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## **Girl power and 'selfie humanitarianism'**

The aim of this article is to examine the 'turn to the girl' and the mobilisation of 'girl power' in contemporary global humanitarian and development campaigns. The paper argues that the 'girl powering' of humanitarianism is connected to the simultaneous depoliticisation, corporatisation and neo-liberalisation of both humanitarianism and girl power.

Located in broad discussions of campaigns around Malala, Chime for Change and the Girl Effect, the paper seeks to understand the construction of girls as both ideal victims and ideal agents of change, and to examine the implications of this. It suggests that this shift is intertwined with what we call 'selfie humanitarianism' in which helping others is intimately connected to entrepreneurial projects of the self, and is increasingly figured less in terms of redistribution or justice than in terms of a makeover of subjectivity for all concerned.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First we consider the literature about the depoliticisation of humanitarian campaigns in the context of neoliberalism and the growing significance of corporate actors in the world of international aid and disaster relief. Next we examine similar processes in the commodification and export of discourses of 'girl power',. We then argue that these have come together in the emerging 'girl powering of development' (Koffman & Gill, 2013), a cocktail of celebratory 'girlafestoes' and empowerment strategies often spread virally via social media; celebrity endorsements; and corporate branding which stress that 'I matter and so does she' and elide the differences between pop stars and CEO of multinational corporations on the one hand, and girls growing up poor in the global South on the other. Our paper focuses on contemporary examples from the Girl Up campaign.

The paper argues that far from being 'post' girl power, global humanitarian and development discourses constitute a new and intensified focus upon the figure of the girl and a distinctive, neo-colonial, neoliberal and postfeminist articulation of girl power.

## Introduction

*'Supporting girls' education is one of the best investments we can make to help end poverty. It will save lives. It will transform futures. It will unleash the incredible potential of girls and their communities.'* (Plan International, 2014)

*'Make a contribution by uploading a photo...683 photos sends one girl to school for a year'* (Girl Up, 2013)

This paper considers the extraordinary visibility of the figure of the 'girl' in contemporary humanitarian campaigns. We argue that girls have become the unprecedented focus of attention as both potential 'donors' to humanitarian causes and as recipients or beneficiaries of 'aid'. We seek to understand this 'turn to the girl' in the context of two broad sets of changes: the corporatisation, depoliticisation and neoliberalisation of humanitarianism, and the mainstreaming of postfeminist discourses of 'girl power'. We argue that together these are leading to the distinctive 'girl powering' of development and humanitarianism (Koffman & Gill, 2013). We further suggest that this process is increasingly intertwined with what we call 'selfie humanitarianism' in which helping others is intimately connected to entrepreneurial projects of the self. Sisterly solidarity with disadvantaged girls is figured less in terms of redistribution or social justice than in terms of a makeover of subjectivity for all concerned (Chouliaraki, 2013; Orgad and Nikunen, forthcoming). The word 'selfie' here thus has multiple meanings: it speaks to the key role in which mobile-technology-generated self-portraits – and social media more generally – play in contemporary girl-focused humanitarian campaigns; it captures the turning of the humanitarian gaze away from the those in need and onto the individual donor; and it highlights the reframing of 'helping others' in terms of entrepreneurial and narcissistic self-work.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First we locate the rising prominence of the figure of the girl within the interrelated processes of the depoliticisation, corporatisation and neoliberalisation of humanitarian communications. Next we explore the role in this process of postfeminist media culture – a media culture in which neoliberalism and individualism are celebrated and in which feminism is both endorsed and repudiated. We then argue that these two broad transformations have come together in the emerging 'girl powering' of humanitarian discourses - a cocktail of celebratory 'girlafestoes' and 'empowerment strategies' often spread virally via social media, celebrity endorsements, and corporate branding. These stress that 'i matter and so does she' (Koffman & Gill, 2014) and elide the differences between girls growing up in the 'comfort zone' of the global North and their 'sisters' in the global South. Finally, we turn our focus to the campaign Girl Up, which was established by the United Nations Foundation to give American girls 'the opportunity to channel their energy and compassion' towards girls in the global South. Through careful attention to this one case study, we seek to examine the way in which the 'girl powering' of humanitarianism is increasingly involved in the emergence of a 'selfie' ethic of care.

