Gender, Development and the World Bank

A Critical Discourse Analysis of women in World Development Reports between 1998 - 2018

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to look at how women are represented in neoliberal discourses of development, if there has been a change on representation of women over the last three decades and how these discourses reflect broader developments in gender equality. The World Bank has been selected to serve as an instance of neoliberal development discourse and one World Development Report (WDR) from each decade is analysed. The theoretical perspectives include discourse analysis and the three Western main approaches to feminist development theory; Women In Development (WID), Woman And Development (WAD) and Gender And Development (GAD); the methodology is related to critical discourse analysis. The analysis suggests that the Bank discourse on women has changed from a predominant WID approach in the end of the 90s where women were mainly depicted as passive and poor objects, and moved closer towards a GAD approach in the latest WDR that constructs women as empowered agents with aspirations. Despite changes in Bank language use over time, the underlying message has remained the same; women are discursively framed as a means to enhance economic efficiency. The discursive changes in the analysed WDRs have to a large extent followed the global developments on discourses on women and gender equality, of which the Bank itself is a key influencer. The discursive construction of women in development, structured around efficiency and economic growth thus sustains, rather than challenges, the hegemonic power structures that sustain gender inequalities. The practical consequences of the current development discourse of constructing women as economic actors without addressing the root causes to their subordination will most likely translate into an increase in the workload of women on the ground while gender inequality and poverty continue to exist.
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1. Introduction

Attention to gender equality in mainstream development discourse has increased dramatically in the last couple of decades; while feminists in the 70s had to struggle to convince development planners that women were active contributors to economic development, the notion of women’s empowerment has now been recognized as crucial to global development partly through the ‘Smart Economics’ policy agenda introduced by the World Bank in 2007, where the economic benefits of investing in women are highlighted. In the three Western main approaches to feminist development theory; Women In Development, Woman And Development and Gender And Development, there have been a discursive shift over time in the way women’s issues have been conceptualized in the context of development; from promoting women as productive members of society to questioning the social production of gender.

The way in which women are represented in development discourse has real material implications when translated into development policies and practices. There is therefore a wealth of research on how women have been framed in international development discourse and specifically within the area of “Smart Economics” on increased corporate involvement in development initiatives that focus on promoting female “empowerment”. However, a research gap can be found on how the above mentioned discursive shift in feminist development theory has influenced the representation of women in neoliberal development discourse over time. The World Bank is regarded as one of the most powerful financial institution that influences the international development arena, positioning itself as “Knowledge Bank”. Against this backdrop and given its global influence in shaping development policy and practice on gender, the Bank’s discourse matters.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of the study is to provide a deeper understanding of how women are represented in World Development Reports over time and to what extent the discursive shift in feminist development theory has influenced the representation of women in neoliberal development discourse. The main research question is as follows:
How are women discursively constructed in the World Development Reports between 1998 and 2018?

I will also address following sub-questions:

- How do these discourses on women correspond to the three chosen feminist approaches?
- How do these discourses reflect broader developments in gender equality?

1.2 Limitation and selection

The purpose of the study is to analyse how women have been framed in Bank discourse by looking qualitatively (instead of including a vast amount of data) at the World Bank’s flagship World Development Reports (referred to as WDR) published 1998, 2008 and 2018. The study makes generalisations regarding alterations and potential shifts in the Bank's representation of women by analysing the three reports and comparing the discourses that emerge from each report. Rather than making a comprehensive analysis of the gender discourse in the WDRs, the study seeks to answer the research questions by selecting three reports in order to establish how the discourse has changed in the last three decades and how such shifts reflect global discussions on gender equality.

The three development theories were chosen because I wanted to study the Bank discourse on women from a feminist perspective and they are considered the three main paradigms on Western theorizing on women’s role in development. While it could have been interesting and very relevant to approach the analysis from a non-Western feminist development theory point of view (considering the object of study concerns women in global South), I deliberately choose to focus on Western theorizing as I was curious, in terms of comparability, to explore to what extent Western theorizing can influence a Western institution.

I will use critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse how women are represented in the selected WDRs. CDA is an often employed tool for researching processes of social and cultural change as it links the analysis of language to the broader social and political context. This approach is therefore appropriate for the purpose of this study. Due to limited space and time, this study will not address the processes related to the production and consumption of the WDRs but only examine intertextuality and interdiscursivity when analysing the discursive practice. Neither will the analysis of social practice examine the relationship between the discursive practice and its order of discourse.
but be limited to briefly address the social matrix of discourse. The detected discourses and the findings are based on the selected WDRs for this study, therefore the findings might have differed if I had analysed World Bank operational documents specifically targeting gender equality instead. It could be considered as limiting to only study texts that do not specifically address gender issues, but this is intentional in order to understand how women are represented in “general” development topics where focus is not specifically on women.

In order to not limit this study to a present-oriented analysis I have chosen to analyse WDRs from the last three decades. Due to the limited timeframe available for this study I have selected one report from each decade. The first WDR was published in 1979 but I chose to start from the 90s, since 1995 is often referred to as a major turning point for the Bank’s work on gender equality (Griffin 2009:135). Since I wanted to include the most recent report (2018) in the study, the two other reports were selected on the basis of the time span (10 years interval) between them. The chosen period of time for this discourse analysis is thus 1998-2018. In the reports, the chapter mostly relevant to the study was selected as the material for analysis. The relevance of the chapter was chosen using the data analysis software NVivo. I ran a search for keywords related to women, such as “girls”, “mothers”, “female”, “men”, “father”, “boys” and “gender” to get a general idea of to what extent and in what contexts women were mentioned in the overall report, and to identify the chapter were women were mentioned most frequently.

1.3 Relevance to the field of communication for development and social change

The field of communication for development (C4D) and social change is a contested area with a multitude of divergent interpretations as well as applications but in essence it is a social process that involves all modes of communication used to further development that can bring about social change. Servaes (2008:15) describes it as “the sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned” and Lennie and Tacchi (2013:4) note that it is about “people rather than technologies, and is both a field of knowledge and of practice.” Apart from academic research and professional practice, Enghel (2014:119) extends the definition of C4D and social change to also include what she refers to as an “institutional project” or “institutional influences that seek to give shape to the study and practice of development communication”. Enghel argues that unlike other
areas of studies, the field of C4D and social change has had little influence on policies at national level; instead the C4D framework has mainly been constructed by projects led by bilateral and multilateral agencies.

How can analysing Bank discourse on women bring about social change, in this case advance gender equality?

To attain social change, we first need to understand the root causes of inequality or underdevelopment and identify who has the power in society and how they benefit from this inequality. Wilkins (2014) notes that development discourse is socially constructed in relation to a certain political agenda. By critically analysing discourse in historical, structural and social contexts, we can better recognize the global conditions that shape development discourse and demonstrate how those who have power in global and political contexts attempt to maintain their dominance by revealing the way they define and interpret problems and solutions. (Wilkins 2014:138-142)

CDA is often employed in studies with the objective to examine how texts work to the advantage of those who hold power and how they affect disadvantaged groups in society. The aim of CDA is to bring about social change, to liberate oppressed social groups by identifying the discursive practices’ role in the maintenance of the social world, including unequal relations of power. Deconstructing discourse concerns understanding the role of hidden political agendas and how dominant groups try to maintain their hegemonic power. According to the theory of CDA, written and spoken texts construct representations of the world and influence our perception of reality. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:60-64) Thus, how women are referred to in Bank discourse influence how women are perceived by development actors who design development projects. Accordingly, Bank discourse influences women affected by the development initiative in a direct way. Conducting this kind of research is therefore highly relevant to the field of C4D and social change; this study can be seen as a social process that uses CDA (to deconstruct the Bank’s discourse on women and uncover how the Bank defines and interprets the causes of women’s subordination) to further development (the findings provide critical insights and can be used as a tool to raise awareness necessary to influence and shape development policies and practices) that can bring about social change. First we need to become aware before we can act, or in Wilkins’ words: “Communication for and about development, engaging intervention toward social change, integrates critical research with thoughtful practice towards social justice.” (Wilkins 2014:138).
2. Background

2.1 The World Bank

The World Bank was founded in 1944, originally to provide loans to countries in the aftermath of the World War II but over time the Bank has turned its attention from reconstruction to focusing on development instead. Today the World Bank group consists of five institutions\(^1\) with the mission to end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity and it is one of the world’s largest provider of funding and producer of development expertise. It provides technical as well as financial support to developing countries and is funded by contributions from member countries as well as through bond issuance. (“Who we are”, n.d., “What we do”, n.d.) The Bank is owned and run by the governments of the 189 member countries, through the Board of Governors. The governors are usually the member countries’ ministers of finance or development and they are also the ultimate policy makers at the Bank. The President is selected by a Board of Executive Directors for a five year term. (“Organization”, n.d.)

