

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Celebrity as Celebration of Privatization in Global Development: A Critical Feminist Analysis of Oprah, Madonna, and Angelina

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What are the consequences of celebrity involvement in global development? Focusing on female celebrities allows us to consider how women's interests become articulated in the construction of development donors in an increasingly privatized development landscape. Emerging through the global production of television, music, and film, Oprah, Madonna, and Angelina Jolie have used their wealth and status to contribute to global philanthropy. Following a discussion of their resources, analyses connect their articulated missions in development as well as public discourse about their projects to underlying frameworks of social change, recognizing the role of patriarchy in neoliberal logics that guide mainstream global development. Focusing on women as mothers and social change as individual empowerment avoids attention to collective action and social justice.

Keywords: Global Development, Celebrity Philanthropy, Feminist Discourse, Gender, Social Change.

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Private donors have begun to take on leading roles on the global development stage. While their glamour has attracted public attention, the amount of their contributions remains much less than that of bilateral and multilateral agencies. Although private donors are quite diverse, including many types of nongovernmental organizations, corporations, civic groups, and individuals, they share an ability to avoid the type of accountability and scrutiny faced by public agencies. Among this group of private donors, a few wealthy individuals, or philanthrocapitalists, are able to dominate contributions toward foundations, causes, and countries.

The rise of “philanthrocapitalism” has been met with applause as well as critique. Some see this funding as a necessary complement to public forms of overseas development assistance. Concerns are raised though when philanthrocapitalism is recognized

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as encompassing a neoliberal ideology, relying on “business thinking by large new donors to transform philanthropy, coupled with the deployment of market mechanisms on a much larger scale to promote development and social change” (Edwards, 2009, p. 237). Many of these private aid initiatives focus on individual empowerment goals, resonating with a neoliberal approach to social change that emphasizes entrepreneurship in market economies.

In the next section, celebrities are considered as a particular group of wealthy individuals who rely on their commodification within a global capitalist network of communication industries. Emerging through the global production of television, music, and film, Oprah, Madonna, and Angelina Jolie have used their wealth and status to become visible agents of the development industry. Whether the intentions of celebrities are sincerely altruistic or strategically motivated toward improving their images is not the issue. Instead, the concern is with the broader systems of global capitalism that sustain an elite network that restricts the possibility for participatory development as well as accountability for their programs.

Following a discussion of these female celebrities’ resources, analyses connect their articulated missions in development to underlying frameworks of social change, as understood through primary resources of their foundations and public relations, as well as secondary discussions in the southern African English-language press. These analyses build on critical approaches to development communication that recognize the importance of political–economic conditions and feminist concerns.

Critical scholars also interrogate communication ABOUT development (Wilkins & Mody, 2001), extending this gaze to the development industry more broadly, considering the articulation of discourse within political and economic structures. Critical scholarship exploring the consequences of neoliberal globalization processes brings political economy into the foreground of communication research.

Celebrating celebrities in global philanthropy

Building on their status as stars of global music, film, and television industries, media celebrities participate in philanthropic work in a variety of ways, from being passively composed in public relations stunts to actively engaged in strategic advocacy, such as Peter Gabriel in the work of Witness (Pedelty, 2013). While the economic structure of communication industries is global, media celebrities bringing attention to global concerns continue to be based in Anglo cultural contexts, particularly Hollywood film and music industries (Cooper, 2008). Bono, for example, has been credited with building “the superhighway between Africa and Hollywood” (Traub, 2008). More specifically, celebrities participate in global development through funding their own foundations and programs, raising funds from others toward particular goals and projects (collaborating with corporate sponsors in hosting gala events; Traub, 2008), promoting awareness of issues (Street, 2012), and facilitating political networks that might support the work of advocacy, social movement, and nonprofit organizations. When celebrities such as Natalie Portman speak on behalf of microfinance or Scarlett

Johansson for girls' education in Africa and South Asia (Traub, 2008), people who are less politically engaged are more likely to pay attention (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2010), particularly among U.S.-based audiences. In a study contrasting news content and public knowledge in the United States, Denmark, and Finland, Curran, Iyengar, Lund and Salovaara-Moring (2009) established that not only is U.S. news more likely to focus on entertainment and celebrities, but also that these media consumers are more likely to know about celebrity gossip than critical global issues, such as climate change or names of foreign leaders.

Critical models of social change recognize that celebrities have more political capital in their ability to select global concerns for public attention than their audiences. Many charitable organizations, such as the Red Cross and Oxfam, recognize this dynamic when they rely on celebrities for public outreach as well as political access (Colapinto, 2012). Oprah, designated as the wealthiest of them with her \$US 2.7 billion, and U2, as a band determined to be the second wealthiest celebrity (Forbes, 2011), are actively involved in global development work. Benefiting from U2 fame, Bono holds a role as a prominent spokesman in several development projects, such as the RED campaign (Richey & Ponte, 2011), launched on Oprah's television show in 2006.