## **Click, donate and (possibly) forget: the corporatisation, depoliticisation and neoliberalisation of humanitarianism**

Over recent decades, the field of humanitarianism has seen radical transformation which has significantly challenged humanitarian aid and international development organisations. Within these broader transformations, whose review is beyond the scope of this paper (see Barnett and Weiss, 2008; Calhoun, 2008), humanitarian communications have been one significant area of NGO operations that have undergone substantial changes.

Earlier NGO communication (during the 1970s and 1980s) has been criticized as patronizing, orientalisising, dehumanizing, with images of starving children and emaciated babies depriving people of agency and dignity, decontextualizing their misery, perpetuating a distorted view of the developing world as a theatre of tragedy and disaster (Cohen, 2013), and failing to achieve the 'imaginative leap' (Cohen, 2013) between 'us' in the global North and 'them' in the global South. In response, from the 1980s, NGOs began using increasingly 'positive images' to depict their beneficiaries as self-sufficient, dignified, empowered, active agents situated in their communities and social contexts (Dogra, 2012; Wilson, 2011). It is in the context of this corrective effort that the empowered girl has emerged as a celebrated figure. As several scholars have observed, many prominent humanitarian campaigns depict girls as imbued with economic and educational capability and highlight the role they play in improving their countries' economic prospects (Moeller 2013; Hayhurst 2011; Murphy 2012, Shain 2013, Koffman & Gill 2013).

However, intensifying competition, scarcer resources and public disillusion with humanitarian aid and NGOs' efficacy and legitimacy (exacerbated and exemplified by criticisms of campaigns such as Live Aid in the 1980s and Make Poverty History in the 2000s), have rendered this new 'positive imagery' paradigm fraught with tensions and unintended consequences. The broader commercial media environment dominated by brands and consumerism, and their own sector's highly crowded field, have led NGOs to increasingly adopt a corporate logic in their humanitarian communication influenced by business, advertising and branding models (Chouliaraki, 2013; Dogra, 2012; Nash, 2008; Orgad, 2013; Richey and Ponte; 2011; Vestergaard, 2008; Wilson, 2011). Humanitarian NGOs increasingly depend on the corporate sector and on 'playing the media's game' for their income (BBC Panorama, December 2013; Cottle and Nolan, 2009).

The corporatization, branding and commodification of humanitarian communication (e.g. Chouliaraki, 2012; Richey and Ponte, 2011; Vastergaard, 2009) is exemplified by the central role of celebrity advocacy (Littler, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2013; Cooper, 2008) and the incorporation of social media into humanitarian communication (Chouliaraki, 2012; Cooper, 2014). Both these practices seek to address and redress the inadequacies of earlier NGO communications paradigms and to engage western publics with far away others. They use celebrity as a mediator reducing the distance between viewers in the global North and distant others in the global South, or employ social media as a platform to include the previously unheard voices of the marginalized and engage western publics with them (Cooper, 2014).

In the process, the adoption of the logic of global market capitalism has fundamentally depoliticized humanitarian communication: relying on and fostering neoliberal values and consumerist forms of engagement, shifting focus from the distant other, inwards onto the supporter in the global North (Chouliaraki, 2013; McAlister, 2012; Orgad, 2012; 2014), and instrumentalising solidarity as a

profitable choice consumers are invited to make (Chouliaraki, 2013). In this new 'post-humanitarian communication' (Chouliaraki, 2013), oppression, exploitation and global systemic injustice tend to be obscured by short-term and low-intensity relations to the far-away other. 'It privileges privatized action rather than grand ethical and political changes that seek to dismantle global strictures of injustice. It is an ethics of click, donate, and (possibly) forget it' (Orgad, 2012: 78).

