

Development Goals for the New Millennia:
Discourse Analysis of the Evolution of the
2001 Millennium Development Goals and 2015 Sustainable Development Goals

by

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ABSTRACT

Through critical discourse analysis, this thesis explores the construction of poverty and development within and across the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the proposed post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals texts. The proposed post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals frame the international development landscape for the next 15 years, therefore it becomes imperative for civil society to understand their dominant economic schemes for poverty alleviation in order to adopt or oppose similar methods of poverty abatement. Deductively, this thesis investigates Keynesianism and neoliberalism, the dominant economic discourses whose deployments within the goals have shaped transnational frameworks for interpreting and mitigating poverty. It assesses the failures of the Millennium Development Goals, as articulated both by its creators and critics, and evaluates the responsiveness of the United Nations in the constitution of the proposed post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals in relation to these critiques through the lens of liberal feminist and World Social Forum discourses. These activist and oppositional social discourses embody competing values, representations, and problem-solution frames that challenge and resist the dominant economic discourses in both sets of goals. Additionally, this thesis uses an inductive approach to critically analyze both sets of goals in order to identify any emergent discursive frameworks grounded in each text that assist in understanding the problems of, and solutions to, poverty.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the marginalized voices that continually remain unheard.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little” (“One Third of a Nation,” 1937). These words from former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s *Second Inaugural Address* have become all too relevant on a global level. The growing problem of poverty throughout the world, and its associated risks and challenges, are critically concerning to human development scholars who contend poverty measurements should play an integral role in measuring progress. Such recognition would likely prove instrumental in initiating effective social, economic, and political change.

To address the perils of poverty and ignite lasting changes, eight all-encompassing goals, referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), were set forth by the United Nations (UN) in 2001. The MDGs, inspired by and borrowed from past UN summits and other global government organizations, provided unified objectives for countries to reach in an attempt to alleviate striking inequalities worldwide. Additionally, they were implemented in an effort to prevent the resolutions of the Millennium Declaration and past summits from being forgotten, as was the case for those that were previously implemented. While their intentions seemed noble, many individuals and organizations contemplated the MDGs potential lack of effectiveness. For example, critics argued that despite objectifying the goals, specific recommendations to help reach attainment were absent, leaving countries searching for methods to most efficiently achieve them (Amin, 2006). Further, many of the developing countries viewed the goals

as a mechanism for the dissemination of multiple dominant economic ideologies, namely Keynesianism and neoliberalism.

As a result of such criticisms, in June 2014, the UN released their proposed post-2015 goals known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seemingly aim to diminish the impact of the MDGs problem-solution frames, which presumed the benefits of mass globalization, but failed to deliver broad increases in living standards in less-developed economies across the globe (“Outlook for the millennium development goals,” 2013). According to the World Bank, goal 1 of the MDGs, which aims to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, failed in specific regions of the world to reach its target of halving the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day between 1990 and 2015. Specifically, sub-Saharan Africa saw a decrease in this proportion from 58 percent in 1990 to a projected 38 percent in 2015. Although proportional improvements were made in this region, the target was not reached. Additionally, this improvement hides an increase in the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day from 296 million in 1990 to a projected 366 million in 2015, a point not considered during implementation of the goals and targets (“Outlook for the millennium development goals,” 2013).

The SDGs promise greater responsiveness to critics’ claims about the 2001 MDGs limitations. Many of the economic underpinnings of the MDGs that were heavily criticized have been de-centered in the SDGs. Now rewritten, the SDGs appear to represent more egalitarian, localized, and time-specific ways of thought. This response is most noticeable in the introduction of the term “sustainable” into the title of the proposed post-2015 goals, seemingly reflecting recognition of the necessity to create long-lasting objectives addressing inequalities for people and the environment, something not

emphasized within the MDGs. This does not suggest all the problem-solution frames from the MDGs have been eliminated, but that the discourse of the SDGs marks a shift towards vocabulary organized around social sustainability, small, equitable, and environmentally friendly practices.

The shift is evident by the integration of the 2012 UN Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development's outcome document, *The Future We Want*, forming the basis for the SDGs (U.N., 2012). Such a transformation reflects global leaders' increasing recognition of climate change and its potential to induce worldwide disasters, affecting a growing population in the process, and pushing governments around the globe to call for more strict sustainability regulations (U.N., 2012). The SDGs frame the international development landscape for the next 15 years, therefore, it becomes imperative for civil society to understand their dominant economic schemes for poverty alleviation in order to adopt or oppose similar methods of poverty abatement.