Aside from tax exemption, celebrities have the added advantage of using their causes to build more humanitarian images for themselves (Kapoor, 2013). Celebrities may tend to determine their causes less according to altruistic than to image-building purposes, but the star power accorded them serves to focus the global development agenda.

The discursive power of media celebrities goes further than merely selecting some issues over others: the very explanation of what causes problems and what might solve them is at stake. Celebrity attention to global issues contributes not only to an oversimplification of complex problems (Dieter & Kumar, 2008), but even more problematically to their depoliticization. By focusing on a "politics of pity," the prescribed path toward resolving serious social concerns becomes one of individual choices rather than transforming systems that structure the distribution of resources (Kapoor, 2013). Even scholars seemingly somewhat sympathetic to the efforts of celebrities to draw attention to global poverty recognize that broader media coverage ends up reinforcing neoliberal ideologies (Njoroge, 2011).

While many celebrities become engaged in global development work, this study focuses on female stars particularly, whose fame and fortune build from profitable work in global television, film, and music industries. This allows us to explore feminist concerns with the patriarchal foundations of development practices, problematizing the roles of women as donors, as well as recipients, of the aid process.

Engaging feminist critiques

This project situates its approach to critical development scholarship within feminist critiques, pertaining to the development industry as well as the commodification

of female celebrities. This critical approach is rooted in concerns with differences in power, particularly gendered but necessarily connected with material resources and social capital (Eriksson Baaz, 2005). Feminist concerns begin with a recognition of the patriarchal nature of development discourse, understanding patriarchy as a hierarchical relationship, which allows men to dominate women structurally, materially, and socially, working through ideological frameworks that intersect with “corporatist and consumerist ideologies” (Lazar, 2007, pp. 141–142).

Histories of development offer a narrative beginning with epistemological denial of women’s contributions, moving toward recognizing women’s integral roles in the development process (WID), incorporating over time an understanding of the broader gender dynamics that structure men’s and women’s participation (GAD). While these contributions can be seen as representing historical shifts in the field (Wilkins, 2007), it is important to recognize that each of these approaches still permeates development discourse.

Women’s positions within development discourses tend to fall within more subservient and passive roles. The development project tends to value women through their bodies, as motherly nurturers or sexual temptresses, and to rely on monolithic portrayals of “Third World women” as passive, traditional, and victimized (Mohanty, 1991; Shome, 2011; Wilkins, 2007).

Highlighting female celebrities broadens the scope of feminist critique of global development to include women as donors. While some individual women have earned considerable fortunes, they have done so in part through the commodification of their mediated appearances and talents, made possible through the profits of global communication industries.

Feminist critiques of philanthropy also call attention to problematic portrayals of female celebrities. Celebrity philanthropists overall are cast in the roles of “spokesmen,” reinforcing male dominance, as well as speaking FOR poor communities, trivializing serious issues and often manipulating events for their own publicity (Boykoff & Goodman, 2009; Dieter & Kumar, 2008). Chouliaraki’s (2012) exposition of Angelina Jolie’s approach to humanitarian aid as entrepreneurial, in contrast to a more “good Samaritan” role played by Audrey Hepburn, illustrates the importance of this contrast. Through her entrepreneurial approach, Angelina Jolie privileges individualism in her philanthropic acts as well as in constructions of poverty, which are “grounded on pity rather than justice” (Chouliaraki, 2012, p. 17). Visual images of women and children in poverty, juxtaposed against the radiance of the female celebrity “situated in the landscapes of poverty they are pronouncing on” (Goodman, 2010, p. 109) are keys to this articulation. This reduction of serious poverty to the branding of celebrities relies on visuals of idealized victims, more likely to trigger compassion among audiences (Hoiyer, 2004). While stereotyped victims provoke compassionate responses, these sentiments are limited: celebrities do little to connect audiences to distant others (Scott, 2014).

In this discourse, women serve as passive victims as well as compassionate donors. When focusing on individuals as responsible for problems as well as solutions,

development frameworks work within the WID paradigm. Critical feminism would necessitate more serious engagement with political and economic power dynamics within and across institutions, and to global and historical contexts. To explore how female celebrities can become engaged explicitly in development work, I begin with questions concerning their elite resource bases.

Building resource bases for female celebrities

Globally, gender gaps, particularly in terms of education and health status, have improved in most countries, although gaps between men's and women's economic attainment and political empowerment remain wide, according to a recent World Economic Forum Report (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2011). Although women are estimated to constitute 40% of the global work force, women earn far less than men for the same positions (World Bank, 2012). Women are also much less likely to make it to the Forbes' wealthiest lists: Of the wealthiest 100 people in the world, only 11 are women, and about half of these are listed as wealthy in terms of their "family." When women do accrue their wealth separately from family connections, typically they do so through their mediated commodification.