The Bank is thus one of the most powerful actors in the development field. McNeill and St Clair (2011) note that in order to understand the significance that the Bank has as a producer of development expertise, it has to be seen in the context of social relations among communities of policy makers, professional advisors, aid administrators and managers within and outside the Bank. According to them, there is a “circular dynamic between the expertise, the audience and the legitimacy of that expertise” meaning that the audiences that legitimize the Bank’s knowledge in many cases are actors relying on funding from the Bank to implement projects that usually have been defined and promoted by the Bank (McNeill & St Clair 2011:104).

The Bank produces the World Development Report (WDR) annually which serves as its flagship publication as it displays the Bank’s leading position in development research and policy. Each year a different theme is selected and the report is written by a different team each year made up of Bank staff as well as external consultants such as representatives from development agencies. Mawdsley and Rigg who have done an extensive review of WDRs between 1978 - 2000/2001 note that there

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\(^1\) The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and The International Development Association (IDA) form the World Bank, and together with The International Finance Corporation (IFC), The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) they form the World Bank group. (“Who we are”, n.d.)
are disagreements between the various authors of individual WDRs; between the different teams and staff in the Bank; as well as between different teams on successive WDRs. The WDR acts as the “public face” of The Bank and although financed by the Bank, it enjoys authorial independence and autonomy according to the disclaimer of the report. It is widely disseminated and the audience consists of development practitioners and scholars, governments and policy makers. (McNeill and St Clair 2011:105, Mawdsley & Rigg 2002: 95-99)

Due to its global influence in the field of development, the Bank and the WDRs have been subject to vast critical research. For example, Griffin (2009), McNeill & St Clair (2011) and Mawdsley & Rigg’s (2002, 2003) research show that the Bank is a significant actor in shaping mainstream development discourses and policy ideas and how it uses its position as a “Knowledge Bank” to legitimize its ideas and support claims about neutrality. Mawdsley and Rigg note that the WDRs seem to present an image of an objective and professional report that “skilfully balance(s) the opinions of different groups, ultimately acting as an impartial overseer of the debate” (2002:98), however their study shows that more radical or alternative development ideas are not mentioned in the report. In other words, the objective debate that the WDR is supposed to represent actively shape the discourses of what is considered reasonable by excluding the extreme (Mawdsley & Rigg 2002:99).

2.2 Framing women and gender in neoliberal context

Neoliberal approaches to gender equality in the context of development are often presented with a great emphasis on women’s economic empowerment. As an example, the aforementioned discourse of ‘Gender Equality as Smart Economics’ that highlights the economic benefits of profiting from women’s labour power is increasingly gaining ground in global governance. There is a wealth of critical research on neoliberal interpretations of gender equality (for a few examples, see Chant & Sweetman 2012; Chow 2003; Cornwall & Rivas 2015; Griffin 2009; Kabeer 2005; Prügl 2015, 2017; Wilson 2008, 2011, 2012) that show that women are often presented in a twofold aspect: both as altruistic victims that sacrifice themselves for the wellbeing of the family as well as empowered subjects such as the ideal entrepreneur. Women are thus often constructed in such a manner that it pays off to invest in them; Wilson (2008) notes that by framing women in these contexts, efficiency and altruism are presented as intrinsic female qualities making them worthy of investment. These arguments align well with neoliberal policy goals that often interpret empowerment as increased
economic participation through which women empower themselves as individuals. Much of these researches argue that too little consideration to gender relations is taken into account when designing development interventions and that these interventions tend to make women work for development rather than challenging the patriarchal power structures that sustain gender inequalities.

There are also ongoing discussions whether neoliberal discourses on gender equality have appropriated feminist language to legitimize anti-feminist political agendas (see Calkin 2015). However, there are also scholars that adopt a somewhat more positive attitude towards the outcomes that neoliberal approaches have had on gender equality; such as granting women and gender issues more visibility to policy makers in global governance. Prügl (2017) refers to a new neoliberalism with a “feminist face”; her research on the Bank’s gender publications since 2001 shows that the Bank’s engagement with feminist core concerns such as equality in the household has highlighted the issue of domestic violence. She argues that this new hegemony of neoliberalism, which alongside underdevelopment also identifies inequality as a problem to be solved, provides “openings for feminist agendas” (2017:30).
3. Theoretical perspectives

3.1 Critical discourse analysis as theory

There are many different definitions of “discourse” and several approaches to critical discourse analysis (CDA). In each approach there are philosophical, theoretical and methodological considerations that researchers need to take into account when applying CDA as their method of empirical study. Common for all approaches is that theory and method are closely integrated and they are concerned with the semiotic aspects of power, injustice, and political-economic or cultural change in society. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 3-4, Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak 2011:394)

A “discourse” can be understood as a frame of references of how we understand and interpret the surrounding world. In this linguistic context, “discourse” has a narrow meaning and refers to spoken and written language. This narrow way of describing “discourse” can be classified as belonging to the first generation of discourse analysis. In CDA, which is largely associated with Norman Fairclough, “discourse” is seen as a social practice and is an example of the second generation of discourse analysis. Fairclough's influential research on discourse analysis integrates a linguistic point of departure with social science. (Bergström, Boréus 2005:307, Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak 2011:394)

3.1.1 Fairclough’s approach

For this study I have chosen to employ Fairclough's approach to discourse and CDA. He understands discourse in three different ways; discourse is language use as social practice, it is a type of language used within a specific domain, i.e. medical or political discourse and it is also a count noun referring to a way of identifying representations of some aspects of social life, for example a liberal or feminist discourse on economy. According to Fairclough, discourse constructs social identities, social relations as well as systems of knowledge and meaning. He has developed a useful analytical framework (1992; 1995; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) to examine discourse as social practice. To Fairclough, a discourse analysis needs to expose the link between text and society; a linguistic approach to text analysis alone is too superficial. Therefore an interdisciplinary approach
which combines textual and social analysis is needed. Fairclough’s approach to CDA draws from three traditions; the linguistic field’s detailed textual analysis, macro-sociological analysis of social practice and the micro-sociological tradition from sociology. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:65-67).

The concept of ideology is central to Fairclough who understands ideologies as constructing realities that produce, reproduce or transform relations of domination, for example between social groups. In his view, discourses can be ideological and these ideological effects (discursive practices) contribute to maintaining and transforming power relations. (Fairclough 1992:87, Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:75)

Fairclough sees every instance of language use, that is discourse, as a communicative event made up of three dimensions (the three dimensional model); he distinguishes between discourse as text (the linguistic features), as discursive practice (the processes related to the production and consumption of the text) and as social practice (the wider social and cultural context to which the text belongs). The aim of Fairclough’s model is to connect theories of hegemony and power structures with theories of discursive practices. The production of a text shapes and is shaped by the social practice. At the same time the process of production forms the text and the interpretation of the text depends on how it is written. According to Fairclough, discourse is in a dialectical relationship with other social dimensions; discourse both reproduces and changes social identities and relations as well as it is also formed by other social practices and structures. This dialectical relationship between discursive and non discursive elements of the social world is central in Fairclough’s approach to CDA. (Bergström, Boréus 2005:308, Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 2002:65)

3.2 Feminist approaches to development

This chapter introduces the evolution of Western theorizing on women's role in development. It will present the three main approaches to women and development since the 70s, which are all based on feminist approaches. (Parpant 2000:52-53)
3.2.1 Women In Development (WID)

The Women in Development (WID) approach is based on liberal feminism and traditional modernization theory and aimed at integrating women in the development process. The term WID came into use in the 70s after the Danish economist Ester Boserup published her book “Women’s role in Economic Development” which became the intellectual underpinning of WID arguments. Boserup suggested that in the recent past women were equally productive as well as equal in status to men and thereby challenged the passive framing of women in 50s and 60s development policy where women were mostly seen as mothers or wives. (Rathgeber 1990:490, Miller & Razavi 1995:7)