This thesis adopts a critical discourse approach towards exploring the construction of poverty and development within and across the UN MDGs and SDGs texts. It explores the dominant economic discourses whose deployments within the goals shaped transnational frameworks for interpreting and mitigating poverty. It interrogates the failures of the MDGs, as articulated both by creators and critics, and investigates the constitution of the SDGs in relation to these critiques, locating areas of UN unresponsiveness within the SDGs to criticisms of the MDGs from oppositional social and political discourses. Finally, it describes the contradictions and new critiques of the SDGs.

Methodology

Through a critical discourse analysis, this thesis examines the MDGs and SDGs documents, as well as the texts produced by various government officials, critics, and the media regarding these goals. **Deductively**, this thesis interrogates the roles played by major economic ideologies, and their known and preferred methods of solving developmental issues, in constituting the problem-solution frames around poverty and development in the MDGs and SDGs. The methodology deployed in this thesis also adopts an **inductive** approach to understanding the social construction of poverty and its remedies in the goals and in prevalent criticisms of the MDGs and SDGs. The goals attracted both considerable acclaim and discord around their conceptualizations of poverty and their strategies for its elimination. Through a historicized inductive form of discourse analysis, this thesis examines the MDGs and SDGs texts themselves, as well as their critiques, in order to identify emergent “discursive frames” shaping and contributing to changes in poverty and its eradication across time.

Grbich (2013), a Professor of Sociology at Flinders University in South Australia, articulates critical discourse analysis as “track(ing) the historical development of the discourse over time and identify(ing) the players and the social, economic and political climate which fostered its development” (p. 248). In addition, critical discourse analysis examines how the identified players maintain power, via discursive practices, including the power to define the conditions of understanding for constructs such as “poverty,” while simultaneously governing institutional deployments aimed at its eradication. Finally, critical discourse analysis focuses on both challenges and subsequent reactions to the dominant discourses (Grbich, 2013).

More specifically, this thesis maps out historically neoliberal and Keynesian discourses within the MDGs and SDGs, investigating loci of disagreement, and their manifestations longitudinally across documents. These schools of economic thought, treated as governing discourses by a variety of interdisciplinary theorists, including Rose (1990) and Nadesan (2008), are defined by their key authorities, John Maynard Keynes for Keynesianism and Friedrich Hayek for neoliberalism. Problem-solution frames (e.g., demand vs. competition), discursive constructs (e.g., “engineering demand” vs. “de-regulation”), and strategies of deployment (e.g., government spending vs. micro-enterprise), define distinctions in these governing discourses. Accordingly, this analysis will address influential players in the development of the MDGs, how their role contributed to the implementation of goals with hidden discourses, and how they structured goals to reinforce the discourses. It will then analyze whether criticisms from the resistant liberal feminist and World Social Forum (WSF) perspectives were accepted and if so, how they are addressed in the SDGs. Last, it will use the aforementioned resistant and minority perspectives to critique the SDGs.

Texts analyzed were found using queries in Google, Google scholar, and Arizona State University’s library search database. Initial searches included terms such as “Millennium Development Goals” to figure out what they were, who was involved, and what they set out to do. Subsequent searches included the names of individuals within the UN that were thought to be involved in the formation of the goals.

The search began with the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan who produced a document entitled *We the Peoples: The Role of the UN in the 21st Century* to summarize past UN summits and their outcomes and to offer an action plan for making a

newly globalized world more equitable for all (Annan, 2000). This document also provided the recipe for the Millennium Declaration and subsequently, the MDGs (Annan, 2000). In addition to Kofi Annan, other members of the UN were queried including Jan Vandermoortele, the former Director of the Poverty Group at the UN Development Program and Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, former Head of the UN Development Program and Vice President of the World Bank in 1994.

Beyond individuals directly associated with the UN, other international organizations were searched, including the major intergovernmental organizations responsible for world economic and financial order, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Connell, 2014). Individuals within these organizations were also queried, including people such as World Bank President Alden Clausen and his successor, Sir James Wolfensohn, who implemented programs and regulations such as structural adjustment programs, Horst Kohler- the former Director of the IMF and Richard Manning, former Chair of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and former Alternative Director at the World Bank.

Major economic terms, such as Keynesianism and neoliberalism, as well as perspectives used to examine economic matters, such as liberal feminism and WSF and their histories, were acquired from expert academic discourses in the fields of sociology, economics, and political science. These economic terms were integrated into additional searches, especially those concerning the critiques, yielding names such as Jeffrey Sachs and John McArthur, proponents of the MDGs, and former Senior Vice President and Chief Economist at the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, a critic.