The three celebrity women highlighted in this study are purposively selected as significant contributors to global development. Table 1 describes the financial and social resources of Oprah, Madonna, and Angelina Jolie, the first two being closer in age (in their 50s), with the latter two being of similar European American descent. Different types of scales offer information as to their wealth and status, with Oprah clearly reigning supreme, as the richest woman in entertainment and the 11th most powerful woman in the world, worth \$US 2.7 billion. While Madonna figures as the world's best-selling female recorded artist and the fourth wealthiest woman in entertainment, with a net worth of \$US 650 million, she does not compete as "powerful." Angelina, however, makes this powerful list as 66th, but is NOT among Forbes' list of the richest women in entertainment, with a net worth of \$US 140 million; her claim to fame, however, also comes from being on the list of the world's most beautiful women. Although more recent Forbes' listings of powerful celebrities only include Oprah (2nd) and Angelina (13th), the same rankings in 2009 list Angelina, Oprah, and Madonna as the top three (Finlay, 2011, p. 196), marking Madonna's height before her fall from grace. Building their status through their glamour, talent, and ownership, Angelina, Madonna, and Oprah gain wealth through their successful navigation of and commodification in global film, music, and television industries.

These three not only make their own individual contributions to foundations, but also collaborate with various philanthropic organizations and networks. One of the formal organizations channeling celebrity participation is the Global Philanthropy Group, established in 2007 by Trevor Neilson, formerly with the Gates Foundation, and credited with advising many celebrities such as Madonna and Angelina Jolie.

Table 1 Resource Bases for Oprah, Madonna, and Angelina

	Oprah	Madonna	Angelina
Net Worth ^a	\$US 2.7 billion	\$US 650 million	\$US 140 million
Media Industry	Television	Music	Film
Claims to fame	World's wealthiest female celebrity	World's best-selling female recorded artist	World's most beautiful women
Richest women in entertainment (2007) ^b	1st	4th	Not on list
World's 100 most powerful women (2012) ^c	11th	Not on list	66th
World's 100 most powerful celebrities (2009) ^d	2nd	3rd	1st

^aRetrieved September 21, 2012, from <http://www.therichest.org/>

^bRetrieved September 21, 2012, from http://www.forbes.com/2007/01/17/richest-women-entertainment-tech-media-cz_lg_richwomen07_0118womenstars_lander.html

^cRetrieved September 21, 2012, from http://www.forbes.com/power-women/list/#page:1_sort:0_direction:asc_search:Oprah

^dRetrieved May 27, 2013, from http://www.forbes.com/2009/06/03/forbes-100-celebrity-09-jolie-oprah-madonna_land.html

Angelina severed ties with this group, however, joining others concerned with Neilson's arrogant bragging about his connections with celebrity clients (Colapinto, 2012). This man appears to have found his way into the work of many of these famed celebrities, more recently meeting with executive producers from Oprah's OWN television network to discuss a reality show celebrating the glamour of global philanthropy (Colapinto, 2012). While these three women are explored here in terms of their approaches to global development, their connections and intersections with other agencies help leverage their status.

Despite the fame of these women, within the global elite men still dominate in terms of wealth and power, allowing men such as Gates and Soros to emerge "as celebrities, partly for their status as two of the richest people on earth, and partly for their spectacular generosity" (Kapoor, 2013, p. 48–49). The very endowment of the Gates Foundation, at \$US 60 billion, exceeds the GDP of many countries (Kapoor, 2013, p. 50). The combined work of these wealthy entrepreneurs and celebrities in global development reinforces market economies.

This section chronicled resource bases for these three female celebrities within a broader consideration of gender gaps globally and male dominance in elite networks. With the financial and social capital afforded these three women given their fame and fortune based on global communications industries, next I explore the nature of the development programs they support, typically in girls' education, as well as their roles in global philanthropy.

Doing development

Each of these women has contributed financial capital as well as her social capital on behalf of global development projects. Next, I describe Oprah, Madonna, and Angelina's approaches to supporting foundations, causes, and programs. Most of their development work has been devoted to building schools for girls. All three also fund programs for vulnerable children, girls, and women, and in health (typically focused on HIV/AIDS) and poverty (particularly microenterprise programs).

Oprah

Oprah rises as the most charitable celebrity, allocating \$US 41.4 million for philanthropies in 2010. Other than her own foundation, she funds, among others: Mississippi Animal Rescue League; Clinton Foundation—AIDS and Climate Change; Project Cuddle; Free the Children (building schools in developing countries); Charlize Theron's Africa Outreach Project; Heifer International; Peace Over Violence; Red Cross; Somaly Mam Foundation (devoted to ending sex slavery); V-Day (stop violence against women); Women for Women International; and Worldwide Orphans Foundation.

The Oprah Foundation also serves as a central venue for her philanthropic work. Formerly known as the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy Foundation, the Oprah Foundation accepts funding from individuals, corporations, and other donors, to supplement her own personal funds. The Oprah Foundation itself is worth \$US 172 million. An earlier manifestation of a connected volunteer nonprofit organization, Oprah's Angel Network closed down in 2011, at the same time she ended her 25-year television talk show. Prior to this decision though she (along with Al Gore) was listed as among the most "influential" celebrities on global issues in four countries (Boykoff & Goodman, 2009, p. 400).

