Counting Change: A Review of Gender Related Trends and Assumptions in the JIAEE

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Abstract

Despite an increased rhetoric and inclusion of women in development issues, women remain an underclass and their work worldwide remains undervalued, underrepresented, and unremunerated. Based on feminist post-modern theory, we attempt to begin a critical evaluation of development initiatives and discourse as represented in JIAEE articles from 1994-2003. Our purpose is to highlight positive achievements while also uncovering attitudes and assumptions that may impede efforts toward women’s development. Articles were systematically reviewed for gendered terms, counted and arranged according to year, geographic orientation, and theoretical orientation (WID or GAD). Modified grounded theory method was used to code the selected articles. Specific themes were expanded upon and discussed in some detail.

Keywords: JIAEE, review, gender, WID, GAD, PAD, language, discourse, international development
Introduction

According to the 1995 UNDP Human Development Report, 70% of the world’s 1.3 billion people in poverty are female (p. 4). The UNFPA (2002) stated that the disparity between men and women living in poverty has increased over the past decade, perpetuating what Sen and Grown referred to in 1987 as the “feminization of poverty.” Wichterich details the mechanisms of globalization that systematically exploit women’s work in informal and domestic economies, noting that in Australia textile companies “farm out” seventy-five percent of their production to homemakers who make $1.75 US per hour (1997, p. 22). According to the 1998 FAO report, women make up 60-80% of the agricultural labor force on the African continent, but receive less than 10% of agricultural extension services (Udoh, 1999). Statistics such as these are startling. They serve to emphasize that even in so-called developed nations, women remain an underclass. Marilyn Waring has repeatedly demonstrated that women’s work worldwide remains undervalued, underrepresented and unremunerated. Despite the increasing rhetoric and inclusion of women in development initiatives, the United Nations declaration of the Decade for Women, alternative and participatory approaches to development, the persistent denial of freedom for and subjugation of women continues (Cook and Kothari, 2001).

With the existence of the above-mentioned increased rhetoric and inclusion of women in development initiatives, the question of why inequality continues to exist begs our attention; development requires a critical review with respect to this important issue. Rist (1997) has stated that a review of the foundations of development (i.e. discourse) is necessary for post-development initiatives to have any beneficial effect. bell hooks (1984) states that with a critical discourse analysis we are able to identify attitudes and assumptions that maintain the structural frameworks that preclude the development and sustainability of feminist initiatives. hooks (1984) states that “without challenging and changing these philosophical structures, no feminist reforms will have a long range impact (p.31)”.

Extension has begun this process of challenging and changing by recognizing that gender is inextricably involved in development initiatives and research. Since 1994, members of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education have addressed women in development in the Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education. Recently, in 2003, the AIAEE held its first conference session specifically on Women in Development in Raleigh, North Carolina. These AIAEE meetings and studies therefore offer us a starting point for the analysis of development discourse and more specifically a starting point for uncovering the attitudes and assumptions precluding women’s contemporary struggles for equality.

Purpose

Although there have been historical reviews of the Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education there has not been a review of the JIAEE with specific focus on gender. The purpose of this paper is to provide a review of gender and women’s development as represented in the JIAEE from a postmodern feminist perspective. Such an evaluation of gender is timely and provides us with the logical next step that hooks call for: an analysis of the general trends on discourses of gender and development. The analysis stemming from this review highlights extension’s work in the
Methodology

This review is situated within a feminist theoretical framework, specifically adopted from WID, GAD and PAD perspectives on development and theorists such as hooks (1984), Rist (1997), and Rai (2002). One hundred and ninety one abstracts of the Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education from 1994 to 2003 were systematically reviewed for gendered terms, such as ‘women’, ‘men’, ‘female’, ‘male’, etc. Articles were selected from the abstracts that contained these gendered terms, randomly numbered for discretion in reporting, and systematically read. Fifteen randomly selected non-gendered articles were reviewed to check for gendered articles that did not include gendered terms in their abstracts. Selected articles were counted and arranged according to year and geographic orientation. A modified grounded theory method was used in coding the selected articles. The articles were openly coded according to their theoretical orientation towards WID or GAD and whether gender was central or peripheral to the selected article’s main purpose. The gendered terms and phrases found within each article were also placed into general categories. Axial coding was then used to examine connections between a gendered term’s assigned category and the conditions that influence it. Notes were generated throughout the review process to facilitate critical reflection of discourse within the selected articles as well as to uncover researcher “bias” during the process.

Theoretical Framework

As stated in the methodology, articles were placed coded under their respective theoretical orientations to WID and GAD. Other forms of development, such as Women Environment and Development (WED), also exist as powerful forms of alternative development. WID and GAD approaches to development are relevant for this review, as they comprise the theoretical underpinnings on which mainstream development efforts have been based for nearly a half-century.