It is in this context that the girl emerges as an idealised subject of post-humanitarian communication. She trades on and reproduces connotations of the 'ideal victim' historically employed by NGOs in their communications, and shown (or believed) to elicit compassion and monetary donation: innocence, vulnerability, authenticity, blamelessness, and 'pure' untroubled femininity. Simultaneously, the figure of the girl is now also potent for the way in which she mobilises ideas and motifs of the post-humanitarian regime: empowerment, newfound freedoms, orientation to the future, self-responsibilisation, resilience and economic productivity. It is the way in which the 'ideal' post-humanitarian subject is gendered through contemporary materialisations of 'girl power' that we turn to next.

### **Postfeminist culture and the girl powering of humanitarianism**

Paralleling the crises and trends discussed above, the last two decades have seen the multiplication of discourses of 'girl power' associated with postfeminist culture. The outcome of popular feminism, changes in consumer culture, technological shifts and demographic transformations (amongst many other changes), 'girl power' is not a singular phenomenon but sits at the intersection of a proliferation of competing discourses, many of which are connected to postfeminist culture (Gill, 2007). As argued elsewhere in this volume (references please Amy and Anita!),

and well-documented by gender and youth scholars more broadly, the late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen the growing visibility of girls and young women in popular culture and policy discourses. Girls in the global North are depicted as subjects of capacity—'can do girls' (Harris, 2004) who are increasingly educationally successful, financially independent and in control of their sexuality and reproductive capacities (Aapola et al, 2005; Driscoll, 2002; McRobbie, 2007; Ringrose, 2007; Walkerdine et al, 2001). Indeed part of the affective 'glow' and force of girl power lies in its postfeminist emphasis upon how much positive change has been achieved for women, alongside its heady, warm-yet-apparently-defiant expressions of admiration for all things girl ('girls rule', etc) (Dobson, 2011 & 2012). In the contemporary postfeminist sensibility, young women are hailed through notions of independence, agency and empowerment, interpellated as active subjects, imbued with the opportunity (indeed obligation) to 'makeover' their lives, through carefully designed and executed 'choice biographies'. As many have noted (Beynon, 2002; Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2009) this represents a stark contrast with constructions of young men, particularly in those media representations portraying masculinity as 'in crisis'.

We suggest that these discourses have come together to form a distinctive articulation (Hall, 1996) or assemblage (Guattari and Deleuze, 2000) that we call the girl-powering of development and humanitarianism (Koffman & Gill 2013). Girl power is now a prominent feature of development discourse; it has also affected development practice leading to an increase in the number of interventions focusing on adolescent girls. These interventions are frequently funded by

governments (USAID, DfID) as well as corporate donors such as Nike and are implemented by a wide range of NGOs (Moeller 2013; Hayhurst, 2011).

While couched in development policy terms, these practices are also inextricably linked to discourses of 'girl power' that are deployed in the construction of southern girls. On the one hand, southern girls continue to be depicted as victims of patriarchal 'cultural practices' through the familiar colonial gaze. Studies show how despite decades of postcolonial critique, these depictions repeatedly re-cite the notion of the oppressed 'Third World Woman' (Mohanty, 2003), now encompassing the highly visible figure of the girl (Bent 2013, Hayhurst 2011, Koffman & Gill 2013, Sensoy and Marshall, 2010, Shain, 2013, Wilson, 2011). Furthermore, as Emily Bent (2013) argues, the neo-colonial trope of the Third World woman/girl is reinvigorated through the construction of Western and Third World girlhood as oppositional. While Western girlhood is constructed as the preferred norm, Southern girlhood is depicted as profoundly shaped by patriarchy, poverty and victimisation thereby reinforcing a dichotomous boundary between 'us' and 'them'. As several scholars observed, these neo-colonial articulations are intertwined with neoliberal discourses of development (Murphy, 2012, Bent 2013, Hayhurst 2011, Koffman & Gill 2013, Shain, 2013) and are closely related to the processes of corporatisation, depoliticisation and neoliberalisation of humanitarianism, which we have outlined above.