This was the period in which Oprah leveraged her influence to build a school for girls in South Africa. When designated as a Leadership Academy, in 2007, this foundation established a girls' school, grades 7–12, south of Johannesburg. This single, exclusive school was allocated \$US 40 million, benefitting a few hundred fortunate girls. In keeping with the nurturing role of women, Oprah reportedly described herself as "one proud mama" when the first class recently graduated from this academy, as reported in the British press (Willis, Smith, & Stenning, 2008).

A central theme of this school's mission, along with that of the academy, even resonating with the previous Oprah television program, emphasized individual responsibility over societal blame (Peck, 2008). This school was critiqued for ideological as well as logistical concerns. First, privileging individualism does not do justice to recognizing the critical conditions of poverty beyond personal control. The central message guiding the ideology of Oprah's charitable initiatives begs women to take personal responsibility, highlighting individual empowerment at the expense of recognizing social inequities that constrain opportunity. Next, the extremely high funding of this one school contrasts poorly in cost-benefit analyses in comparison to other charities, such as Catholic AIDS Action, allocating \$US 80,000 for 1,500

children's meals, clothes, and educational programs, or the Rwanda Community development work, spending \$US 300,000 on 50,000 orphans (Peck, 2008, p. 218). But Oprah was not the only female celebrity to invest in girls' education in the African region.

Madonna

While Madonna differs from Oprah in that she is not contributing as much financially to global development, they share an interest in funding schools for girls, one in Malawi to match the other in South Africa. Neither of these schools has worked well. But before exploring Madonna's efforts, it's worth noting the broader context of her global development giving. The central targets of her global charitable work include orphanages in Malawi; vulnerable children who have lost parents or have contracted HIV/AIDS; programs on HIV/AIDS and malaria, poverty, and education (Friedman, 2012).

Madonna established her foundation, *Raising Malawi*, in 2006 "to bring an end to the extreme poverty and hardship endured by Malawi's 1.4 million orphans and vulnerable children once and for all" (Raising Malawi, 2012). Public information on this foundation does not report an operating budget, but does admit to working with community and academic organizations in Malawi, along with the Clinton Foundation, Millennium Promise, the corporation Bingham McCutchen, and others. Assets for this foundation are estimated at about \$US 2.7 million. Working with Michael Berg, the cofounder of this foundation, Madonna leveraged her own \$US 11 million contribution by helping to raise \$US 18 million (Nagourney, 2011).

Madonna's 6-minute film on this work (Shekie2000, 2008) opens with visual shots of people crying and burying children. Against this backdrop of despair and death, her melodious voice asks: "how do we break this cycle?" The resounding chorus, through different individuals, such as Reverend Tutu, sings of our power to change ourselves and our nations, and that we share "a common fate." We are told: "we have a choice." Madonna then asks herself rhetorically: "Why did I choose Malawi?" She answers herself: "I didn't. It chose me." This rhetorical slant may be intended to counter critiques of her foundation's approach to development as being "top-down."

The Raising Malawi Foundation not only supported the operating budget of the Home of Hope orphanage, but also allocated \$US 300,000 for the organization "buildOn" to construct 10 schools in the country. This was not the total budget though: Some estimate the school project as costing \$US 3.8 million. This Academy for Girls was intending to admit 500 girls but, in the end, never did. Some blamed this wasted expense on mismanagement and corruption by hired staff and consultants (Nagourney, 2011; Traub, 2008), while others pointed to her unfortunate connections with the Kabbalah Centre, itself the focus of an IRS investigation (Ryan, 2011). As a result of the reputed corruption in the Kabbalah Centre and her Foundation, Madonna fired the board of advisers for Raising Malawi, but continued to fund the construction of schools (Raising Malawi, 2012).

Government officials in Malawi have accused her of being more concerned with her public image than with working collaboratively to invest in the education of their country (Reuters, 2011). Private funding such as that of Raising Malawi becomes particularly important to poor nations when foreign aid, in this case 40% of the nation's budget, is suspended, as happened when Malawian police killed protestors (Reuters, 2011). Mapondera and Smith (2012) give voice to those in villages who gave up their homes to make space for these schools, leaving empty land now available for a cemetery for the national heroes of Malawi. The tension between the government of Malawi and the work of this celebrity-sponsored foundation remains a challenge in this specific case, but also illustrates the broader dynamics that highlight the critical role of political agencies in negotiating aid between donors and recipients.

Angelina

Angelina Jolie plays a somewhat different role on the global development scene, cast as a more collaborative team player, through her service as a "goodwill ambassador" for the United Nations (UN) (2009), special envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Citizen of the World, according to the award given by the UN Correspondents Association. In sharp contrast to the political resentment that Madonna's attempt at building schools left among the government leaders and citizens in Malawi, Angelina was awarded honorary Cambodian citizenship in 2005 in recognition of her work there.