Drawing on the insights of Boserup's work, WID advocates promoted the argument of women as productive members of society to influence development policy. The approach introduced a conceptual shift in development thinking; whereas women previously were mostly framed as passive receivers in health and social welfare programmes, WID arguments presented women as active but untapped contributors to economic development. Development was believed to benefit from women's contribution and providing women access to the marketplace would not only have a positive impact on development but it would also improve their status vis-à-vis men. WID advocates thus framed women's subordination in an economic context by presenting the difference in status and power between men and women in terms of their economic contributions. They connected these concerns with demands for equity and social justice as well. By linking the root cause of women’s subordination in terms of their economic output and exclusion from the marketplace, this approach favoured Western values and targeted individuals as catalysts of both economic and social change. (Dogra 2011:340, Razavi & Miller 1995:7)

According to WID advocates, women's disprivileges stem from excluding them from the development process. With an acceptance of existing social structures as point of departure, the focus was on how to better integrate women into economic systems and development programmes rather than questioning why women had benefited less from these programmes during the past decade. By arguing for the integration of women into the national economic systems, it was implied that women were not already taking part in development, meaning that women's roles in household and informal economic activities were downplayed (Dogra 2011:340). It failed to question the link between existing economic structures and male dominance. Instead, WID proponents advocated
legal and administrative changes in order to end discrimination against women in different spheres of society. (Rathgeber 1990:491, Miller & Razavi 1995:7)

The WID approach accepted the prevalent modernization theme of the time—that development is a linear process of economic growth and that the lack of sufficient contacts between modern and traditional societies resulted in the disadvantaged position of the latter. The approach aimed at integrating women into existing development initiatives by addressing “women’s issues” like maternal mortality or setting up local, small-scale projects focusing on individual relevance and practical needs. It could be an income-generating initiative focusing on women's roles as producers. The initiative would teach the women a particular skill or craft or organize them into marketing cooperatives and a welfare aspect (such as hygiene or literacy) was often added to the project, instead of trying to find strategies for reducing the burden of their reproductive tasks. Their domestic work was not taken into consideration when planning these projects. It was commonly believed that an opportunity to earn income would suffice to encourage women to, despite lack of time, find a way to engage in yet another activity. Thus, even though WID promoted women as productive members of society, women were implicitly framed as passive receivers of development aid in the design of projects. (Griffin 2009:119, Peet & Hartwick 2015:287, Rathgeber 1990:492)

Many WID projects as implemented by development agencies have been criticized for promoting modernist discourses, in the form of the colonial discourse and the liberal discourse on markets. The colonial discourse homogenized women in global South and depicted them as poor and an object of pity while the liberal discourse which promoted individualism, free markets and voluntary choice enhanced the disempowerment of women in global South. The WID approach thus identified itself with liberal feminism but it used the image of poor women to raise sympathy and obtain funds. (Peet & Hartwick 2015:287) Another shortcoming in WID projects is that men’s roles and responsibilities in women's subordination were overlooked. Men were implicitly portrayed as bad or irresponsible in development discourse while women were discussed in relation to their productive value; improvement in their status was linked to the value of their incomes. The WID proponents assumed that gender relations would change of themselves as women become fully (economically) integrated into development. (Dogra 2011:340, Unesco 2003:17, Rathgeber 1990:492)
3.2.2 Women and Development (WAD)

During the 70s, researchers started to question the modernization theory as they argued that the relative status of women had not improved very much during the last decades. A new approach based on Marxist feminist theory and some parts of dependency theory emerged in the second half of the 70s; Women and Development (WAD). Marxist theory offered the most developed criticism of modernization theory which made some feminists turn to Marxism in the search for answers for women’s development issues.

Dependency theory blames Western capitalism for the underdevelopment of global South and argues for a separation between global North and global South as solution. The WAD approach was influenced by this thinking and focused on separating women from men by creating “women-only” projects as they wanted to avoid integrating women into patriarchal domination. Whereas the WID approach focused on women's relationship to development, the WAD approach was concerned with the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism and highlighted the key role of women as economic agents that is necessary for the functioning of societies. WAD proponents paid attention to the distinctiveness of women's knowledge, work and responsibilities and argued for acknowledgement of the importance that women have always played in the development process. (Addison 2015:40, Parpant 2000:60-61)

Just like the WID approach, WAD arguments also presented women as important economic actors, however WAD extended the debate by questioning the relationship between women and development processes rather than solely focusing on strategies on how to integrate women into development. The WAD approach perceived development as being gender-determined and a class process; gender relations and class inequalities converged to form the development process. It was the unpaid labour of women that upheld the entire surplus production system that benefitted men. WAD argued that focusing only on women's economic integration would uphold existing international structures of inequality promoting patriarchal interests. According to WAD proponents, it is women’s work both inside and outside the household that is crucial for maintaining societies and this is also the root cause that sustains the structures of inequality. (Griffin 2009:119, Peet & Hartwick 2015:293, Rathgeber, 1990:492-493).
WAD proponents seek to change policies and put women's issues on national and international agendas. Their strategies include disseminating information as well as designing campaigns to make mainstream bureaucracies more responsive to women's needs and to enhancing bonds among women through active, autonomous local networks and groups. (Parpant 2000:60) In theory, the WAD approach recognizes the impact of class, but in practice the approach tends to, like WID, group women together without taking class, race or ethnicity into consideration, factors that may influence their actual social status, when designing and implementing projects. Consequently, WAD does not systematically address the issue of gender and cross-gender alliances and divisions within classes. (Griffin 2009:121, Rathgeber 1990:493).

The WAD approach argues that the global gendered division of power and labour systematically undervalued women's labour. However, it fails to offer a thorough inquiry of the relationship between differing modes of production, patriarchy and women's subordination. According to the WAD perspective, women's position is understood primarily within the structure of international and class inequalities and will advance only when the international structures become more equal. Until then, carefully designed development strategies is seen as the key to solve the underrepresentation of women in all levels of society rather than by more fundamental changes in the social relations of gender. (Addison 2015:40, Griffin 2009:120)

While women are viewed as passive receivers in the WID approach, the succeeding theoretical approach “Gender and Development” (GAD) views women as active agents of empowerment. The WAD approach finds itself somewhere in the middle; it acknowledges power structures but still views women as passive receivers of development aid, and by that it focuses on designing development strategies for women while awaiting for equal power structures to appear.

### 3.2.3 Gender and Development (GAD)

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach with its roots in writings of Third World feminism, socialist feminism and grass-roots organizational experiences emerged in the 80s. Social feminists were partly influenced by traditional Marxism as they viewed the social construction of production and reproduction as the root cause to women's subordination. They took into consideration all
aspects of women's lives and analysed why women had systematically been assigned secondary roles. (Parpant 2000:62, Rathgeber 1990:494)

The GAD-theorists take a holistic perspective as their point of departure in the study of woman and development; focusing on the interconnection of gender, class and race and how women experience oppression differently depending on their social or economic context. GAD recognizes that patriarchal power, which runs through all levels of society (national, community and household levels) defines and maintains women's subordination in the regional, national, and global economies as well as their material conditions of life. The approach does not focus on women solely, but rather on the social construction of gender. It does so by questioning the validity of the ascribed male and female roles and the responsibilities and expectations that correlate them in different societies. Gender relations are not seen as reflections of natural order but something that can be changed. It argues that patriarchy operates both within as well as across classes to suppress women. (Rathgeber 1990:493-495, Parpant 2000: 62-63, Griffin 2009:122).

In contrast to WID and WAD, the GAD approach focuses attention on both the productive as well as the reproductive aspects of women’s and (men’s) contribution to work. It dismisses the separation between the public/private domain that generally has been used to disregard family and household maintenance work performed by women. It pays special attention to women's subordinate roles within the family and questions the assumptions related to conjugal relationships. (Rathgeber 1990:493-495).