At the same time, contemporary humanitarian discourses cast girls as subjects of extraordinary potential. Indeed, the contrast between girls' powerlessness and their potential is highlighted and used as a rhetorical device across policy documents, campaign materials and media texts. For example, the Nike Foundation declares 'invest in a girl and she'll do the rest' (Nike Foundation 2011), while the UN Interagency Task Force on Adolescent Girls calls to 'unleash the power of girls' and claims that deprived girls are 'the unexpected solution to many of the world's most pressing problems' (UNFPA 2/3/2011). Another recent example is of 'Jegna', a Nike/DfID sponsored girl-band. Styled as the 'Ethiopian Spice Girls', like the original band of 'sporty', 'posh', 'scary' and 'baby' spice, each Ethiopian singer is supposed to represent a 'type' of girl and a set of qualities with which young Ethiopian women can identify. These role models, created as part of a wider branded social communication platform are understood as capable of unleashing a major social transformation through the empowerment of girls (Girl Hub 2013, see Koffman et al, forthcoming).

The mediated figure of Malala Yousafzai neatly exemplifies this dual construction of the girl as a victim and agent of potential: She is at once a victim of oppressive patriarchal culture and a courageous, resilient agent refusing to be silenced, embodying the feisty, girl-power inflected mode of contemporary (post) feminist (post) humanitarianism. As Heather Switzer (2013) argues, the southern girl embodies two oppositional 'types': the durable figure of the schoolgirl and the oppressed (usually married) girl-child.

A crucial component in the 'girl powering of humanitarianism' is the address to girls (not boys, nor adults) in the US (and elsewhere in the global North) exhorting them to identify as sisters, saviours and 'BFFs' of their Southern counterparts. This address affirms the prominence of a discourse that Sensoy and Marshall aptly termed 'missionary girl power' (2010). We concur with Sensoy and Marshall that this discourse reiterates the missionary and colonial depictions of the victimised Third World woman in need of a Western saviour. However, this analysis, as we will illustrate in the next section, does not capture some of the novel dynamics involved. These dynamics, we argue, are best

described as the emergence of 'selfie humanitarianism'. Drawing on the two bodies of literature – post-humanitarian communication and postfeminist culture, in the following section we explore the rise of a 'selfie ethics of care' at the heart of the campaigns for sisterly solidarity between girls. We argue that this is an important feature of the 'girl powering' of humanitarianism and development which has hitherto remained unexplored within the literature examining this process (Bent 2013, Hayhurst 2011, Koffman& Gill 2013, Murphy 2012; Sensoy and Marshall, 2010, Shain, 2013, Wilson, 2011) .

### **Girl(ing) Up and the rise of 'selfie humanitarianism'**

Girl up is a campaign established by the Washington D.C. based United Nations Foundation. Its declared aim is to give American girls 'the opportunity to channel their energy and compassion' towards supporting girls in the global South (Girl Up Facebook 2014). More than simply soliciting donations, the campaign seeks to spark a grassroots movement among American girls in support of their Southern 'sisters'. In order to generate widespread activism the campaign organises online appeals and 'awareness raising' girl conferences, often involving celebrities and high profile public figures (mostly women), capitalising on the visibility and popularity of celebrity advocacy that was discussed earlier. Girl Up has also produced a 'girlafesto' (Koffman& Gill, 2013) – a manifesto for the would-be movement and offers consumerist forms of engagement – supporting southern girls through a range of merchandise available for purchase on the campaign's website. Thus, American girls are invited to engage with the campaign in a variety of ways – by becoming advocates, donors, fundraisers, and consumers of Girl Up merchandise.

