures that defines them as "mothers" and that they

have a reputation to fulfill due to traditional social norms. The organization does, however, state that the image of women as a “mother” is often used by the women themselves and has proven to be effective in peace negotiations. *Women for Women International* also discuss traditional structures within the home and represents women in the role of housewives and “mothers”.

Kvinna till Kvinna

The next illustrative example shows that traditional structures in DR Congo affects women’s power and positions them in a role where they have certain duties and need to attain their honor.

“Women’s power... it is really invisible. And it is mostly due to tradition. According to tradition, the woman cannot say: ‘I am tired’. It is her duty to work from early morning until late. Women don’t even have power at the family level”
DR Congo Report (Mannergren et.al, 2012, p.6).

Kvinna till Kvinna represents all Congolese women as a subordinate group without any familial power. By rephrasing the statement that “women don’t *even* have power at the family level”, they could instead say that traditional structures can mean that *some* women lack power within the family. It would then not be as generalizing. *Kvinna till Kvinna* argues that traditional gender roles become even more evident in a country defined by war, especially during peace negotiations where the men are the ones making decisions and women are supposed to stay at home to take care of the family and household (Kvinnor är viktiga i fredsprocessen, 2012). They also mention women being victims of slander, threats, violence when they try to get their voices heard, meaning that these obstacles, are linked to “cultural and social norms about the gendered nature of society” (Equal Power- Lasting Peace Summary, 2012).

“A woman’s reputation is sometimes considered her most valuable asset and by getting involved in politics she may be considered “dirty” or even a “prostitute” (Equal Power- Lasting Peace Summary, 2012, p.3).

When *Kvinna till Kvinna* uses the wording “a woman’s”, they automatically position all women in a monolithic group sharing the same problem. By just rephrasing to say “some women’s”, it would not be as generalizing. Also, by referring to women’s reputation as their most valuable asset, it puts women in a group all defined by the structures in the home and positions men as the biggest reason for women’s subordination. Women are defined as victims of men that have put them in a specific position within the family patriarchy. As Mohanty argues, that would be to assume that women are nothing but sexual-political subjects prior to their entry into the family. *Kvinna till Kvinna* do however use the words “sometimes” and “may” which is not as generalizing and should not be overlooked. In the following extract, *Kvinna till Kvinna* looks at traditional gender roles and states that:

“The traditional gender roles during war become clear when it is time for peace negotiations: the men attend to the negotiating table while the women are left at home without any opportunity to affect the process” (Kvinnor viktiga i fredsprocessen, 2012, p.1).

First, *Kvinna till Kvinna* claim that women are left powerless at home with no opportunity affect peace negotiations. But they seem to contradict themselves in another report, stating that women in fact are an important part of the conflict and have opportunities to affect:

“Women are activists, decision makers, breadwinners and soldiers [...] Even if women don’t participate in the actual battles, they are actors who live in and has opinions that affect the conflict” (Rapport om kvinnor i krig och konflikter, 2012, p.2).

Kvinna till Kvinna also talks about women’s role in the familial system being affected by sexual violence, meaning that when families and neighbors witness the rape of their wife, mother or sister, it has consequences for the whole community (Blunda inte för det sexuella våldet i Syrien, 2013). The victimized women are being dishonored, as well as the children that are at many times the result of rapes. The young women who have been raped are seen as disgraceful and are married off, sometimes to the perpetrator or are punished. As truthful as this may be for some

communities and groups of women, the statement assumes that all women have a reputation to uphold for the rest of the community and are again being victims of men. *Kvinna till Kvinna* argues that the traditional patriarchal family has a history in these countries, and still exists today. By this representation, it is something that women suffer from and something to be rescued from.

In their reports with focus on Liberia, DR Congo and Iraq, they describe all women as subordinate within traditional structures and therefore position all women as victims of the familial system. They also repeatedly argue that different aspects of society such as patriarchal and traditional values, complains women to take part of the decision-making power.