In addition to volunteering her time to the UN and the Clinton Global Initiative, cochairing the Education Partnership for Children of Conflict, Angelina contributes funds to several organizations, such as the UNHCR (\$US 5 million since 2001) and the Namibian Wildlife Sanctuary (\$US 2 million; UNHCR, 2012). Funds are concentrated though, combined with the resources of her partner Brad Pitt, toward the foundation they established in 2008 with a \$US 8.5 million investment (Philanthropy News Digest, 2011). In contrast to the more conformist role played by Audrey Hepburn as goodwill ambassador for UNICEF following her acting career, Angelina's ambassadorship for UNHCR during her film career drew public attention to her private life with her partner (Cooper, 2008), helping to transform her previously wilder image to that of a more stable family character (Wheeler, 2011).

Explicitly recognizing family members through naming, the Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation (MJP), based in Cambodia and Los Angeles, describes its mission as being "dedicated to eradicating extreme rural poverty, protecting natural resources and conserving wildlife. MJP promotes sustainable rural economies that directly contribute to the health and vitality of communities, wildlife, and forests" (MJP, 2012). Among many projects devoted to environmental, health, and children's concerns, in 2008 this foundation joined Microsoft in support of the Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) fund, providing free legal counsel to immigrant children without their parents in the United States. Focusing on children is a central theme for her, cochairing the Education Partnership for Children of Conflict, founded through the Clinton Global Initiative. The issues she addresses through her philanthropic work

Table 2 Global Development Participation by Oprah, Madonna, and Angelina

	Oprah	Madonna	Angelina
Foundation	Oprah Winfrey Foundation	Raising Malawi	Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation
Foundation assets	\$US 172 million	\$ US 2.7 million	\$ US 8.5 million
Countries of focus	South Africa	Malawi	Cambodia Namibia Ethiopia Afghanistan
Adopted children		David (Malawi) Mercy (Malawi)	Maddox (Cambodia) Zahara (Ethiopia) Pax (Vietnam) Shiloh (Namibia)

include people displaced by conflict, such as refugees; environment, conservation, and agriculture; children's concerns, such as caring for orphans and education; poverty, such as microcredit; and health, such as HIV/AIDS (MJP, 2012).

Only recently did Angelina join the chorus of her peers and open a school for girls, but in Afghanistan rather than the African region. These initiatives are being funded by a new jewelry line, in collaboration with designer Robert Procop who designed her engagement ring from Brad Pitt in 2012 (Reuters, 2013). Recent media attention to Angelina's schools for girls outside of Kabul relates this program to schools funded by Oprah in South Africa and Madonna in Malawi, noting the latter's controversy over "costs and mismanagement" and the former's school staff member "arrested on charges of assault and abuse of students" (Reuters, 2013).

While these three female celebrities share interests in funding development programs, Angelina differentiates herself in promoting more attention to conservation and wildlife issues, but appears to have fallen into the fold of financing schools for girls. But her work does contrast with Oprah's concentration in South Africa and Madonna's in Malawi by including more countries in her repertoire. Table 2 charts the similarities and differences across these three celebrities' connections to global development.

Casting women celebrities as global philanthropists

Female celebrities project their value in global development work as virtuous donors, capitalizing on their leverage as nurturing mothers, ensconced in their commodification as beautiful, glamorous women. As donors, their role also contributes to the sense of mission, conventionally portrayed in public discourse with religious themes (Wilkins, 2007). In this section, I explore these themes of how women become cast as donors, not only in academic literature but also in public discourse published in the

African region, based on English-language news coverage 2008–2012 of these three women.¹ Although this is a limited selection of print news sources, as a collection these narratives allow comparative analyses of female celebrity philanthropist representations within the central region of their development programs. Overall, this press collectively gave more attention to Madonna's work in Malawi ($n = 13$) than Oprah's philanthropy in South Africa ($n = 7$), or that of Angelina Jolie's Foundation work in Namibia and Ethiopia ($n = 6$) in terms of number of articles. However, Oprah's work in South Africa attracted lengthier coverage: The median number of words in articles about her school greatly exceeds ($n = 464$) those in articles covering Madonna (median = 243 words) or Angelina (median = 170 words).

Manifesting their glamour in the projected light of missionary zeal, Christian references dominate public attention to their charity. Casting these celebrities with the appearance of purity begins with their very names. Madonna, her codified celebrity moniker, offers an ironic and iconic articulation of virtue and sexuality in popular culture. Angelina's name offers a diminutive reference to a pure and helpful angel, and like the name of Madonna, referencing biblical narratives that value women as pure, virtuous, and giving, in the sanctity of the greater good. Even Oprah has a historical connection with biblical texts, having originally been named Orpah, for the sister of Ruth (although this later changed reportedly because of difficulties in pronunciation). Similar across these women then are names that reference biblical narratives that suggest women earn their worth when acting as virtuous maternal figures.