In the following discussion we analyse the features of the Girl Up address to girls, interrogating the notions of girlhood, empowerment, consumerism and selfhood they propagate. We argue that while the address entails an appeal to 'sisterhood'- global solidarity and compassion between girls, the shape that this solidarity and compassion takes is deeply problematic. Caring for distant 'sisters' is articulated through discourses that are simultaneously postfeminist and, crucially, post-humanitarian, culminating in what we term 'selfie humanitarianism' in which the expression of solidarity is predicated on a refashioning of the self through consumption, self-broadcasting (Banet-Weiser, 2011) self-branding, self-promotion (Gill, 2007) and media production .

#### *The selfie gaze, or can the subaltern tweet?*

Girl Up urges Northern girls to partake in social media-based activism involving the production of media content: tweets, images, videos and most significantly, selfies. While seeking to provide channels for the expression of sisterly solidarity, these activities and platforms are steeped in contradiction: the 'sisters' that they try to address are entirely absent. Rather than a dialogic two-way communication between Northern and Southern girls, the production of media content is self-oriented, contained within the sphere of Northern girls' lives. The images and tweets produced are overwhelmingly centred on Northern girls: it is their images, thoughts and feelings which are made public via social media rather than that of those girls in need of help.

An explicit example of this is found in the '11 days of action' campaign organised by Girl Up in the run up to the International day of the Girl 2013. In this campaign, Northern girls were encouraged to lend their support by taking a different action every day. The appeal highlights the intensity of media production in girls' everyday life inviting them to transform this activity into an act of charity: *'Think about all the photos you take every day. If you share just one photo using the free Donate a Photo app, Johnson & Johnson will help Girl Up send 58 girls in Liberia back to school'* (Girl Up 2013). 'Sharing', the constitutive activity of Web 2.0 (John, 2012) is mobilised as a form of expressing solidarity. Many of the images donated, such as in the examples above are girls' own selfies or pictures of their family and pets. While engaging in an effort to help others, it is supporters own image or images of their lives that are made publicly visible, rather than the recipients who are in need. We therefore argue that a 'selfie gaze' characterises this novel expression of sisterly solidarity, whether or not the image is actually a self-portrait.

Another example for this can be found in subsequent calls for action, in which American girls were encouraged to take action by expressing their thoughts or sharing content on social media. One action entitled 'Tweet it out' invited girls to tweet their answer to the question 'Why do you stand up for girls around the world?' (Girl Up 2013). Again rather than being oriented toward the southern girls – the 'recipient' of aid, in the 'old' terminology of humanitarian practice, the action of standing up for disempowered others is self-oriented, remaining exclusively contained within the 'safe zone' of Northern girls. Rather than looking outwards, in line with both post-humanitarian and postfeminist emphases on self-gaze, Girl Up invites Northern girls to build on and extend their existing digital media production practices, to enhance the gaze on themselves and the preoccupation with their own lives. In a subsequent day of action, Girl Up called on Northern girls to produce and publish a video in which they were asked to answer one of two questions: ' 1) How would you celebrate if every girl, no matter where she was born, was able to reach her full potential? Or 2) If you were given \$1 million, how would you spend it to help girls around the world?'(Girl Up, 2013). Significantly, both these questions centre on the Northern girl. She is not expected to invest time and effort in learning about the plight of those girls she seeks to help. Nor is she expected to articulate claims in political terms, for example, regarding how resources should be spent or how to bring about change. Rather she is expected to express her care for her southern 'sisters' is through turning her own thoughts and feelings into a 'terrain of self-inspection' (Chouliaraki, 2010: 119) and, fundamentally, through spending money – alluding to her experience as a consumer. In both cases the appeal invites the Northern girl to take a primary interest in her own thoughts and plans- how *she* would celebrate, how *she* would choose to spend a million dollars. This selfie-gaze outlines a highly narcissistic form of caring for the suffering of others, one in which the spectator/donor remains centre stage and is not invited to turn her camera or thoughts to those that need help. The donor's own interior life is presented as infinitely more interesting and relevant than the conditions faced by those of the donor she purportedly seeks to help.