Thesis Organization

The thesis is organized into five chapters. This chapter introduced and outlined the topic to orient the reader. It explained the analytical approach of critical discourse analysis used to investigate the MDGs, SDGs, other UN reports, and the various criticisms from internal and external individuals and agencies. This chapter provided the reader with a basis of key authorities and their positions, as well as their importance in the implementation of the aforementioned documents; and it acknowledged the socially constructed nature of economic problem-solution frames organized around poverty and development.

Chapter Two explores how economic paradigms can be regarded as social discourses that infuse and shape governmental understanding of poverty and institutional strategies aimed at its eradication. As discourses, economic paradigms of thought must be regarded as socially constructed and historically situated. Therefore, it is imperative to identify and historicize the economic discourses studied in this thesis in order to understand their nature historically and in relation to the specific social and economic process that gave rise to their relevance. Therefore, this chapter identifies and explores Keynesian and neoliberal economic authorities, their problem-solution frames, and the vocabularies they share when discussing economic and social goals. Further, it identifies other social discourses and their authorities, namely liberal feminist and WSF, whose critiques of the goals have circulated widely, but whose arguments did not receive official recognition within the MDGs.

Chapter Three contextualizes each economic discourse and its role and presence during, and prior to, the development of the MDGs. In doing so, it identifies the role

major discourses, organizations, and international authorities played in shaping the MDGs. It also locates and highlights areas where each economic discourse is deployed within the goals, targets, and indicators. Finally, this chapter concludes by addressing major criticisms of the goals by individuals within the previously stated international organizations and other academics in the field of development.

Chapter Four focuses on the evolution of the MDGs into the SDGs and details the goals and respective targets, paralleling the structure of Chapter Three. Additionally, it will map engagements with past and present social and economic discourses, with a particular emphasis on the emergent “sustainability” discourse, which ultimately shaped the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs. This chapter concludes by locating and highlighting areas of economic discourse deployment within the goals and targets.

Chapter Five focuses on the resistant liberal feminist and WSF perspectives to analyze the reproduction of current competing discourses found within the SDGs. It also examines, from these perspectives, how the UN responded or failed to respond to their criticisms during the formation of the SDGs and within the SDGs themselves. Additionally, Chapter Five reviews the components of each chapter’s findings and their significance and importance in the global developmental context. This chapter also identifies and details limitations of this analysis, such as the “absence of praxis,” which Grbich (2013) describes as the lack of engaging in the resistance of power within the context. Finally, this chapter identifies and describes potential areas for further analysis.

CHAPTER 2

THE DISCOURSES

The MDGs and the SDGs are historically significant documents worthy of close textual analysis. A discourse analysis of their ambitious agendas precedes both inductively and deductively. Within this thesis, analysis seeks to identify the established economic logics and problem-solution frames that form the MDGs and their reinvention as SDGs approximately 15 years later. The goals are structured by pre-existing economic discourses, but their specific articulations are sculpted by confluences of interests and agendas. Thus, analysis remains open to the categories of discourse that emerge in grounded form from the close textual analyses of the MDGs and SDGs. This chapter identifies and explores dominant economic and political discourses that have shaped economic policy towards poverty reduction and development across the twentieth and twenty-first century.

Economic and Political Paradigms

Social theorists Mitchell Dean in “A Genealogy of the Government of Poverty” (1992), Nikolas Rose in *Powers of Freedom* (1999), and Majia Nadesan in *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life* (2008) argue established economic paradigms, such as classical liberalism and neoliberalism, can be treated as “discourses” with discernable institutional complexes, governmental logics, problem-solution frames, and preferred authorities. Close reading of the MDGs and SDGs illuminates how the goals have been molded by hegemonic economic discourses, including Keynesian social welfare capitalism and neoliberal free market capitalism. Each of these discourses is organized around distinct problem-solution frames, allowing for identification of their

influence in social affairs. This chapter identifies dominant hegemonic economic discourses and the political and social discourses challenging their capacity to dominate the social field.

Economic discourses and their authorities seek to shape the dynamics of the market and social life at multiple levels of analysis. Their problem-solution frames dictate how social issues, such as poverty, are both represented and acted upon. Historically, poverty has been regarded as a problem of government and the discourses examined in this chapter have approached the constitution and remediation of poverty using distinct, and often competing, problem-solution frames and strategies of deployment. For example, government spending and engineering demand is a solution to poverty distinguishing the influence of Keynesian discourse, as opposed to economic deregulation signaling neoliberal discourse. This chapter therefore identifies the dominant hegemonic economic discourses, neoliberalism and Keynesianism, their rise to prominence, and characterizes their typical modes of deployment.