Attention in the African news to Madonna in Malawi relied frequently on these references, calling her "Saint Madonna of Malawi," whose "appearance was described by local politicians as a 'gift from heaven,' " even referring to the history of the land she purchased to build a school as previously owned by "David Livingstone, the British missionary, (who) first brought Christianity almost 150 years ago" (*Sunday Tribune*, April 3, 2011). In another South African newspaper, a "young orphan" supported through her foundation was quoted as confessing to Madonna: "You are our god. Where could we have been without you?" (*Star*, October 31, 2009). While less dominant in coverage, occasionally references to Angelina (such as her "big Christmas gift," *Namibian*, January 4, 2011) and Oprah (quoting her school's principle referring to this being a "blessing in disguise," *Sunday Independent*, September 11, 2011) integrated Christian missionary themes. However, Madonna appears to be most frequently cast in this missionary capacity, even incorporating technological solutions within a metaphor of religious radiance: "The 51-year-old also promised electricity to a local village. Speaking in Mphandula, the singer said: 'I know you work in darkness. I will bring you electricity'" (*Star*, October 31, 2009). While Madonna's appeal is projected in terms of religious mission, Oprah's framing relies more on metaphors of magic and gifts.

Oprah's philanthropic work in global development takes on this nurturing role as she epitomizes the "fairy godmother" to African girls, building schools, funding orphanages, and supporting programs for children. Similar to surprising audience members of her television show with new cars, her inclusion of a select few girls

to attend her comparatively luxurious school privileges the idea that chance, rather than merit, channels mobility. Just as fairy godmothers bestow gifts through magic, Oprah bequeaths schools and vehicles with enough spectacle to detract from questions that might reveal Oz behind the curtain. Several news articles from the South African press feature the idea of her contributions as “gifts,” such as the “vegetable patch for a school with hungry children, playground equipment for a rural orphanage and 11 brick houses for shack dwellers in Orange Farm feature gift list given by girls at the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy” (*The Star*, October 23, 2008); and Oprah’s “gift to build a dream on” (*The Star*, December 23, 2008). The idea of Oprah as fairy godmother features in descriptions of her school, whose “conception is like a fairy tale” (*Sunday Independent*, September 11, 2011), praised by Nelson Mandela as offering “opportunities to some of our young people they could never imagine had it not been for Oprah” (*The Star*, April 4, 2009). Central to this characterization of a fairy godmother is the idea of a celibate maternal figure, neither sexual nor physical in connections with other adults or children. Madonna and Angelina, in contrast, stake their claim as actual mothers, through childbirth and adoption.

The savior metaphor differs dramatically though across male and female lead roles: while men find spotlights on their heroic action as lone figures, women rise to heroism when sacrificing on behalf of their families and children, earning applause for their compassion. While Bono and Geldof appear to earn attention for being able to connect with the business world, Angelina and Madonna must be “more empathetic and ‘caring’” (Kapoor, 2013, p. 17). Analogous to the glorification of Mother Theresa, women gain status through their nurturing roles, through caring for children whether they conceive them or not; and when women do not birth children, they are expected to play the role of mother through adopting children or supporting orphanages.

Valuing women as mothers even when they are donors fits a broader development discourse, in which women as recipients of aid become visible in their roles as mothers and caretakers of families (Wilkins, 2007). As donors, these three women privilege children in their giving strategies over many other valuable causes. Best known in global philanthropy for her role as advocate and actual transnational adopter (Kapoor, 2013), Angelina gains status through her focus on children and her connection to handsome partner Brad Pitt. Chouliaraki (2012, p. 10) explains this “tension in Jolie’s humanitarian persona between a ‘universal’ discourse of motherhood, inviting identification with Western publics, and a discourse of intense particularity including glamorous looks and legendary wealth, setting her apart as an object of popular fantasy.” The magic of glamour resonates with the fairy godmother image, further reinforcing hierarchies across national and racial lines given their tendencies toward transnational adoptions.

These adoptions reinforce their positions as “global mothers,” eloquently articulated by Shome (2011) as a manifestation of the power of White transnational femininity. Both Madonna and Angelina have adopted children, in addition to birthing their own. Madonna has adopted both a son and a daughter from Malawi, perhaps finding inspiration from Angelina’s adoptions in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Vietnam, and

Namibia. Sandra Bullock and Charlize Theron have joined this exclusive club of Caucasian female stars bringing home African babies. Unlike the welcome Angelina was granted during her adoptions, Madonna's attempts were met with controversy. Her decision to adopt Mercy in 2009, following her adoption of David Banda in 2008, was initially rejected by a local court in Malawi, but its Supreme Court of Appeal allowed her to process this adoption on appeal (Finlay, 2011; Kapoor, 2013). These adoptions fit a broader trend of U.S. families adopting children from the region, particularly from Ethiopia (BBC, 2012). The African Child Policy Forum reports that in this region international adoptions have risen dramatically, quadrupling between 2004 and 2012 (BBC, 2012).