#### *Refashioning the self: from girls to leaders*

A further aspect of the self-focused character of Girl Up is its invitation to American girls to compete to become one of Girl Up's Teen Advisors, who constitute an important part of the campaign. The design and framing of the role of teen advisors reveals its intertwinement with currently circulating notions of the neoliberal self. In these, individuals are hailed as enterprising and self-managing subjects, exhorted to work on and improve themselves. Rather than being framed as a call for justice



and solidarity with far-away others, Girl Up calls upon Northern girls to help others through transforming themselves into leaders and launching a professional career. Importantly, this is a competitive activity, focused on individuals' achievement and success. Girls who take up this role are promised the opportunity to 'develop leadership skills through ... trainings in advocacy, fundraising, public speaking, and leadership' (Girl Up 2013) – a description indicative of the wider postfeminist makeover paradigm that characterises postfeminist culture. A key aspect of the Teen Advisor's role is to become a public persona, who produces and presents media content. She is are required to contribute to the Girl Up blog, comment on its Facebook page and engage with other social media platforms. Each girl has an elaborate personal profile on the Girl Up website containing pictures, a biographical narrative and a video.

In order to support the 'makeover' from girls to leaders, each cohort of teen advisors participated in a leadership summits in which American girls received training in 'storytelling' and advocacy and attended speeches by women entrepreneurs, media professionals and 'inspirational' political figures such as Michelle Obama's Chief of staff. The summit culminated in a practical 'lobby day' during which girls met politicians on Capitol Hill and began advocating for girls in the South (Girl Up 2013).

The construction of the teen advisor role reveals the productive entanglement of postfeminist and post-humanitarian modalities: American girls are not invited to subordinate their self-interest to act on behalf of disadvantaged girls. Rather, they are invited to help others through developing their own skills and opportunities. Solidarity, as Chouliaraki argues, is instrumentalised as a profitable choice that American girls are invited to make as consumers. Despite being in their teens, Girl Up advisors are offered career training, a platform for embarking on the entrepreneurial projects of the self at this young age.

Despite this, an articulation of girlhood, empowerment and leadership is also extended to Southern girls. Describing her visit to programmes for adolescent girls in Guatemala, a girl up teen advisor wrote in her blog 'These programs are helping girls understand the power of their actions, their rights, and the ability they have to be a leader and make a difference. While the change must come within them, the programs are giving the girls the tools they need to be empowered and empower those around them'(Stafford n.d.). She articulates a distinctly neo-liberal discourse which expects girls to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and transform the conditions of their lives. By arguing that 'change must come within them' the familiar notion that it is internal processes rather than external objective conditions, which are to blame for their current predicament is evoked and reinforced; a move that concurrently obscures global inequalities and reinforces the neoliberal psychological imperative to work on the self.

Girl Up further subjects Southern girls to the neoliberal logic and the supposed experience of Northern girls by invoking the universality of girlhood. Northern girls and Southern girls are both described as being empowered by Girl Up, as the teen advisor proclaims: 'Being involved with Girl Up has given me the chance to stand up for my rights and the rights of other women around the world. What I realized after meeting with the young women is that these programs are doing the same thing for them as Girl Up has done for me. Programs like these are helping girls in Guatemala to be leaders in their community and the protagonists of their own stories.'(Stafford, n.d.). This construction, which draws simultaneously on postfeminist 'girl power' discourses and post-

humanitarian universalist discourses, signals the effort to obliterate the distance between donors and distant others, but serves to mask the radical inequalities between and among them.