GAD also advocates a more active role of the state in terms of promoting women's emancipation. According to the GAD approach, the state should provide some of the social services in areas such as child care or health care that many women provide on a private basis. Women are viewed as agents of change and are encouraged to organize themselves to address their own needs and plan solutions to achieve more political impact. (Peet & Hartwick 2015:299, Rathgeber 1990:494)

In terms of applying the GAD approach in practice, the projects are designed in order to try to meet practical needs as well as promoting strategic interests. The objective is to bring about gender equality and fundamental structural changes in social, economic, and political structures which will lead to power shifts. It seeks to involve both women and men in making decisions and sharing
benefits in the projects. Since it aims further than the WID and WAD approaches in questioning the underlying assumptions of social structures, the desired aim goes beyond solely designing interventions to better integrate women into development programmes. This is also one of the weaknesses of this approach; since the privileged agents of development interventions rarely are truly committed to structural change and power shifts it is difficult to implement the approach to practical programming and project development. (Parpant 2000: 62-63, Rathgeber, 1990:493-495, Unesco 2003:17)
4. Methodology

4.1 Fairclough’s three-dimensional model

Fairclough’s approach (1992; 1995; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) is one of the most systematic and structured method to conduct a discourse analysis with the objective to “bring together linguistically-oriented discourse analysis and social and political thought relevant to discourse and language, in the form of a framework which will be suitable for use in social scientific research, and specifically in the study of social change.” (Fairclough 1992:62)

4.1.1 Text

By employing a linguistic text analysis with determined tools, it is possible to identify discourses and by so, support one’s interpretation. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:83) Fairclough presents a number of tools for analysing the linguistic aspects of the text; the ones that will be used in this analysis are wording, transitivity, nominalisation and modality.

Wording refers to the “multiplicity of ways of “wording” a meaning” (Fairclough 1992:190). Fairclough gives the example of how immigration is commonly described as either an “influx” or “flood” instead of as for example a “quest” for a new beginning. (Fairclough 1992:191)

When analysing transitivity in texts the aim is to understand how events and processes are connected to, or not connected to, the subject and object. Depending on how a sentence is structured, for example by using a passive form and leave out the agent, one can describe an event as a natural phenomenon with no agent of responsibility, that is no one to blame. The purpose of transitivity is to investigate what ideological consequences different forms of production can have and by doing so determine if the text is a reproduction of already existing discourses or if it is a part of an innovative process. (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 2002:83)

Nominalisation is another linguistic feature that reduces agency. Nominalisations omit agents from the processes by replacing the verbs or adjectives that can be used to describe processes with nouns. Furthermore, one can imagine that the processes are perceived as more concrete if they are used as nouns. (Bergström & Boréus 2005:284-285)
The aim of analysing modality in a text is to examine the degree of agreement. The researcher takes into account if what is being presented is expressed as an established fact, an opinion or a question. (Bergström & Boréus 2005:323) According to Fairclough, the use of objective modalities involves some form of power and serves to both reflect as well as reinforce one's authority (1992:159). An example of modality that establishes social relations in a certain way is permission, where the speaker puts him/herself in a position where he or she gives the receiver permission to do something (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:84). For this study, I will look at modality to a certain degree, but with the intention to use it as a tool to detect discourses rather than focusing on the degree of agreement.

4.1.2 Discursive practice

Analysing the discursive practice involves looking into the processes regarding production, consumption and distribution of text. There are several approaches to analyse the discursive practice. One approach is to examine intertextuality and interdiscursivity which is what I will do for this study. The purpose is to understand if the author of a text bases the text on other discourses and genres. The degree of interdiscursivity depends on to what extent different discourses and genres are mixed together in a communicative event. A text that combines discourses in new and complex ways is considered to have a high degree of interdiscursivity and can contribute to discursive and thereby social change while a text that employs different discourses in a conventional way only reproduces already existing discourses and thereby maintains the dominant social order. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:69-73).

Interdiscursivity is one type of intertextuality. Another type of intertextuality is manifest intertextuality when a text cites another text with the intention to manifest others’ ideas in the discourse. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:73) Intertextuality concerns “the influence of history on a text and to a text’s influence on history, in that the text draws on earlier texts and thereby contributes to historical development and change”. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:74)

4.1.3 Social practices

Fairclough emphasises the importance of placing the texts into a larger context and thereby taking into account the conditions in which the discourse that is being analysed finds itself in. The third
dimension of Fairclough’s model therefore focuses on the social practice. When analysing the social practice the purpose is to understand both the social context of the text and what ideological consequences it has. First, the researcher has to look into the relationship between the discursive practice and its order of discourse. Second, the researcher needs to identify the social matrix of discourse (that is the partly non-discursive, cultural and social relations and structures that are part of the wider context of the discursive practice). However, according to Fairclough, discourse analysis alone is not sufficient to fully uncover the social practice, one needs to include other theories as well, such as sociological and cultural theories (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:85-86).
As mentioned in the section 1.2 Limitation and Selection, I will mainly be concentrating on examining the social matrix of discourse for each report.

4.2 Critical thoughts on the use of CDA
This study employs a social constructivist approach with regard to methodology and analysis. The social constructivist approach perceives reality and facts differently from the positivist approach. Social constructivism recognizes that there are multiple realities, or rather, there is one physical reality but it can be perceived in several ways, reality is largely a social construction. The positivist approach views knowledge or truth as an objective representation of reality that we can analyse and demonstrate in a probability range through verifiable measurement methods. Positive research is therefore claimed to be objective (Wagner et al., 2012: 51). From a social constructivist perspective, the positivist view can be questioned since what is claimed as real, scientifically correct, or objective, can be perceived as influenced by underlying norms such as androcentric or Western norms (Peet & Hartwick 2015: 274). The positivist view of objectivity can thus be questioned since it might not always be value neutral.

CDA as method can be regarded as self-affirmative in so far as the researcher interprets the text according to the frameworks and structural conditions offered by the chosen discourse method and can therefore be assumed to find the truths he/she seeks (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:23). It seems likely that the researcher finds what he/she is looking for; therefore I can only urge other researchers to do the same analysis in the same way, in order to prove the scientific value of this method. This would also further increase the validity of the analysis. Regardless of the research area, question or method, the analysis will always be influenced and affected by the analyst performing the
study. A critical interpretation cannot possibly be generalized, because it is part of the analyst’s social construction of a perceived reality. Nevertheless a strict theoretical and methodical procedure contributes to a form of transparency.

Initially, my attitude towards the research subject can be assumed to be critical of the neoliberal approach to gender equality that the World Bank expresses in its institutional discourse. This would compromise my ability to deliver an objective research result, which is contrary to a traditional positivist approach to research. Critical discourse analysis does not only look at what is expressed in the communicative event, but rather it aims to clarify why a subject or truth is described in a certain way. That being said, critical discourse analysis is thus critical research. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:63) It is important to emphasize that discourse analysis is not a tool searching for what is right or wrong in a text, neither does a discourse analysis merely reflect a pre-existing reality, rather it shows how language creates representations of reality. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 8). In other words, this study will not seek to find answers to what is right or wrong, true or false in the empirical material.

One important detail to take into consideration when conducting a discourse analysis is to adopt a critical attitude towards oneself, one's knowledge and values. An important concept in this regard is reflexivity, meaning that the researcher sees his own work as part of a discursive construction. (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 116) The researcher is supposed to set aside his/her values, truths and ideologies (at least until later discussion of the analysis) when reading texts critically and analysing them (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 28). It is therefore important that the researcher is well aware of its worldview and basic assumptions, and to the extent possible, distances itself from its taken-for-granted understandings in order to perceive the contingency of the material being analysed (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:21).
4.3 Analytical framework

For the operationalization of the theoretical considerations of WID, WAD and GAD I have identified keywords that characterises each feminist approach to development. The keywords will guide in detecting discourses from each approach.