“Historically considered to be the property of male family members, women are still stuck in abject poverty and illiteracy with very limited possibilities to transform their own lives” *Liberia Report* (Mannergren et.al, 2012, p.11).

It is evident that all women in these three countries (Liberia, DR Congo and Iraq) are described as subordinate in familial power structures. Women are portrayed as victims without any sort of power within the family but at the same time bearers of the family honor and reputation.

“The power of Congolese women lies within the family. They are the ones who bring ‘harmony’ to the couple, separate the fighting children or make peace between neighbors. However, in spite of their role as small-scale conflict-solvers, women were not given a stronger position in matters concerning peace on national or regional levels. The reason for this, according to the participants, was the strong tradition of leaving all matters of peace and security to men” *DR Congo Report* (Mannergren et.al, 2012, p.8).

Congolese women are being grouped together and presented here as subordinate in power structures outside the home and in the public sphere. A similar representation of women’s situation in Iraq can be seen in the next paragraph:

“Women are seen as the bearers of the family’s honor, which is why abuse or even killings of women who have “broken” the family’s honor is widely accepted. As a consequence, it is thought that women must be controlled in order to protect the honor of the family” *Iraq Report* (Mannergren et.al, 2012, p.6).

Kvinna till Kvinna also writes about women’s image of “the mother” and states that women in some cases have managed to exercise power and influence by presenting themselves as “mothers”. This gives a nuanced image of the problem and it is difficult to know whether they are referring to all women, and in that case, in what countries? *Kvinna till Kvinna* means that it is used as a tool in order to gain influence and participation in peace processes. It gives the image of being naturally peaceful and naturally less corrupt than men and means that this image will give women more respect (Equal Power- Lasting Peace Summary, 2012, p.4). They use an example of women in Liberia, saying:

“The identification of themselves as mothers was a powerful drive for women’s initiatives towards reconciliation. Nevertheless, since “mothers” traditionally look after the household and stay away from politics, this role may simultaneously serve as an effective excluding mechanism” (Equal Power- Lasting Peace Summary, 2012, p.4).

Women for Women International

Women for Women International also pushes on the notion of traditional structures within the home. They discuss women’s participation in the family as well and mean that community engagement often starts at home. They are implying that when the men go to war and leave the woman as head of the household, it is not only an emotional burden but also an enormous burden on the women’s workload. The women do now have to deal with their traditional tasks as well as generating an income. Like in the next example, *Women for Women International* states that both spouses should make family decisions equally:

“[...] increasing women’s decision-making abilities in the home is desirable, shared decision making with family members is also important. Ideally both spouses contribute to familial discussions and choices” *DR Congo Report* (Women for Women International, 2010, p.30).

The stereotype described by Mohanty defines women uniformly represented as attaining a value and status within their families that makes them an oppressed group subordinate by familial structures. The quote stated above seems to suggest that no women own any decision-making power within the familial structures and are all in need of help from outside actors. Can we assume that the decisions are not made equally within all households in DR Congo? Even if traditional or religious structures are dominant in some of the described countries, it is still problematic to talk about *all* women under the rule of these structures as a common group without power within the family. A more nuanced representation could be made by simply describing women differently depending on origin, class, traditions and different religions but also saying “some” women. Like in the next quote, *Women for Women International* argues that all women and girls in Afghanistan are subordinate by male family members, who hinder their freedom of movement.

“Although male family members still control women’s and girls’ lives and freedom of movement in public to a significant degree, women do not view this as acceptable. WfWI affiliates are aware of their rights and of gender discrimination, which is the first step in redressing such discrimination” *Afghanistan Report* (Women for Women International, 2009, p.24).

In their *Afghanistan Report* (2009) as well as their *DR Congo Report* (2010), the focus lies on the male oppression of women within the household, much due to traditional structures that still live on. By referring to all women being controlled by men within the familial structure, it positions all women as a homogenous group.