The term Women in Development (WID) emerged in the early 1970's in response to a growing recognition of the exclusion of women from the development process. Proponents of the WID approach saw it as a way to increase the visibility of women in development by focusing on women as an "analytical and operational category" (Chant 2000, p. 7). Under the WID paradigm, separate organizational structures were implemented to address women's issues and thus resulted in the development of women-specific policies and projects.

Although the work of WID theorists made important links between women’s work and status that had been missing from Western based development (Rai 2002), critics argued that WID initiatives overlooked an understanding of women's positions as inextricably linked to their socially and culturally-constructed relationships with men. Parpart (1995) states that WID theorists "seemingly unquestioned [the] assumption that women would benefit by being 'slotted-in' to existing (male-biased) development structures (p. 227).” In this respect, the proponents of the WID approach failed to realize that it perpetuated ideologies of economic growth and liberalization that undermine women’s equality. WID also failed to account for the multiplicity of women’s identities.
and interests. With such essentialist tendencies, WID-aligned development efforts had the effect of excluding both female and male experiences of gender and development. Parpart and Marchland (1995) write, "In this light, an undifferentiated and unilateral focus on women is not only conceptually inappropriate, but deprives gender interventions of their transformative potential (p. 14).” WID approaches to development tokenized women’s interests, treating the symptoms of gender inequality rather than the sources. (Rai 2002)

An ideological shift was made in the 1980’s from the WID approach to development to the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. GAD sought to incorporate a holistic view of women's issues into development efforts by asserting that cultural, legal, and political institutions dynamically shape gender identity. The GAD approach to development asserted that development efforts must address the relationships between men and women and the underlying socio-cultural institutions of a community that serve to deny women their basic human rights and capabilities. Accordingly, GAD’s focal point of analysis is the productive and reproduced roles of women as active agents in the process of change.

Critics of the GAD approach claim that GAD is a theory in need of a method of implementation into women's lived experiences. The GAD-aligned development initiatives face challenges of macro patriarchal culture of development organizations, longer and larger resource commitments required by GAD-based initiatives, and the difficulty of demand normative approach to women’s rights, culture and development. Rai (2002) notes that although the GAD approach to development is predominant in feminist development, the WID approach to development is predominant in development planning and implementation. Rai argues that the GAD approach to development and its fundamental goal of transforming socio-cultural structures for the emancipation of women can be quite threatening to patriarchal development organizations.

A feminist Post-Modernism and Development (PAD) approach to development emerged in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s in response to the growing evidence that development was not working and, more specifically, that development was not working for women (Rai 2002). PAD theorists advocated post-development initiatives while stressing various politics of identity, individual agency and action-oriented responses to exploitation. Postmodern theorists argue that specific bodies and worlds are created through language. Rai (2002) states that women occupied a particular place in Western-based discourse that problematized the “underdeveloped”:

They were the victims of barbaric cultures as well as their markers. The social relations that enmeshed them were barbaric and therefore threatening to the civilized world. The problem of the Orientalist discourses is not simply of essentializing, dichotomizing cultures as old and new, traditional and modern, but also on of invention (p. 56).

In other words, written and spoken forms of language are paramount in constructing realities and are often forms of violence in themselves (Derrida, 1976). Foucault (1980) emphasized that knowledge is subjectively formed through the assertion of power. Accordingly, language must be deconstructed to uncover sources of power. Rist (1997) uncovers sources of power from the language of development, which uses biological metaphors of growth and patriarchal metaphors of family responsibility to naturalize the process of development.

As stated in the methodology, this review is aligned with a Postmodernism and
Development (PAD) and seeks to continue the process that WID catalyzed and to help achieve the fundamental transformation of socio-cultural institutions that GAD theorists demand. The postmodern approach allows us to begin a process in understanding how we as extensionists situate and construct women through language.

Results

Twenty-two out of the 191 abstracts reviewed contained gendered terms and were selected. The twenty-four articles contained a total of 113 distinct trends in gender terms. For example, phrases and terms such as power relations, distribution of power, power structure were all classified under the term “power”. One out of the fifteen randomly reviewed non-gendered articles contained gendered terms in its introduction and was included in the review. One article selected as being gendered by its abstract was thrown out because it did not address gender concerns throughout the remainder of the article. In total, twenty-three out of the 191 articles were classified as “gendered” and accounted for twelve percent of the total articles. See table 1. for gendered article abstracts according to year.

Table 1. Number of gendered abstracts:

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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Gendered article abstracts were further broken down according to which gender, or gendered term they used. For example, “female heads of households”, "women participants", "women farmers" and "female respondents” are represented under the term “women”. See table 2.