4.3.1 Indicators of a WID discourse

Productive members of society, economic development, productive labour, employment, economic resource, access to market, equity, efficiency, active contributors, individual profit, consumption

This is translated into action as promoting an agenda that integrates women into economic systems and development programs. Lack of access to resources is seen as the reason to women's subordination. Primary focus is placed on egalitarianism and on developing strategies and actions designed to reduce the disadvantages women face in the productive sector and ending discrimination against them. Investing in women’s productivity is expected to yield economic as well as social returns. (Razavi Miller 1995:2-12, Griffin 2009:123, Tinker 1990:31)

4.3.2 Indicators of a WAD discourse

Women-only focus, separate women from men, recognition of women's role in development, income-generating activities, economic agents, international structures of inequality, patriarchy, impact of class

This is translated into action as promoting an agenda placing special attention to protect women's interests from patriarchal domination. The underrepresentation of women in economic, political, and social structures is seen as the reason to women's subordination. Primary focus on active engagement at the policy and community level and creating women centric projects. (Parpant 2000:60)
4.3.3 Indicators of a GAD discourse

Gender relations, social construction of gender, structural change, gender equality, reproductive role, unequal power relations, sustainability, contextual

This is translated into action as promoting an agenda that emphasises a holistic view of gender and development; focusing on the interconnection of gender, class and race. The social construction of production and reproduction is viewed as the root cause of women's subordination. Primary focus is placed on the social relations of gender as well as gender and class inequalities that cause many of the practical problems women face in their daily lives. (Rathgeber 1990:493-495, Unesco 2003:17)
5. Analysis

The title of the WDR is Knowledge for Development and the third chapter named Absorbing Knowledge is used for the analysis.

5.1.1 Textual analysis
In general there is a high degree of nominalisations when referring to “mothers” throughout the chapter;

“Schooling enables mothers to raise healthier children…” (p41); “The influence of the mother’s education begins in the womb…” (p41); “protein deficiency works its effects through the pregnant mother.” (p42).

Nominalisation reduces agency and emphasises the effect; in the first sentence, schooling becomes the noun that stands for the process while women’s agency is reduced and the effect “raise healthier children” is emphasized. This indicates that when talking about women in their roles as mothers, the report draws on the 50s and 60s development discourse where women were framed in passive terms and identified in their roles as wives and mothers and targeted in policies related to social welfare such as home economics and nutritional education. However, when referred to as women or girls, they are mainly presented as agents of action;

“women who have attended school tend…” (p41); “women are more likely to be aware of…” (p42); “girls begin to drop out…” (p42); “girls… have not shared in the gains” (p55).

Even though girls are often constructed as agents of action in the sentences, the wordings used with the “girls” suggest a victimized discourse;

“Unfortunately, significant numbers of girls in poor countries never attend school and will someday join the ranks of illiterate mothers.” (p42); ”Many countries still lag far behind in the pursuit of universal literacy, especially for girls and women” (p45); “In still too many settings, some groups - the poor, girls, adults who have long since left
school without learning basic skills - have not shared in the gains” (p55, my emphasis).

A WID discourse can be detected here as girls in global South are depicted as objects of pity.

The wordings in following sentences also suggest a WID discourse as they value women and girls in terms of their performance:

“The education of a mother pays off in better health care and better nutrition for her children.” (p41) and “failed to serve the needs of the poor or of other groups, such as girls, whose returns to education are potentially high.” (p.48, my emphasis)

According to WID proponents, investing in women will yield economic as well as social returns.

There is a high frequency of objective modalities in the text;

“In this the parents’ schooling, especially the mother’s is critical.” (p41); “significant numbers of girls...will someday join the ranks of illiterate mothers.” (p42); “governments have invested in poor quality….and failed to serve the needs of... girls; whose returns to education are potentially high.” (p48).

This indicates a high degree of affinity; the report presents the arguments as facts and “universalizes” the Bank’s worldview (Fairclough 1992:161). By using objective modalities the Bank signals and reinforces its authority as “Knowledge Bank”.

5.1.2 Discursive practice

The text contains a low degree of interdiscursivity. It draws on neoliberal discourse using concepts such as “efficiency”, “delivery”, “global markets”, “investments”, “marginal returns” and “produce people”. Education is presented as valuable in terms of monetary value. It is also referred to as a commodity; in this case the report criticizes the delivery of education for being too inefficient and not worth the investment:

“One of education’s most powerful effects is on wages.” (p40) and “And delivery (of education) is still too inefficient, with too little tangible return for what is spent.” (p40).
The interdiscursive features in the text draw upon modernization theory and colonial discourse which indicate a WID approach:

“It (schooling) helps to overcome some inhibiting traditional practices: women who have attended school tend to be less attached to traditional remedies for children's illnesses and thus more open to modern methods.” (p41)

Here “traditional” practices are put in a negative light, as something backward that can be harmful to the children in opposition to “modern” implying Western, methods.

The report suggests that the success of the East Asian economies had to do with their ability to embrace Western technology:

“Being a technological “follower” did not hurt the East Asian economies, which began their spectacular rise by being very good at adapting foreign technology.” (p42)

The text implies that Vietnam is a backward society that thanks to technology will “enter modern society”.

“In Vietnam the draft primary curriculum includes information about computers (including the Internet), to prepare students to enter modern society”. (p53)

The text states that for everyone, education is key to creating and spreading knowledge and continues with arguing for why women are a good investment:

“Moreover, the benefits of education can spread well beyond the educated. The education of a mother pays off in better health care and better nutrition for her children.” (p40).

Here we can also detect a modernist discourse; investing in women will “trickle down” to benefiting their children as well.

In terms of intertextuality, the report draws on other studies, which it refers to to support its arguments, as well as referring to its strategy papers on education and earlier editions of WDRs:

“Over the past decade, several editions of World Development Report have discussed the efficiency and equity issues bedevilling education.” (p48)
Since the other texts that the report refers to are authored by the very same institution that authors the WDRs, the report only reproduces already existing discourses; there is thus a low degree of intertextuality.

The following paragraph from the report is an example of a typical WID-project; local, small-scale and teaching women a particular skill or organizing them into cooperatives focusing on their roles as producers:

“Modern communication technologies allow them (women) to learn at their own pace outside school or the workplace. For example, women in a community group in South Africa, with the help of one of their peers who has the equivalent of two years of high school education, download information about adult education programs that they would otherwise not be able to afford. Thanks to advice they found on-line about vegetable farming, they recently harvested their first crop.” (p54)

The first sentence suggests that modern communications technology makes it possible for women to learn in their “spare time” next to their reproductive tasks. The issue is thus time constraint, and the presented solution is modern technology, instead of addressing the underlying reasons for the women’s time constraints. In the second sentence women are presented as active agents who by using modern technology succeed in providing for themselves.

“Boys” are entirely absent in the chapter while “men” and “fathers” are only mentioned twice:

“Surveys show that more-educated men and women are more likely to be aware of the protective effects of condoms.” (p42)

However, the next sentence continues by only mentioning women:

“In a Tanzanian survey, 20 percent of women with four to seven years of schooling, but only 6 percent of uneducated women, said they used a condom during sex with a casual partner.” (p42)

The text does not state if there are male statistics available, however leaving out the men implies a worldview where the Bank considers it being women's responsibility to use condom, implicitly blaming women if they contract a disease.

In the instance where “father” is mentioned:
“In some circumstances, as with primary schooling in Lahore, Pakistan, the education of the mother has a larger influence than that of the father, perhaps because of the mother’s greater role in the home.” (p.46)

The sentence suggests that women are more “worthy” of investing in in terms of education and that it might be “thanks to” her spending more time in the household. In both instances men are implicitly portrayed as bad or irresponsible while in the latter sentence women are discussed in relation to their productive value. This way of framing men and women in global South draws on modernist discourse that the WID approach makes use of.

5.1.3 Social practice

In the aftermath of the Washington Consensus it had become clear that the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) had failed to spur economic growth and reduce poverty. Feminist scholars noted that women had to make up for the economic losses by pitching in with household and community services normally provided by the state. As a result, an “efficiency case” to invest in women gained prominence in development discourse. (Chant and Sweetman 2012:519, Chant 2016b:3)

A new approach commonly referred to as the Post Washington Consensus, replaced the SAPs at the end of the 1990s. This approach continued to advocate free market policies in the aid packages however with the inclusion of social policies and a support for state intervention in cases of market failures. This approach facilitated in directing concerns over gender inequality at the Bank. (Prugl 2016:32) At the same time, Amartya Sen’s capability approach gained influence which led to the popular use of the Human Development Index to measure development. (Hickel 2014:1357-8) Sen argued that normative evaluations should focus on the extent of freedom people have to realize their own perceptions of the good. In other words, the focus should be on what a person is able to be and to do, and not on what he/she can consume or earn in income. (Robeyns 2003:62)

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted at the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women which took place in Beijing. This agenda resulted in a turning point for putting gender equality on the global agenda and many governments committed to promote gender mainstreaming in their policies. Against the background of the UN World Conference of Women and the Post Washington Consensus, the discursive practice in development discourse during this period did acknowledge social justice and fairness as sufficient ends to secure gender equality. (Eyben and Napier-Moore
However, that same year the World Bank published its flagship publication on gender issues; *Enhancing Women’s participation in Economic Development* with the key message that it pays off in terms of economic growth to invest in women (Chant and Sweetman 2012:519). The publication does acknowledge the need to shifting towards a GAD perspective: “The paper also suggests a broadening of the women in development approach toward a gender in development strategy that takes into account the relative roles and responsibilities of women and men and recognizes that, of effect long-term change in the conditions of women, the actions and attitudes of men must change.” (World Bank, 1995:7) as well as commits to mainstreaming gender in all its operations. (World Bank 1995:7)

In the light of this background, the analysis has shown that the WDR 1998 remains informed by the Washington Consensus, as it prioritizes the market as both the means as well as end goal of development. It continues to reproduce already existing discourses (neoliberal, modernist and colonial) in the representation of women as poor and an object of pity, which serves to maintain the dominant social order. In the report there are no signs of linking the global demands for promoting social justice, human development and gender mainstreaming with gender equality. The analysis has shown strong indicators of WID discourse, even though the Bank’s flagship publication on gender equality recognizes the need to apply a GAD perspective.