Just like *Kvinna till Kvinna*, *Women for Women International* argues that the historical notion of “motherhood” is still present in the Middle East and that religion offers protection to women in

both the “private” and the “public” sphere (Salbi, 2003, p.16). They argue that women in the Middle East have historically been seen as carriers of their people’s honor, heritage and culture and thereby positions *all* “Middle Eastern women” as a group sharing one common problem.

“Motherhood as a social identity in religious thinking thus provides a “positive and assertive self-identity among women” and a “sense of self-worth from which to challenge various forms of oppression and, in the process, develop new strengths and capacities” (Salbi, 2003, p.16).

The social reality of “Middle Eastern women” is represented as being determined by traditional/religious laws, which puts them in a position of regulation by family codes such as marriage and inheritance (Salbi, 2003, p.17). It is problematic to refer to *all* Middle Eastern women as oppressed by these traditional familial structures in similar ways and not regard the diverse history that each country and religion contains.

It is evident that both *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* represents women as victims of the familial system when dealing with issues concerning traditional structures within the household. Women are described in a stereotypical way by both organizations that tend to describe women in general as “mothers” and oppressed by their position within the family where they have private duties and a public reputation/honor to uphold.

6.5 Do the organizations portray “Third World women” as a group all suffering from development processes?

The fifth stereotype Mohanty describes concerns how “Third World women” are portrayed as victims in the development processes. Mohanty argues that Western feminist scholars tend to describe development as synonymous with economic development or economic progress and that this would affect women as a group in the same way. Again, Mohanty contends that it is inaccurate to represent all “Third World women” as a homogeneous group all with the same

needs. Needs that include education, work, access to health/services, political participation and legal rights and are explained through a lack of relevant development policies, which tends to exclude women as a group. Feminist scholars tend to focus on the problems and needs of women in the “Third World” and few tend to notice if they have “choices” or freedom to act. Western scholars do not take class or socio-economic position in society into account when examining “Third World women” suffering from development process, according to Mohanty. What Mohanty describes is critique of Western feminists’ representation of “Third World women” and the effects the development process had on these women prior to the 1980s, when “Under Western Eyes” was published. Neither *Kvinna till Kvinna* nor *Women for Women International* represent women in war-torn countries as victims of this process, since the organizations’ material contains more contemporary problems.

However, as an interesting aside, the organizations talk about development as a positive process for women, and that those women need to be educated to access and promote this process.

Women are represented in a homogeneous way in these discussions. Some examples of this will be provided next:

Kvinna till Kvinna

Kvinna till Kvinna’s main objective is to involve women in the peace process and they argue that by making women economically independent, more females will participate in the society and peace process. This is based on generalizing assumptions closely connected with the one above that concerns women as universal dependents. In *Kvinna till Kvinna*’s reports in the series Equal Power-Lasting Peace, focusing on the different areas (e.g. Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia) they are in each document discussing the situation in each country. They are focusing on one country at the time; yet they are presenting the exact same conclusions, and the problem seems to be just the same in all countries. When discussing women as a part of the development and peace process it tends to be generalizing. For instance, here is one excerpt from the Equal Power-Lasting Peace reports where it comes out generalizing, even though they are trying to be concrete:

“It is very important to achieve economic independence for women – it can certainly contribute to higher involvement of women in the society and in the peace process – that is what we try to promote. We also educate our female population on the issues of democracy and participation. Only with an increased involvement of women in these areas will we achieve peace in the end” *Armenia and Azerbaijan* (Kvinna till Kvinna, 2012, p.8).

This way of writing- stating that women are in need to be educated, is evident throughout all of *Kvinna till Kvinna*’s material, and not only in Armenia and Azerbaijan. *Kvinna till Kvinna* reproduce post-colonial ideas when arguing of implementing Western values to help the women they seek to assist, and to promote development and implement development policies.

Women for Women International

There are parts in *Women for Women International*’s material that, just as *Kvinna till Kvinna*, emphasizes that a part of the organization’s objective is to teach and implement Western values to provide economic development. One concrete example is from *Women for Women International*’s annual report from 2011, where they are proclaiming the importance of educating women in the war-torn countries in which the organization operates.