While many support these adoptions for providing family support for children in need, as well as financial support to orphanages and children's services, others raise concerns about the commercialization of this process, their fear for children's safety, and their concern with trans-continental and trans-racial adoptions. In the African region, some children are given into adoption even with one parent living (BBC, 2012). In the United States, almost twice as many light-skinned children in orphanages, with no living parents, have been adopted as those with darker skin (Jaye, 2012). In the African region, the Child Policy Forum has raised the concern that many countries do not have adequate procedures to ensure children are well cared for post-adoption, or even to guarantee against child trafficking. Apart from these logistical and safety concerns, Tchouaffe (2007) believes that these trans-racial adoptions by wealthy Americans of African children cause harm by reinforcing the idea that White benefactors are needed to rescue helpless Africans. However, these expensive adoptions do help to fund orphanages and children's services to support many other children in need. For example, the Home of Hope Madonna supports in Malawi helps to finance families that help care for children, so that they have homes outside of orphanages (Dugger, 2009).

While both Angelina and Madonna have earned their fame in part through their glamorous appearances, Madonna appears to suffer from a Madonna/whore dichotomy that characterizes her musical career. Emphasizing her star appeal, Angelina is referred to in the South African *Sunday Times* (December 6, 2011) as "the world's busiest, most beautiful star ... whose glamour can bear comparison with the screen idols of 1950s Hollywood." While Madonna also attracts attention to her glamorous persona, her characterization appears less secure, and at times competitive with male figures. In the South African *Star* (October 31, 2009), Madonna is "used to being the centre of attention, but on Thursday Madonna was most definitely upstaged—by her adopted son David."

The portrayal of these three celebrities in relation to men differs dramatically. Oprah, as fairy godmother, does not attract media attention in relation to men, and perhaps therefore can be more likely to be portrayed as "heroic," as the mother of one of her school's students claimed for Oprah, also declaring that "her favorite TV program was the Oprah Winfrey Show," (*Sowetan*, October 14, 2009). While Angelina's relationship with partner Brad Pitt attracts quite favorable coverage (even when we

are reminded explicitly of other ex-husbands Johnny Lee Miller and Billy Bob Thornton), “heroic” references remain in the domain of Pitt (*Pretoria News*, September 8, 2008), described also as “an intelligent man and physically he’s a real man, in all things that it means” (*The Times*, December 6, 2011). As a couple, Angelina and Brad are said to “understand the power of family” (*Cape Argus*, November 25, 2010). In contrast, Madonna’s ex-husbands appear as competitors and her estrangement from them as instability: As an explanation for her work in Malawi, the *Daily News* in South Africa suggests that: “Of course, Madonna may have something to prove. Her ex-husband, Sean Penn, has earned international attention for his relief work in Haiti” (*Daily News*, June 4, 2012); and the *African News* that her “quickie divorce” from Guy Ritchie was making it “very difficult for international pop diva Madonna to adopt another child from Malawi” (December 3, 2008). Male allegiance appeared to be needed during her difficult times, and came from Ashton Kutcher, who responded to critiques of “Madge” claiming that she is one of the most “generous” people he knows” (*Cape Argus*, April 28, 2008).

Not only does Madonna’s entrance into global development excite controversy within the U.S. and UK press, but within the African press as well, in which media attention was much less flattering to her than that devoted to Oprah and Angelina. Within this news coverage, Angelina was able to contribute her perspective directly about her work (she was quoted four times, Brad Pitt once, and one other quote came from her nonprofit CEO), as did Oprah (she was quoted twice, along with her foundation staff, two school officials, a student and her mother, along with Nelson Mandela). In contrast, almost twice as many quoted sources ($n = 15$) in news covering Madonna’s schools and adoptions were negatively disposed (including Malawian government officials, judges, activists, and adopted children’s family members, and fired staff) than those supporting her work ($n = 8$, including two quotes from Madonna herself, four from her funded charities, a young orphan supported by her work and her lawyer). Madonna was criticized for not being sensitive to national laws regarding adoption, as well as for lack of accountability in the corruption in building schools.

While this press felt Madonna was acting in her own interests, which might have been constructed more positively as a male characteristic, they were more defensive of Oprah. With reference to Madonna, the South African *Daily News* suggested that the Malawian government “has declined to work with the singer on her foundation’s latest construction plan, with a spokeswoman saying: ‘We now feel like this is all about propping up her global image and not in our interest’ ” (April 6, 2012). In contrast, the South African *Star* blamed criticism of Oprah on racism: “the world’s media cannot resist portraying us as just another African country threatened by bureaucratic corruption assisted by an inherent amorality,’ in that for those “who cannot resist that sort of thing, the story of Oprah’s poor black girls behaving badly was a chance to lay bare their true feelings about race,” quoting a website posting that “Black people are not civilised” (April 4, 2009). Among these three celebrities, attention to Angelina’s work in global development has been the most favorable, with Madonna’s being the

most controversial. While Oprah's schools experienced serious problems, her role as fairy godmother may have saved her from more substantial critique.