5.2 World Development Report 2008

The title of the WDR is *Agriculture for Development* and the third chapter named *Rural households and their pathways out of poverty* is used for the analysis.

5.2.1 Textual analysis

In about half of the instances were women are mentioned, they are constructed as passive objects;

“participation in the credit market were lower for women” (p83); “household chores are the responsibilities of women”(p83); “food crops should be grown by women”(p83).

By using nominalisations, cause and agent of responsibility are hidden (Bergström & Boréus 2005:344):
“Large-scale production of nontraditional and high-value agricultural exports has, however, increased women’s wage work in fields, processing and packing.” (p.78)

Here the production of agricultural export crops stands for the process that makes women the goal of action, in this case, grants more women opportunity to participate in the rural labour market. These nominalisations draw on the WID approach since they do not address the causes of or assign an agent of responsibility to women’s disadvantaged position but rather focus on the immediate effect, such as increasing women’s income.

In the other half of the cases, women are depicted as agents of action;

“women pull themselves out of poverty” (p.73); “women’s participation in agricultural self-employment” (p.78); “women are even more likely to participate in..” (p.79); “women determine their livelihood strategies” (p.82).

Compared to the 1998 WDR, the wordings used with women contain more references to empowerment linked to economic growth, thus lower degree of victimized discourse. In the following sentence, the wording places “power” on a par with “economic activity”, framing empowerment in material value. This implies a WID discourse that favours integrating women into economic systems.

“A woman’s power is affected by her participation in economic activity, which itself depends on her asset endowment (including human capital) and her access to the household’s assets.” (p.83)

However, there are also references in the text that construct women as inferior to men:

“Educated household heads are often more likely to sell a large share of their products to the markets, while female-headed households more often produce for self-consumption.” (p.78)

The wording suggests that the “educated household heads” are male, since the second part of the sentence continues with “female-headed households” instead of for example “less educated…” This statement has two implications: first it implies that male is the norm meaning that men are identified as gender neutral in terms of their sex, in other words, male experience is conceived as the standard
while female experience as divergent. Secondly, by weighting “educated household heads” against “female household heads” a generalization is made that women are less educated, giving women an inferior status.

5.2.2 Discursive practice

Neoliberal market discourse is the dominant discourse that can be detected in the text. People are described as households, that “design strategies” to cope with “market failures”;

“Rural households design livelihood strategies to suit their asset endowments and account for the constraints imposed by market failures, state failures, social norms, and exposures to uninsured risks.” (p72)

and solution to overcome poverty is spelled productivity;

“In Uganda, escaping from poverty was linked to improving the productivity of land and diversifying into commercial crops.” (p73)

A modernist discourse can be detected in following sentence where traditional is associated with something negative and modern technology is implied being the solution:

“People who remained in poverty where those who stuck to the more traditional farming systems”. (73)

The use of modernist and market discourse thus corresponds with the WID approach.

A reference is made to the need of taking different contexts into account when designing anti-poverty policies:

“The challenges differ across countries and subnational regions, and thus demand context-specific agendas to reduce rural poverty.” (p.73)

This implies a departure from the colonial discourse that was more visible in the 1998 WDR where countries in the Global South were perceived as a more homogeneous category.
A WID discourse can be detected in a paragraph that highlights that women’s limited access to credit and market might have a negative influence on farming productivity:

“And where women have less access to credit, extension, and markets, as is frequently the case, farm productivity might fall as a result.” (p74)

WID proponents view lack of access to resources as the reason to women’s subordination. Another indicator of WID discourse is describing unequal access to markets as one of the reasons to women’s disadvantage and highlighting legal changes as solution;

Women’s access to land is often limited by unfavourable marital and inheritance laws, family and community norms and unequal access to markets.” (p.86)

An example from Nepal is mentioned, where a woman could inherit land from her parents after a law change.

Even though briefly mentioning that a household consists of “complex interactions of cooperation and power plays” (p.83), the report is more concerned with how intrahousehold differences in controlling assets and cash influence decision-making in terms of cultivation, technology and the household’s market orientation. It gives as example how women in Ghana suffered from less soil fertility, less tenure security of plots as well as lower participation in the credit market and how these factors resulted in how women tended to cultivate less profitable crops. (p83) Here we can again detect a WID discourse since the issue is described as caused by women’s lack of resources.

Another indicator of WID discourse is when the report laments how women in Guatemala are forced to spend less time on their income-generating activities;

“In Guatemala, labor shortages associated with high-value export production forced women to reduce the time they devoted to independent income-producing activities or to cultivating crops under their own control. Labor constraints also encroached on the time that women could allocate to food crops.” (p.83-4)

The last sentence suggests that women have less time to work on their food crops due to spending more time on labour elsewhere, implying that women’s income-generating “activities” are less valuable since they are not labelled as “real” work. One of the main reasons for why many women in
Global south are confined to lower paid activities in the informal economy is their lack of skills, and as long as women remain in these kind of jobs their inferior status as home and at work will unlikely improve. (Kabeer 2005:18). A GAD approach would have addressed the source of problem in order to find a more sustainable solution while the WID approach only focus on the immediate effect the problem has on the women's income as we can see in the sentence above.

A major difference in this WDR compared to the 1998 one is that the roles of men are more present in the discourse; in many instances men are mentioned together with women which corresponds with a GAD discourse. Also, the report acknowledges social norms working against women’s advantages and recognizes women's reproductive work;

“Social norms often have a strong influence on household strategies and on the roles of men and women in the households…. Social norms often dictate that most of the childrearing, cooking and household chores are the responsibilities of women, limiting their potential to take advantage of new farming, labor, or migration opportunities, reinforcing inequalities. Or increased labor force participation by women, combined with these traditional roles at home, mean much longer workdays for women than for men.” (p83)

Although the problems with social norms are described as affecting women's economic participation, instead of framing this issue as worth solving as an end in itself, the report does recognize gender inequality caused by social norms. This discourse clearly draws on the GAD approach.

Another indicator of GAD discourse appears when the text addresses an example of how gender relations in the household changed, thus showing that the ascribed male and female roles and the responsibilities and expectations that correlate them are not reflections of natural order:

“Yet in some contexts women’s wage jobs, and the income they generate, can shift the balance of power and work inside the house. Women’s employment in the growing export flower market in Ecuador increased the participation of men in housework.” (p83)

However, the market is presented as the reason why women’s situation has improved. Development is thus defined as growth that can lead to gender equality.

There is a WAD discourse implied in a paragraph that credits women for their important role in development. A figure (3.4) provides statistics on female participation in agricultural self-
employment across different regions. The figure displays a distinction between some regions where men and women work equally, other regions where more women than men participate and regions where less women than men work in agricultural self-employment. It concludes with

“Yet many development policies continue to wrongly assume that farmers are men. The important role of women in agriculture in many parts of the world calls for urgent attention to gender-specific constraints in production and marketing.” (p79, my emphasis)

The demand for gender-specific constraints resonates with the WAD approach that favours separating women and men in projects.