“The women also learn business and vocational skills, and gain access to income-generating activities where they can apply those skills and begin moving towards economic stability” (Annual report, 2011, p.1).

Education is significant, yet, teaching women in countries of war about business is definitely a very “Westernized” point of view, where the main meaning of stability is economic stability. Furthermore the annual report contains some information about how *Women for Women International* works with educating and promoting Western values, a result of a post-colonial era, to teach women how to involve in development and peace processes.

To conclude what Mohanty means with this fifth stereotype, none of the organizations' are reproducing this generalizing stereotype since it is not discussed in their material. When the organizations' are discussing development and the more specifically development process they are not portraying women as victims, yet they are generalizing in their ways of picturing all women in need of education to be able to access and promote this development.

6.6 Do the organizations represent “Third World women” as all oppressed by religious ideologies?

The last stereotype provided by Mohanty represents “Third World women” as victims of religious ideologies. Religious tradition and patriarchal structures positions women as a monolithic group and subordinate to men as well as in the community. Men generally have the control over economic resources and provide personal security to women within religious societies. Mohanty especially looks at Islam, which is commonly represented by Western feminists as an ideology separate from outside relations. *Kvinna till Kvinna* partly generalizes when it comes to the stereotype of “Third World” women as victims of religious ideologies. The organization does, however, a good job in providing research and material presented through the women's own voices and pushes on the problem that international actors often use stereotypes when it comes to religion and culture. However, *Kvinna till Kvinna* doesn't specifically write much about religion and its effect on women, but does instead discuss traditional- and cultural structures that can be comparable to religious structure as such. *Women for Women International* on the other hand, tend to represent women as victims of religious ideologies, especially in their Annual Journal (2003) which is dedicated to the issue of women and religion. Women are represented as victims under the religious traditional structures that tend to favor men. Women (especially Muslim women) are therefore not enjoying either freedom or protection under Islamic traditions.

Kvinna till Kvinna

Kvinna till Kvinna contends that traditional patriarchal structures keep women from participating and represents women as victims when it comes to activism, meaning that women take risks when working with sensitive feminist issues and therefore becomes excluded from the community. Even though *Kvinna till Kvinna* repeatedly shows signs of referring to women as victims of traditional patriarchal structures, they represent women individually depending on country and origin. But what all women in the countries they work with seem to have in common is that they are all subordinate due to traditional structures and oppressed by men.

There are many obstacles for women's participation in the political process, due to tradition and culture. Women's lack of power can depend on governmental laws, like they do for example in Iraq where the Constitution states that religious law precedence over family law. Women's exclusion therefore has an impact on women's rights in for example marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance (Equal Power – Lasting Peace Summary, 2012). In Bosnia, women become victims of overt discrimination and harassment when working with sensitive issues that does not fit into the traditional and cultural structures such as sexual and reproductive rights (Equal Power – Lasting Peace Bosnia Report, 2012). Traditional governmental structures and cultural regulations affect women especially. *Kvinna till Kvinna* argues that:

“Nationalism and gender are related. The religious community supports nationalism and it is really a partnership that prevents women from doing politics or having power. As another informant explained, patriarchy, nationalism and religion are three vertical structures closely related to one another and they create invisible power structures that obstruct women's participation in society outside condoned roles”
Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mannergren et.al, 2012, p.6).

The statement implies that all women that live in nationalistic societies influenced by religious tradition are seen as victims and subordinate in the political community. The statement is tough referring to the nationalistic patriarchy that is a big issue in today's Bosnia and Herzegovina, but one can assume that the same issue can be applicable to other countries and therefore to all

women. *Kvinna till Kvinna* writes that women's needs have to be understood in relation to the conservative norms in society that strengthen the exclusion of women (Mannergren et.al, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2012, p.11).