Although the influence of hegemonic economic discourses can be discerned everywhere in government policy on matters of employment, banking, and social policy, the social field remains a space contested by alternative and often divergent discourses that ignore and/or resist the fixed measurements and calculating tendencies of most hegemonic discourses. This chapter identifies important “social discourses” that offer their own articulations of poverty, development, and preferred social governance. Specifically, it identifies liberal feminist and WSF discourses that were largely absent during the MDGs but contributed to the development of the SDGs. These discourses were selected for their position as economically oppositional to the dominant discourses, the

magnitude of their movements, as well as their easily discernable general problem-solution frameworks.

Economic Discourses

Before delving into history, it is important to understand that the dominant economic theories of the 20th century, Keynesianism and neoliberalism, developed as responses by social institutions to economic problems. They sought to increase control over the economy by using theoretically developed explanatory models that promised to have predictive power (Granovetter, 1992). This thesis views each economic theory and accompanying ideology as a worldview or paradigm, restricted and shaped by the social system of which the group is a part. Each institution's cultural beliefs and shared set of values and practices predispose various modes of theoretical thought and methodological inquiry, creating distinct problem-solution frames within each group (Granovetter, 1992). For example, classical economics, promoted by the likes of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, is a discursive paradigm of material self-interests such that the market is a representation of demand or need and freedom from imposition, thereby diminishing the need for government intervention (Steger & Roy, 2010).

Keynesianism

During the Great Depression from 1929 to 1939, liberalism had fallen out of favor and people questioned and became weary of Wall Street. The British Economist John Maynard Keynes founded Keynesian economics by conceptualizing a government-regulated economy with trade controls and social protections (Dumenil & Levy, 2011). He believed high unemployment rates before and after WWII resulted from the tendency of businesses to stockpile money rather than invest in job creating ventures. Specifically,

he saw this myopic corporate investment strategy as hindering recession abatement, as it reduced the driver of the economy, namely middle class spending. Consequently, Keynes encouraged massive government spending, high taxation on wealthy individuals, increased government owned and operated utility and transportation systems, and increased wages for the working class (Steger & Roy, 2010).

Simultaneously, in July 1944, Keynes and a group of UN delegates met in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire to discuss how the two major victors in World War II could assist Europe in expediting post-war reconstruction. During the conference the group decided to create the British controlled IMF, an organization initially established to monitor global currency exchange rates, and the U.S. controlled World Bank, an organization created to provide nations with the capital necessary for post-World War II reconstruction (Phillips, 2009). Although the World Bank was initially founded to satisfy needs of war torn Europe, it soon turned its efforts to newly developing countries. More specifically, it aimed to provide financial help to countries in Africa that were in the process of establishing a government after being freed from colonial rule.

During the 1950s and 1960s, touted as the “Golden Age of Capitalism” in the U.S., the implementation of Keynesian economic and political practices facilitated high economic growth, low unemployment, debt reduction, and reduced income inequality (Steger & Roy, 2010). Despite these successes, this period of economic growth and prosperity under Keynesian ideologies were said by some to be unable to withstand the oil shocks, inflation, and falling corporate profits, encouraging the shift towards neoliberalism beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, by the early 1990s the Clinton administration, though a firm believer of neoliberalism's benefits, as

evidenced by the 1993 signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, partially integrated modes of Keynesian economic inquiry, now coined “New Keynesian” economics, within the existing neoliberal structured governmental system (Steger & Roy, 2010). For instance, in an attempt to reduce inequalities through bolstered social welfare programs (Mankiw, 1992), Clinton increased the minimum wage, unsuccessfully attempted to provide universal healthcare to all, and implemented the Family Medical Leave Act, allowing employees to take maternity leave or time off to care for a sick family member (Steger & Roy, 2010).

The re-emergence of Keynesian ideology in the 1990s and post-2008 financial crash led to its implementation within the MDGs and SDGs. Further analysis within Chapter Three reveals the limited role of Keynesianism in the MDGs, paralleling its position in mainstream 1990s economic thought. Additionally the analysis in Chapter Four highlights its emanation in the late 2000s, inducing integration within the SDGs. Marking Keynesian ideology is a focus on generating aggregate demand, problems of wealth distribution, and increases in state regulatory agency as a means of minimizing mass-market fluctuations.

Neoliberalism

During the 1970s, a period marked by stagflation, characterized by rising unemployment rates that resulted from the “baby boomer” influx into the job market, along with rapid inflation, Keynesian policies were blamed for no longer producing the economic growth and stability they once did during the 1950s and 60s (Peet, 2004). Over time, policy makers began adopting the neoliberal view that releasing the market from government control provided the solution to this economic downturn (Centeno & Cohen,

2012). Typified by a decrease in government-structured barriers to free markets and free trade, as well as the formation of markets for sectors traditionally run by state-owned enterprises, neoliberalism gained momentum during the Reagan Administration in the U.S. and Thatcher Administration in the U.K. (Harvey, 2005).