Later in the report power imbalance is mentioned in the context of market opportunities. The recognition of linking power imbalance to women's status in the household also draws on a WAD discourse;

“Where men control income from cash crops, power imbalances in the household can be reinforced when new market opportunities open. Shifts in household strategies that might lead to pathways out of poverty are not gender neutral.” (p.84)

The interdiscursive features in the report draw on the Post Washington Consensus as it supports state intervention in cases of market imperfections;

“In many cases, collective action alone cannot correct market failures; that is a crucial role for policies and the state.”

However, the sentence that follows criticizes the state for failing to “play this role” implying that one cannot only rely on the state as “many policies have been detrimental to rural households’ livelihoods” and mentions “taxation of the agricultural sector” as one of the reasons for households failing to “pull themselves out of poverty through the farming pathway” (p83).

Compared to the 1998 WDR there is a slightly higher degree of interdiscursivity in this text as indicators of WID, WAD and GAD discourses can be detected. However, the dominant discourse draws on the WID approach.
5.2.3 Social practice

During the UN Millennium Summit in 2000, promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment was addressed as a goal (MDG3) to be achieved by 2015. In 2007 the World Bank launched its Gender Action Plan (GAP) which was titled ‘Gender equality as smart economics’ with the objective to “advance women’s economic empowerment in order to promote shared growth and MDG 3” (World Bank 2006). The plan recommended gender mainstreaming in the Bank’s operations and forging public–private partnerships to improve women’s economic opportunities as the way to go forward. In 2009, in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, the first-ever plenary session devoted to adolescent girls was held at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, one of the most influential players in macroeconomic decision-making fora. The key message of that WEF was that investing in girls and young women would restore economic growth and might ward off future global crisis. (Chant 2016a:314-315) Or, as former Managing Director of the World Bank, Ngozi Okonzo-Iweala stated: “If investing in women is ‘smart economics’ … catching them upstream, as girls, is even smarter.” (Ngozi Okonzo-Iweala 2009, quoted in Chant 2016a:314) The discursive practice in official development discourse thus emphasized advancing gender equality through market mechanisms, framing women and girls as entrepreneurs that could act as a fundamental source of growth. This “Smart Economics” discourse was also adopted by a host of multilateral and bilateral development institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses and companies wanting to contributing to social good. One example is the Girl Effect campaign initiated in 2008 by Nike Foundation in cooperation with the UN and with the mission to empower girls to end poverty. (Chant 2016:315, Chant & Sweetman 2012:519, Roberts 2012:950)

In this report, women’s disadvantaged position is framed as a problem because it affects their economic potential. However, women are no longer constructed as victims but rather with more agency even though it is viewed in economic terms; hence it is reproducing the WID discourse that corresponds to the prevailing global development discourse. There is a discursive change in the report compared to the 1998 WDR as it draws on the Post Washington Consensus as it permits the state to intervene in cases of market failures and there are undertones of the GAD approach as power relations in the household and gender roles are addressed. Nonetheless, the main concerns over gender inequality are presented with instrumental arguments such as “limiting women’s possibilities to take advantage of emerging opportunities to improve competitiveness” (p74). The prevailing WID discourse that the 2008 WDR draws on is thus in line with the global development discourse.
5.3 World Development Report 2018

The title of the WDR is Learning to Realize Education’s Promise and the first chapter named Schooling, learning, and the need for education is used for the analysis.

5.3.1 Textual analysis

Compared to the two earlier WDRs, there is a lower degree of nominalisation in this report, but there are still many occurrences where women’s agency is reduced in the sentences:

“female schooling reduced fertility…”; “education reduces teen pregnancy…”; “Education also increases women’s use of contraception…” (all on p.41)

The wordings used together with women in these examples in the context of fertility

“control over the size of their families”; “aspirations, empowerment, agency”; “increases their role in family decisions…” (all on p.41)

suggest an empowered framing of women’s capacity to have greater control over their lives. However, even though women’s ability to choose implies agency, in this text, “choice” is mostly mentioned in the context of women’s sexual and reproductive lives, thus drawing on an instrumental view of women.

The report links the benefits of education to lower fertility rates among women, and also how women’s education spills over to health benefits for their children. A comparison between two similar statements, made with a gap of 20 years in between, displays the change in wording of how women are constructed in the discourse:

“The education of a mother pays off in better health care and better nutrition for her children.” (World Bank 1997:40)


Even though the two statements have more or less the same meaning, the first sentence draws on an instrumental, WID discourse whereas the latter example has a tendency towards GAD discourse;
women in their roles as mothers are constructed as agents of action, the language is less technocratic and the education of a woman/mother is no longer explicitly justified with the words “paying off”.

5.3.2 Discursive practice

There is a high degree of interdiscursivity in the text. The chapter opens with two quotes that set the tone of the whole chapter. The first one comes from the feminist and anarchist political activist Emma Goldman and talks about how education should be able to unlock “the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child”. The second quote is taken from Capital in the Twenty-First Century, a study on the global trend toward greater wealth inequality written by Professor Thomas Piketty;

“In the long run, the best way to reduce inequalities with respect to labor as well as to increase the average productivity of the labor force and the overall growth of the economy is surely to invest in education”.

Piketty’s work is underpinned by a left-wing political orientation (the liberal magazine The Economist refers to Piketty as the “modern Marx”) thus this statement draws on left-wing political discourse. These uses of manifest intertextuality introduce new discourses to the report, which implies that the Bank is steering away from the conventional neoliberal discourses build upon WID approach as noted in the previous reports.

The chapter starts with following statement:

“Education is a basic human right and it is central to unlocking human capabilities. It also has tremendous instrumental value.” (p38)

What is striking is the order of the words. It puts instrumental value on the second place. Overall, more focus is put on the individual’s agency, freedom and wellbeing. The text draws strongly on Sen's capability approach discourse, not only does it use similar language as Sen, it also explicitly refers to Sen (p38). The values of education are not only measured in monetary terms but also in non-monetary terms such as the control women have in their own lives. As an example;
“Education also increases women’s use of contraception, increases their role in family decisions on fertility, and makes them more aware of the trade-offs in having children.” (p41)

and

“Schooling reduces teenage pregnancy indirectly by increasing girls’ aspirations, empowerment, and agency.” (p41).

There are strong indicators of GAD discourse, as consideration is taken to race, gender and income when presenting facts;

“Regardless of their race, gender or income, more-educated individuals in Europe and the United States have a lower probability of having a chronic health condition.” (p40)

Another example where race and gender is mentioned, is shown in Figure 2.1 Mortality rates in the United States are lower for adults with more education (p40):

The report questions assumptions of gender roles when addressing how social norms can be detrimental to boys as well which draws on a GAD approach:

“Social norms can operate in much the same way to inhibit male access to opportunities. Case studies in Australia and Jamaica suggest that underachievement among boys is linked to
Another indicator of GAD discourse is visible in how the relationship between people in global South and in global North is perceived as more equal as the report addresses gender inequality and other issues in OECD countries as well:

“Occupational gender segregation is a strong feature in many labor markets across the world. In OECD countries, women dominate the service sector, whereas men are overrepresented in industry. In addition to horizontal segregation, women also face a “glass ceiling”.

By addressing issues in global North as well, the modernist discourse (of the ideal, modern Western society) visible in previous WDRs is gone. Another sign that indicate less distance between South and North is expressed in the sentence “Education increases trust, tolerance, and civic agency…. more-educated individuals are more trusting and tolerant of people they know and even of strangers.” This implies a worldview of interconnectedness between all peoples and nations.

However, there are still many indicators of neoliberal WID discourse in the language use, such as

“education makes workers more productive by giving them the skills that allow them to increase their output.” (p39); “returns to education are higher in economically free countries with institutions that allow individuals to adjust to shocks and market forces.”