Women for Women International

Unlike *Kvinna till Kvinna*, *Women for Women International* represent women as victims of religious ideologies and states that "religious notions have ingrained a sense of powerlessness in the psyche of women" (Vohra, 2003, p.36). Their 2003 Annual Journal is dedicated to the subject of "The Impact of Religion on Women in the Development Process" and shows a lot of evidence of generalizing stereotypes. As Mohanty describes the stereotype, *Women for Women International* discusses Islam as an ideology especially downgrading to women and refers to all "Middle Eastern women" as being under the same oppression without any reference to country or origin. However, in the following illustrative example, *Women for Women International* argues that religious ideals provides a positive aspect for women, because they can be valued as mothers.

"Religious ideals provide a haven of sorts for women through its glorification of traditional roles, among other ideals, in response to economic insecurity and the unattainable demands of modernization and globalization. - If women cannot succeed in the economy, they can at least be valued as mothers" (Rouhana, 2003, p.5).

It is questionable to argue whether *Women for Women International* are referring to all religions that exists in the countries of the "Third World" or not, when they for a fact only discusses "Islam" and "Hinduism". By referring to Middle Eastern women, they also overlook the complex nature of culture and tradition that exists within different areas and therefore denies that women are differently positioned within religious communities, just as Mohanty argued.

Women for Women International states that the vast majority of Middle Eastern women choose to wear a veil, despite its negative image in the "West" (Salbi, 2003, p.17). Even though they make clear that it is a *majority* of the women which in itself is not very generalizing, we can still

question what the statement is based on and why they group all Middle Eastern women together as a group. The report provides an underlying notion that subordinates women in religious cultures and positions these women as the “others”, in need of help. It therefore assumes that the “West” knows what is best. As we can see in the following extract, the religious protection that is available for women is being referred to as a myth:

“For that religious protection to become a reality, though, religious law and tradition will have to be redefined and renegotiated to reflect modern family structures and needs. Until that happens, the religious promise for safety and security for women will remain mythical. But, when talking about the Middle East, myths and promises are all that is available now” (Salbi, 2003, p.18).

The previous quote implies that religious laws and tradition needs to be modernized and redefined in order to benefit women. It positions women as victims of religious ideologies and assumes that safety and security does not exist for women under religious structures. It is evident that *Women for Women International* uses generalizing language in other aspects, like for example when it comes to a section in the report regarding Afghanistan.

“Afghan women feel strongly that Islam, more than any other religion, guarantees equal rights to men and women. The women are well aware of the existence of women’s rights in Islam. “Women have the right to work, to study. Women have lots of rights,” they said. “Women have rights in Islam. They can work outside of the house,” one woman added. But they could not elaborate much further. There was a need to learn about their rights” (Abirafeh, 2003, p.36).

Women for Women International is in this aspect using a way of representation that is undermining Afghan women and also acts like they know what is best for them. According to the organization, awareness-raising is needed in order to break down traditional barriers and changing attitudes. Just like Mohanty describes the stereotype, Muslim women are seen as uniformly and generally oppressed by religious ideologies and traditions. The main explanation to why these women don’t know their own rights according to *Women for Women International*

is the lack of education. They argue that this is a huge obstacle to the understanding of women's rights in Islam because they don't have to learn about it from others.

“Compounding the problem, religious law is interpreted strictly from a perspective of male privilege, in a manner often more restrictive than actually exercised in Islamic history. Women in this case find themselves losing on both ends: they are neither enjoying the freedom brought about by modernization nor the protection dictated by religious traditions” (Salbi, 2003, p.16).

The issue of women's rights awareness is present in *Women for Women Internationals'* representation regarding the countries India, Iraq, DR Congo and especially Afghanistan. Without regard to other countries and religions than “Islam” and “Hinduism”, it is difficult to position all women with the same issues and solutions. It is also daring to say that no Muslim women are enjoying freedom or protection under Islamic traditions.