Table 2. Number of gendered abstracts according to terms used:

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<tr>
<td>“Women”</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Men”</td>
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<td>1</td>
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Gendered articles were coded according to either a WID or GAD theoretical orientation. An article was considered to have a Women in Development (WID) theoretical orientation if it focused on women as a group in their own right, seemed to “slot-in” women to existent male-biased development structures as a solution to a problem, and did not address women’s positions as evolving dynamically through socially and culturally constructed relationships with men. Articles were categorized as having a Gender and Development (GAD) theoretical orientation if they focused on both men and women, gave precedence to gender relations, and addressed the importance of a gender perspective instead of a “gender component”. One article in 1997 did not align with either WID or GAD and was not included in this table. See table 3. for the theoretical orientation of articles according to the year published.
Table 3. Theoretical orientation of articles

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<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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Gendered articles were then categorized according to the purpose of the article. An article was deemed Gender-Centered (GC) if gender was central to the purpose of the article. An article was categorized as Gender-Peripheral (GP) if gender or women’s issues were mentioned but were not central to the article’s purpose. See table 4 for categorizations of GC and GP articles by year.

Table 4. Gender-Centered (GC) or Gender-Peripheral (GP) categorization of articles

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<tbody>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>GP</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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Articles were also arranged according to the geographic orientation of the project or activities discussed. One gendered article was geographically oriented in each of the following countries: Greece, Jordan, Honduras, Rwanda, Uzbekistan, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, the Dominican Republic and Malawi. Two gendered articles were geographically oriented in each of the following countries: India, Malaysia, Iran, and Zimbabwe. There were three gendered articles located in South Africa, one in Sub Saharan Africa, and one in Africa. Some of the articles contained two geographic orientations by country.

Table 5 shows that gendered terms were most often associated with extension programs; knowledge, roles and responsibilities; household; participation; and labor. These five categories were individually examined and are presented below.

Extension Programs

Articles noted issues concerning gendered access to extension programs. Among these issues were the following: extension programs were not gender sensitive; extension programs did not respond to gendered needs; a lack of female extension agents; a failure of extension for women; the high cost of training good community leaders; barriers to women becoming community leaders in extension projects due to literacy requirements; balance between male and female extension staff; encouragement of women’s involvement in agricultural professions; the need for extension to reach rural women; and a low participation of women in extension programs; and a need for cross-gender sensitivity training. Article 31 specifically noted that in one area sixty-four percent of women expressed a preference for women extension agents although: “less than one-fifth of women were found to have access to state extension services and three percent to private extension.” Article 918 states,

*Men must be involved in community development, but women prefer and perform better in single-gender groups. This knowledge must be incorporated into future training programs. To continue increasing women’s involvement in development requires jointly examining their needs, and casting aside previous misconceptions held by agricultural educators.*
Table 5. Gendered terms and categories within gendered articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gendered phrase/term category</th>
<th>Number of articles with term or phrase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extension Programs</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education and Literacy</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Blindness</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to Resources</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Perceptions of Women</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Needs</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalization of Women</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Balance</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Relationships</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western-Based Development</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feminist Critiques of Science</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Globalization</td>
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Knowledge, Roles and Responsibilities

Articles frequently noted gendered knowledge, roles, and responsibilities, including the following: gender-specific knowledge of crops; gendered division of labor by task; stereotypes of traditional gender roles; the responsibility of women to direct their income toward family needs; cultural traditions restricting women from claiming more knowledge than men; and the domestic and productive roles of women.

Household

Articles that addressed household-related issues included the following topics: female heads of households; male heads of households; the negative affect of currency devaluation on household cash resources, thereby increasing the need for higher rice production; increase of female-headed households due to HIV/AIDS epidemic; and female influence in male-dominated households. Article 106 states,

*Extension’s ineffectiveness also reflects several faulty assumptions...extension agents generally work with heads of households (assumed to be male), concentrate on commercial rather than food crops (usually grown by women), and assume that information given to one family member (usually the male) is shared with other members of the household.*
Labor

Articles that mentioned gender in the context of labor issues included the following topics: dependency on family labor; husbands’ and children’s labor in women’s development projects; gendered division of labor by task; high rates of formal unemployment of women; finding factors impacting rice collecting for women farmers; role of women in paid labor force under Soviet rule; and invisibility of women’s labor.

Participation

The following issues provided the contexts for articles mentioning gender and participation: greater level of participation in extension by women; low participation of women in extension programs; participation of researcher in local community; inclusion of women in development policy formulation, design, and implementation; involvement of men and women in establishing policy; and project-based development for women to increase their visibility.