All three of the women highlighted here contribute to services caring for children without parents. Overall children's health and welfare appears to be a priority focus for these female stars, cementing their value as nurturers within the development scheme. Although she has not adopted children herself, Oprah reinforces the importance of this maternal role when characterizing her pride in the girls graduating from her academy in South Africa in these very terms. While all three can be criticized for lack of cultural sensitivity and social accountability, along with being celebrity philanthropists working outside of their own communities, their adherence to gendered stereotypes, as virtuous, glamorous donors, is sustained. The glorification of these celebrities is tempered with the recognition of broader agendas that reinforce neoliberal ideology.

Perpetuating the neoliberal gaze

A neoliberal framework for development privileges modernization as an approach to social change, highlighting individual agency in achieving entrepreneurship, political rights, and mobility through education. Neoliberalism operates "as a set of ideas and practices centred on an increased role for the free market ... with implications for social justice" (Willis, Smith, & Stenning, 2008, p. 1), as a hegemonic structure that challenges resistance movements and limits women's participation in development (Dutta, 2011). Presented as an apolitical approach to social change, women are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves as individuals rather than raise a collective voice in protest over clear gender inequities in political, economic, social, and cultural resources.

Within structuring and intersecting logics of neoliberalism and patriarchy, women earn their value through their participation in market economies (promoted as a tool of individual empowerment) and their nurturing roles within families as well as through global philanthropy. Whether as development donors or recipients, the significance of this maternal role needs to be understood as part this hegemonic development agenda. As explained by Shome (2011, p. 389), the "discourse of global motherhood must be situated in the context of contemporary neoliberal conditions of unequal flows of global capitalism and cultural exchanges." Resonating with this neoliberal agenda, Oprah has become known for her attention to self-empowerment, both within her television programming and her charitable work (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Peck, 2008).

In understanding the bases of these celebrities' resources, it is important to note that Oprah differs in important ways from the other two, accruing wealth not only through commodification of beauty as have Angelina and Madonna, but also through ownership in the very industry that supplied her wealth. This ownership has allowed Oprah to reach a higher level of wealth and enter the club of the most wealthy in the world, usually exclusive to men. And as such, she has become one of the most

powerful and giving of individual donors in the global community. Gaining her wealth and status from the global television industry, her approach to global development then does not threaten global capitalism, but supports neoliberal logic by emphasizing individual agency in strategic social change.

This attention to individual empowerment resonates clearly with the Women in Development (WID) and modernization approaches to development. The central aim of the Oprah Winfrey Foundation is “to support, empower and educate women, children, and their families all over the world” (Oprah Winfrey Foundation, 2012). Moving beyond exclusive attention to girls and women, Gender and Development (GAD) frameworks consider broader dynamics within which women have rights and opportunities. The articulated goal of the MJP (2012) to “build healthy and vibrant communities” working with “impoverished rural villagers and local governments” approaches GAD considerations by recognizing political and cultural conditions; however, differences in power across gender and class are not explicit in this articulation. Madonna’s development rhetoric echoes the strategies of Oprah in concentrating on girls’ empowerment and of Angelina in raising concerns with local community participation and sustainability (Raising Malawi, 2012), but the implementation of her programs has been seriously challenged. While this analysis is limited to a narrow set of public articulations and discussions of their development programs, it is possible to connect this discourse to broader visions of development that privilege neoliberal ideologies.

Liberal political theory and capitalism depend on a neoliberal ideology that illuminates individual agency while shadowing constraints in norms, policies, and structures. Further limiting agency to acts of consumption may project a narrow view of social change, but permits an apolitical disguise, shielding programs from questions concerning why people are poor, children are suffering, and women do not share the same rights and resources as men. The neoliberal gaze accentuates the sanctity of the female donor along with the individual empowerment promoted through the work of female celebrity philanthropists.

Celebrating celebrity in global development spotlights spectacle, curtaining our gaze from the backstage dirt and pretending authenticity exists without rehearsal. In Kapoor’s (2013, p. 80) words, this approach “is not meant to help the poor as much as save the rich, that is, avoid catastrophe for revolt, and legitimate, maintain, and advance global capitalism.” Female celebrities cast as global philanthropists reinforce the gendered norms that enable their profitable commodification through global media industries, contributing to the neoliberal logic of an increasingly private, unaccountable global development enterprise.

Note

- 1 The newspapers included in this analysis are: *The Star* ($n = 8$), *Cape Argus* ($n = 4$), *The Times* ($n = 4$), *Sunday Tribune* ($n = 2$), *Sunday Independent* ($n = 2$), *Cape Times* ($n = 1$), *the Herald* ($n = 1$), *the Daily News* ($n = 1$), *Sowetan* ($n = 1$), *Pretoria News* ($n = 1$), and the

Namibian ($n = 1$). All of these newspapers are published in the African continent and available online through Lexus-Nexus.

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