### Refashioned philanthropy<sup>1</sup>

Northern girls' experience as consumers is further drawn upon in another of Girl Up's appeals. 'Are there one or two dresses in the back of your closet... collecting dust, lonely and forgotten? Don't you think it [the dress] deserves a chance to empower another young woman like it once did for you?' With this question Girl Up invites American girls to donate their clothes to Moda Vive/ VivaDressUp, an online platform that sells party dresses (Girl Up 2013). Girl Up has partnered with this platform, offering American girls the opportunity to donate dresses that will be sold online to other American girls. A percentage of the proceeds are subsequently donated towards helping adolescent girls in the global South. The appeal evokes the notion of a chain reaction connecting the empowerment of different girls: by donating a dress that once empowered her, a Northern girl will help empower another Northern girl (who will purchase the dress) and at the same time facilitate the empowerment a Southern girl. It is striking that empowerment is cast as an equal goal for all girls thereby ignoring the radical difference in the conditions of Northern and Southern girls' lives and the very different kinds of empowerment they may require (let alone questioning their needing of empowerment, see Wilson, 2011). Northern girls' empowerment entails the wearing of a stylish dress, while Southern girls' empowerment entails accessing basic needs such as education or clean drinking water. The appeal purposefully elides these differences, affirming simply (in a typical neo-colonial mode) that donations can 'help empower young women everywhere' (Girl Up 2013) thereby inviting girls to conflate consumption and care for the self with care for distant others.

Another Girl Up partnership, with the entrepreneur Ivanka Trump (frequently listed in digests of the world's richest women) who created a Girl Up bracelets part of her jewellery line, demonstrates a similar construction conflating consumption and care and collapsing Northern and Southern girls into a seemingly indistinguishable 'we'. In a blog entry on the Girl Up website Trump urges girls to buy the bracelet, explaining that the proceeds from the sale will help send six girls to school in Malawi. One of Trump's suggestions is that girls buy the bracelet as a graduation gift for a friend or a relative. Since the proceeds of the bracelet will help support Southern girls' education, the bracelets represent, in her words, an opportunity to *'celebrate the achievements of a graduate you know; while giving our world's hardest-to-reach girls the opportunity to experience that same achievement and hope'* (Trump 2011). Trump's narrative invites girls to care for their less fortunate 'sisters' by celebrating their own privilege with an act of a stereotypical feminine consumption. This act of consumption will offer Southern girls a chance to become the high-achieving, successful postfeminist subjects which Northern girls already are assumed to be. In a move that exemplifies the penetration of the market logic of profitability into humanitarianism (Chouliaraki, 2011) Trump concludes her sales pitch by portraying the purchase as a good 'deal': 'one bracelet, six lives changed forever. How

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<sup>1</sup>Moda Vive, vivadressup.com, accessed 18/2/2014

can you pass this deal up?'(Trump 2010). Acts of solidarity are commodified and rendered into bargain shopping.

## Conclusion

In this article, we explored the case of the Girl Up campaign, to demonstrate what we describe as the girl-powering of international development and humanitarianism. The interrogation of the discourses of girlhood being propagated by this campaign revealed that whether in the global North or South, 'the girl', as Gonick et al (2009) argue, is now expected to be an ideal neoliberal subject: empowered, agentic and entrepreneurial. We further argue that this mediated construction of the girl in contemporary post-humanitarian communication enables and reinforces an inward gaze, which shifts away from a political concern with global injustices into an individualised, neo-liberalised charity that is intertwined with entrepreneurial projects of the self.

Through celebrating consumption, branding, self-gaze and emphasising neoliberal values, the mediated girl in post-humanitarian, postfeminist communication works to mask, rather than highlight, the radical differences and inequalities between the Southern and the Northern girl, and disregard inequality, injustice and global exploitation more broadly. This mediated post-humanitarian girl thus undercuts the very basis of the humanitarian impetus: to recognise and assist the other *on her own* terms, not because she is 'like me', wearing my dress, or practising self-responsibilisation, self-governance, and self-empowerment by 'pulling herself up'.

Consequently, as we have shown, the appeal of campaigns such as Girl Up to 'sisterhood'- solidarity between girls across the North/South divide is deeply ambivalent. Rather than articulating and providing means for developing such solidarity, which is predicated on recognition, commitment and care, the girl-power appeal disarticulates (McRobbie, 2009) cross-border solidarity. The coming together of Southern and Northern girls is enabled only on the basis of the narrow terms and through the North-centred discourse of 'girl power', and its supporting platforms and genres, the selfie being their recent most prominent expression. Girl power, then, is deeply and problematically implicated in selfie humanitarianism.

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