Conclusions

Our review has highlighted feminist trends within extension, however this is only the beginning of a much larger and much needed process. Our review has shown that many extension workers have placed gender at the center of their works. It has also shown that some extension workers still employ WID initiatives and their underlying modernization ideologies that contradict women’s development.

We only discussed five of the gendered phrase categories. However there were other interesting points that incorporated gender. Some of these included:

- the irreversibility of development and changes in technology
- the high return rate of literacy programs for women
- the potential of Women’s Groups to reach more women than customary extension
- the need for extension programs to be developed according to women with various levels of education
- the increasing numbers of female-headed households, specifically of older women who have been taking care of orphaned children from HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- the roles of women in formal and informal economies
- the need to critically evaluate anti-woman discourses of science and international development

Some comments on discourse found in gendered articles

There were examples of problematic discourses found within the gendered articles. It is necessary to highlight some representative examples in order to discuss the implications and underlying assumptions embedded within them. One example of development discourse as a process of thought, language and writing is utilitarian notions of humans as tools of modernization. Article 66 for example, noted that women would use a greater percentage of the land to cultivate food crops due to decreasing farm sizes. The author recommended that agroforestry projects should,

initially focus on female farmers to convince them of the benefits and the utility of
new trees species and agroforestry practices and subsequently explain to men how to go about planting new species.

This language is problematic as it suggests using women to promote the adoption of agroforestry methods and using men to provide the labor. What is interesting about this quote is the necessity of “convincing” the women. With many criticisms of the green revolution, many questions come to minds that are not answered in the article: why do the women need to be convinced of adopting new tree species? Are these new species cash or subsistence crops? Who is promoting their adoption? How will the men and women be remunerated for their labor and their land?

Another example of problematic discourse includes romantic and nostalgic constructions of essentialized groups of people. For example article 109 states that “men have pretended for too long that they can conquer nature; women can show them how to conquer the future by placing their decisions and activities within the context of what nature can tolerate.” Men do not simply “pretend that they can conquer nature”. This article effectively ignores the role that men have had in environment and feminist based movements but it also perpetuates the oppressive ideologies that feminists have fought to get rid of: that men are the ones who make culture and that women are bound to nature by their biology.

Development discourse has also historically constructed women’s labor as unskilled. The consequences of this, as mentioned in the introduction and theoretical framework, undervalue the contributions of women to the maintenance of society. An example of this discourse can be found in article 41:

Repetitive and time consuming tasks were performed by women while tasks requiring muscle strength, operational skills to handle tools, technical skills to handle chemicals, and the expertise to handle money in marketing the crops were performed by men.

The distinction between women’s “tasks” vs. men’s “skills” here is notable. Moreover the “tasks” that are performed by women include tapping and collecting latex from rubber trees, harvesting cocoa pods, collecting fallen oil palm fruits. The language used by the author implies that these tasks require less skill, expertise and strength and therefore have less importance. Moreover, the author uses far more description in describing the skills and strength of men thereby also implying the importance of men’s skills over women’s tasks. In parallel article 52 states, “The potential for women to contribute to the rural economy is significant. Women should engage in sustained, long-term economic development and seek out technical assistance and services.” This assertion ignores the fact that women are and have been involved in the rural economies worldwide, and suggests that women are not already engaged in sustained, long-term economic development.

A critique of how development and extension discourse undermines women’s work emerged from article 106 and serves to illustrate how embedded discourse is in women’s perceptions of their own labor:

A number of extensionists (male) state that agriculture isn’t a large part of women’s’ work and therefore isn’t important to deliver. Women themselves even comment on ‘helping their husband’ when they are working in the fields, rather than acknowledge their own contributions.

Two of the articles placed their discussions of gender within Malthusian
discourses of population control, emphasizing the high birth rates of women in the Third World. Discourses on appealing to proponents of population control have historically emphasized the high birth rates of ‘Third World’ women. Not only does this serve to implicitly blame the South and women of the South (contributing to notions of racism and sexism). It also effectively detracts from more immediate issues of exploitation, resource distribution, and dislocation.

Educational Importance
This review is the critical part of the feminist praxis on development and post-development. We specifically suggest that a more detailed analysis of discourse on gender in extension be conducted. It is part of a much larger and necessary process that needs to be continued. There are multiple forms of feminism and many different needs for feminism. We are gaining awareness, as evidence by most of the articles reviewed, that development has not created sustainable and emancipatory change for women. A key aspect of evaluating why this is involves the fundamental task of looking at the underlying discourses, including trends in thought, language and writing that perpetuate the belief in development. This task is crucial to evaluating new directions for research, as human assumptions can dictate to whom efforts are directed and ultimately the effectiveness of those efforts.

References