“Although not every religion is represented, the articles in this journal address and interweave many such themes [...] Hence, understanding the role and impact of religion on women sheds light on important components of a society that fundamentally shape its population” (Salbi, 2003, p.2).

Even though *Women for Women International* state in the beginning of the journal that not every religion is represented, they are still generalizing in many of the articles and refer to women as victims of religious ideologies.

Both *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* tend to generalize women as victims of religious ideologies, but in different ways. *Kvinna till Kvinna* does a better job at providing texts that includes the women's own voices and opinions and does therefore create a more nuanced picture of their situation than *Women for Women International* does. It is also important to know that *Kvinna till Kvinna* doesn't provide much material that concerns religion specifically and does instead talk about traditional- and cultural structures where women are seen

as victims. It is also evident that *Women for Women International* tends to group women together as a homogenous group when it comes to religious oppression and does not provide evidence from many different religions and countries like *Kvinna till Kvinna* does.

6.7 Summary

As the previous analysis have presented, both *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* shows generalizing tendencies when it comes to representing the women they work with. It is evident that four out of six claims, or stereotypes, made by Mohanty can be found in the material from both organizations. “Women as victims of development process” is the only claim that could not be found in any of the two cases, and is therefore not represented in the generalizing way described by Mohanty. The stereotype “women as victims of colonial process” could only be found in the material of *Women for Women International* and is not mentioned by *Kvinna till Kvinna*. To answer the first research question previously stated in the thesis, we can see that *Women for Women International* represent “Third World women” as a homogenous group sharing a similar experience of oppression in five out of six claims described by Mohanty and that *Kvinna till Kvinna* reproduce four of the stereotypes.

Even though they both provide material that state the importance of not to generalize women, they do however in some cases produce the opposite image. It is evident that both organizations represent women as subordinate and in need of help, in the majority of Mohanty’s six claims. Despite the many aspects the two organizations have in common when it comes to their way of representing “Third World women”, there are also many differences. To answer the second research question, (whether there are any differences in their ways of representation) we will now conclude how *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* represents each of the six dimensions in order to see how they differ from each other.

First, it is evident that *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* represents “Third World women” as victims of male violence, by focusing on two different aspects. *Kvinna till Kvinna* looks almost exclusively at male violence concerning sexualized oppression, while

Women for Women International primarily focus on both domestic physical abuse and sexual violence as well.

When it comes to “Third World women” being represented as universal dependents, it is evident that both organizations portray women as economically and politically dependent, as previously described by Mohanty to characterize the stereotype. However, the two organizations differ when it comes to their theories of why women are being economically and politically excluded. *Kvinna till Kvinna* argues that women’s exclusion mainly depends on poverty and corruption, while *Women for Women International* argues that it is much due to traditional patriarchy that holds women back. Their solution is to involve international actors to a higher extent than *Kvinna till Kvinna*, which instead means that solutions can be found by listening to the women’s own voices and opinions.

Mohanty’s third claim concerns whether the organizations portray “Third World women” as victims of colonial process. There is not much to be said other than the fact that *Kvinna till Kvinna* does not provide any material concerning how women have been affected by colonial processes, while *Women for Women International* provide only one report where they reproduce an image of passive women and show tendencies of being generalizing.

Both *Kvinna till Kvinna* and *Women for Women International* tend to portray women as a group where they all are victims of familial systems. The two organizations describe women in general as “mothers” and oppressed by their position within familial structures. However, *Kvinna till Kvinna*, again, seems to take women’s own voices in to account, unlike *Women for Women International*. *Kvinna till Kvinna* states that the women themselves often use the image of “mothers” when it comes to peace negotiations in order to portray women in a positive image within traditional social norms. *Women for Women International*, on the other hand, tend to put more focus on traditional gender roles within the home as well as male oppression due to domestic patriarchal structures.

When it comes to portraying women as victims of the development process there is not much to be said, as none of the two organizations are covering this topic.