Another indicator of neoliberal discourse can be found in Box 1.2 titled “Education can’t do it alone” (p44) where factors outside the market are identified as possible problems that can “reduce the returns to education”, such as social norms preventing women from working, low demand for educated labour (which is claimed to be caused by poor investment climate) or countries incentivizing “the wrong things” (governments with big public sectors that attract educated youth, this is a “problem” because public sector jobs will not increase economic productivity).
5.3.3 Social practice

The UN Women was formed in 2011 which gave unprecedented attention to the human rights of women and girls in international forums (Chant 2016b:4). In 2012 the Bank chose gender equality as theme for the WDR for the first time in its 30 years of history. The 2012 WDR promotes the “Smart Economics” discourse as proposed in its 2007 GAP, however it also acknowledges the intrinsic value of gender equality. (Roberts 2012:950) The discursive practice in mainstream development discourse concerning gender equality is partly underpinned by the notion that the material gains of achieving gender equality will contribute to broader development outcomes for both women and men, framed in a capability approach discourse of “more representation”, “inclusion” and “choices” (Hickel 2014:1358). The rise of various financial models, such as microcredit loans and conditional cash transfers with their emphasis of women as better clients (more responsible than men), that claim to tackle both poverty and gender inequality has also lead to a wide consensus among a majority of development institutions as well as NGOs that women's economic empowerment will bring about gender equality. (Wilson 2011:319)

In the 2018 report, gender equality is discursively connected to both the Smart Economics agenda as well as the capability approach, promoting notions of “agency”, “choices” and “empowerment”. Women are constructed as empowered individuals having the capacity to make choices. The global attention given to promoting gender equality as an intrinsic value in itself is partly reflected in the 2018 WDR that draws more clearly on a GAD discourse in its holistic approach to gender relations and development. However, the underlying message is still promoting a WID approach where the benefits of investing in education for women are linked to health and welfare returns such as healthier and better educated children, rather than linking the benefits to more equal status in society for women.
6. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to through a critical discourse analysis of three WDRs, provide a deeper understanding of how women have been represented in Bank discourse over the last three decades and how these discourses reflect broader developments in gender equality. Before presenting the concluding remarks, I would like to once again point to the fact that one has to take into consideration that the WDRs are written by several authors with different backgrounds, the topics are different for each year and the messages communicated can be contradictory even within the same report, which makes it a complex task to establish clear trends within the reports over time. Therefore I want to emphasize that I recognize the fact that the World Bank and the WDR team are not one monolithic actor even though the WDR’s are analysed in this study as one representative “voice” of the Bank.

6.1 From WID to GAD

The analysis suggests that the Bank discourse on women has changed from a predominant WID approach in the end of the 90s and moved closer towards a GAD approach in the latest WDR. Even though the tone of the language has shifted from instrumental and technocratic towards a “softer” tone with seemingly more emphasis on human rights, the efficiency discourse around women in development is still the prevailing one. Bank discourse constructs women as economic actors worth investing in and gender equality as a product of economic growth.

In the 1998 report women were framed in a victimized (i.e. referred to as “poor” or “illiterate mothers”) and colonial (i.e. women are presented as a distant other who need to “overcome some inhibiting traditional practices”) discourse. Men are practically absent from the text with a few exceptions, in which they are portrayed as irresponsible which reproduces the stereotypical gender roles of men and women in global South in modernist discourse.

There is a slightly higher degree of interdiscursivity in the 2008 report which mainly draws on WID discourse but with signs of WAD and GAD discourse as well. Women are to a lesser extent framed as victims as there are more discursive connections between women's empowerment and economic growth as well as references to the important role that women play in agriculture. Women are thus presented as active participants in economic development, corresponding to the “Smart Economics”
discourse that started to emerge globally during this period. There are still traces of modernist discourse in the report (i.e. referring to traditional farming in a negative way and presenting modern technology as solution) which implies that women in global South are looked upon as a distant other that is inferior. Unlike the 1998 WDR, the 2008 WDR pays attention to gender relations and male and female roles in the context of household responsibilities which draws on the GAD approach. However, women are still framed as inferior as male is presented as the norm (i.e. educated household heads vs. female household heads).

In the 2018 report, women are generally framed as empowered agents with aspirations, a clear departure from the 1998 report where women were mainly depicted as passive and poor objects. There are stronger indicators of GAD discourse in the latest WDR where concepts such as human rights is given more prominence than in earlier reports, examples are given of how boys also can suffer from assumptions of gender roles, gender statistics are presented with attention to race as well and women are mentioned alongside words as “choices”, “agency” and “aspirations”. The report also addresses examples of gender inequality in global North and conveys a feeling of a global community, thus less distinction between women in global South and global North. However, the WID approach, wrapped in the attractive language of the capability approach, remains the core of the report.

In the last three decades, the Bank has, and continues to, approach gender equality with an efficiency argument. As demonstrated in the analysis, although the benefits of achieving gender equality is presented in a different package in the latest report, with discourses drawing on the capability and GAD approaches adopting intrinsic arguments, there is much continuity in promoting instrumental arguments to why gender equality matters in Bank discourse. Women are constructed as the ideal candidate to invest in with arguments such as “educated mothers raise healthier children” (WDR2018:41). Development efforts should educate and integrate women into the economic systems in order to spur development and growth which will eventually advance gender equality. Examples of how market mechanisms have produced gender equality are provided and the Bank continues to explain the reasons for women's subordination with women's lack of resources, time constraint, unequal access to markets and social norms.

The discursive changes in the analysed WDRs have to a large extent followed the global developments on discourses on gender equality (as outlined in social practices), of which the Bank
itself is a key influencer. This is what Fairclough refers to as the ideological effects (1992:87); an unequal society is maintained through these discourses that strongly focus on framing women as effective producers and linking individual responsibility and economic growth with the advancement of gender equality. While it is an important starting point to assign women agency, to depict them as agents of change and make them conscious of their choices and capabilities, it will do little on its own to revert the systemic reproduction of inequality. By situating the reasons that cause gender inequality outside of the market, such as the state, regulations, social and cultural norms, and identify market mechanisms as the remedy, the Bank shifts attention away from structural causes of inequality and can continue to legitimise the need for global capitalism, market-friendly solutions and ultimately the need for its existence. The discursive construction of women in development, structured around efficiency and economic growth thus sustains, rather than challenges the hegemonic power structures that sustain gender inequalities.

6.2 Closing remarks and future study

The findings of the study clearly resonate with the academic critiques of neoliberal approaches to gender equality that focus on women’s individual economic empowerment instead of addressing patriarchal power structures that sustain gender inequalities. The study has revealed how a powerful financial institution sets standard for global norms of interpreting the remedies for gender inequality. The WDRs serve to universalize the Bank’s world view and assert the Bank’s hegemony over development discourse. As Cornwall & Brock note about the importance of paying attention to language in development discourse; “If words make worlds, struggles over meaning are not just about semantics: they gain a very real material dimension.” (2005:1056) Therefore it is imperative to scrutinize how those in power explain society and deconstruct the language they use to define problems and solutions. The Bank does not only shape ideas or discourses but eventually also action. The practical consequences of the current development discourse of constructing women as economic actors without addressing the root causes to their subordination will most likely translate into an increase in the workload of women on the ground while gender inequality and poverty continue to exist.

This is the first study that analyses how women have been discursively framed in Bank discourse over three decades and that analyses the development of discourses in relation to feminist theories of development. This study is also relevant for understanding to what extent the World Bank has followed the global debate on gender inequality. Research in this area has identified a research gap in

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2 See sub-chapter 2.2 Framing women and gender in neoliberal context.
how various global and local systems of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinities form gender relations (Chow 2003). As complement to this study, future study can extend the research to include how men have been represented in Bank development discourse over time, in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of how gender relations are produced and articulated in global neoliberal institutions. Future research could also put more emphasis on studying the social practice and analyse what the direct impact (in terms of designing development projects) of the Bank’s gender discourse is on women on the ground or how different countries translate the discourse into policy ideas concerning gender equality.

An incomplete understanding of the causes of gender inequality in mainstream development discourses is problematic if we are to remove inequality on a structural level. Equal representation of women is crucial in order to advance gender equality. However, solely having equal presence of women (as advocated by WID and WAD proponents) is not sufficient. A complete social transformation that goes beyond economic, cultural and political spheres is needed. A good starting point is to make way for more nuanced ways of depicting women in mainstream development discourse. To bring forward alternative voices that are not allowed much space in global governance discourses (such as those voices that Mawdsley and Rigg found in their analysis to be excluded in the WDRs) that address not only economic but also social inequalities and call for structural changes through redistribution of resources, challenging operation of markets and questioning the relations of exploitation and privilege. The discursive focus needs to be shifted from women’s individual economic empowerment to collective action as argued by feminist scholars and the roles of men should be more visible in discourses on gender equality. Men and women need to work together towards the ultimate goal of achieving social justice for all.
References


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Online resources