The last dimension concerns how the organizations represent “Third World women” as all oppressed by religious ideologies. *Kvinna till Kvinna* doesn’t specifically write much about religion and its effect on women, but does instead discuss traditional- and cultural structures. *Women for Women International* tends to be more generalizing when it comes to women and religion, and much focus is put especially on women under the oppression of Islamic traditions. *Kvinna till Kvinna* does a better job at providing texts that includes the women’s own voices and opinions and does therefore create a more nuanced picture of their situation than *Women for Women International* does. It is also evident that *Women for Women International* tends to group women together as a homogenous group when it comes to religious oppression and does not provide evidence from many different religions and countries like *Kvinna till Kvinna* does.

7. Conclusion

Chandra Mohanty and the post-colonial critique that followed her in the mid-1980s have taken the feminist debate in a new direction. In her article “Under Western Eyes” she criticizes how Western feminists represent women in the “Third World”. With six diverse cases she explains how Western feminists reproduce inaccurate stereotypes of the “Third World woman”. Her writing led to a huge breakthrough and feminists in “the West” got more aware of their ways of portraying “Third World women”. Scholars have during the last couple of decades put the issue of Western stereotypical representation on the agenda. There is extensive scholarship regarding how Western feminists’ represent “Third World women”, yet also how media, IGOs and travellers portray women in the “Third World”. Though, the inadequate literature concerning how Western NGOs represent “Third World women” makes this thesis fill an important gap in the literature.

With Mohanty’s six claims of Western feminists’ generalization of “Third World women” as a foundation, this thesis have been applying these claims on two Western women’s’ organizations to examine their ways of representing women in the countries they seek to assist. With a constructivist theory, ontological assumptions and Mohanty’s six claims as an analytical framework, this thesis have been providing a comparative study examining *Kvinna till Kvinna* and its American counterpart *Women for Women International*’s ways of representing “Third

World women". The thesis have provided an answer to the research questions and the stated aim to determine if the organizations represent "Third World women" in the stereotypical way, and if there is any major differences between the Swedish and American organizations.

By using words like "all women" or simply "women", the organizations tend to group women together as a homogenous group and represent them in a generalizing way. There are many instances throughout the material where women are being represented depending on their country of origin. They are for example frequently talking about "Middle East women", "Balkan women" and "Congolese women" as coherent groups. When they are talking about "Muslim women", not taking country, culture or history into account, it is surely generalizing, not only for women in the "Third World" but also for Muslim women all over the world. There are many cases when women's problems are presented in the same way and with the same solutions, which is also an important reason to conclude that the organizations are generalizing.

The two organizations do not generalize at an equal level in all of Mohanty's claims. Four generalizing stereotypes are evident in both organizations. One stereotype regarding colonial process is only present in *Women for Women International* and the stereotype of "women as victims in the development process" is not existent in any of the two organizations. In many aspects, when portraying women in the "Third World", the organizations are alike, however, there are some parts where they differ. Like for instance when talking about women as victims of male violence, the organizations put focus on different aspects of the problem, where *Kvinna till Kvinna* tend to focus more on sexual violence and *Women for Women International* on other aspects as well. Overall, the organizations focus on some diverse aspects throughout their material, for example when it comes to portraying women as victims in the colonial process and it is the case that *Women for Women International* do generalize, while *Kvinna till Kvinna* does not bring up the colonial process at any point.

To summarize, Western NGOs have to work on their representations practices to be less generalizing. There are many aspects in which in the organizations are concrete and nuanced, yet when terms like for instance a uniform "women's voice" still is present in the material, there are

still much to be improved. The organizations should be at the leading edge concerning fair and non-generalizing representation.

Further research

An interesting aside would be to do further research, investigating how Western women's NGOs represented "Third World women" prior to Mohanty's critique. That would make it possible to determine whether the organizations' did assimilate Mohanty's criticisms or not. Now it is only possible to speculate if Mohanty have been effecting *Kvinna till Kvinna and Women for Women International* ways representation and that it might have been even more generalizing if Mohanty did not manage to reach out with her critique.

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