Promoting large reductions in personal and corporate taxes, neoliberalism attempted to encourage both consumer spending and business investments in employment creating ventures. In addition, it mandated cutbacks in state run social service and welfare programs deemed highly inefficient for their inability to quickly respond to market demand (Steger & Roy, 2010). Not only were free market policies viewed as a reasonable fix for the current economic state, many also praised them as an effective way to maximize social good and personal freedoms through the limitation of government reach and expansion (Harvey, 2005). Further, neoliberal policy supporters quashed fears of future economic downturns by promoting the free market as a self-corrective entity, producing effective and efficient responsiveness to market supply and demand (Steger & Roy, 2010).

In the early 1980s, neoliberal values and problem-solution frames of reference spread to the IMF, World Bank, and OECD, as these major intergovernmental organizations fell under control of organizational leaders exercising neoliberal ideologies (Connell, 2014). Led by World Bank President Alden Clausen from 1981 to 1986, loans granted to developing nations shifted from project funding ventures, such as expanding public health facilities, to program lending investments, such as the development of programs encouraging economic growth. However, developing nations received loans

only after implementation of neoliberal macroeconomic adjustments, otherwise known as structural adjustment programs (Phillips, 2009; Connell, 2014).

More specifically, structural adjustment programs demanded opening of markets through the contraction of government sanctioned import and export taxes and greater access for foreign investors to outsource jobs to these countries (Peet, 2003).

Furthermore, reductions in trade and tariffs enabled transnational corporations to outsource manufacturing and agricultural jobs to developing countries, ultimately flooding the global market with a bevy of unemployed workers who, by competing for employment, were forced to accept minimal pay for heavier workloads. Consequently, developing countries vied for corporate investments by incentivizing these transnational corporations through increasing telecommunication and transportation infrastructures (Tierney, 2014) in an effort to reduce unemployment and boost the local economy (Guyen, 2012).

The prevalence of neoliberal ideology in the 1980s and 1990s led to its implementation in the MDGs. Shifts in economic thinking after the financial crash of 2008 reduced its pervasiveness in the SDGs. The analysis presented within Chapter Three and Chapter Four will reveal the presence of neoliberalism in the MDGs and SDGs. Indicators denoting neoliberal ideology include an emphasis on economic de-regulation, complete privatization, free trade, and a reduction in government size and spending for the creation of a strong private sector.

Political and Social Discourses

Dominant economic discourses do not monopolize the social field of development. Other discourses with competing values, representations, and problem-

solution frames resist and compete with dominant discourses. However, resistant discourses remain influenced by dominant discourses. For example, liberal feminist discourses adopt many of the same assumptions and problem-solution frames as Keynesian economics, yet what distinguishes the former from the latter is the centering of female agency and development that meets women's needs, a foci not found in the dominant economic paradigms. Although history provides a foundation for denotations of liberal feminist and WSF discourses, this thesis redefines how each constructs poverty and their preferred methods of abatement through an inductive exploration of their criticisms of the MDGs. More explicitly, commonalities grounded within and across critiques help further define specifics concerning how liberal feminists and the WSF view the source of, and suggest developmental solutions for, poverty. Chapter Five will unpack these criticisms in further detail but it should be noted that the inductive analysis of these criticisms in Chapter Five aided in defining the markers used to deductively analyze discourse deployments within Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

Liberal Feminist Approaches

Historically, the modern feminist movement began in the late 19th and early 20th century, with activists seeking to establish the right for women to vote and to own land ("Women's Movement," 2014). The 1960s saw the re-emergence of the American and European feminist movement advance with the passing of the Civil Rights Act outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin (US NPS, 2012). However, many women felt the law did little to increase the rights and equality of women in the workforce due to poor government regulation ("Women's Movement," 2014). As a result, many women lobbied for the Equal Rights Amendment, which empowered women

outside the home (“Women’s Movement,” 2014). Simultaneously, women began questioning the male-dominated and oriented field of economics. Danish economist Ester Boserup and colleagues (1970) highlighted how the changing world landscape affects men and women in the agricultural sector differently. This was one of the first attempts to describe the role of women in the economy and how male dominated economic models neglected the effects that changes had on working women.

Liberal feminists have critiqued the work of mainstream economists as reductionist throughout history, suggesting this method of inquiry commonly employed in economics does not capture the full complexity of social factors governing market arrangements. Nelson (1995) contends neoliberal economics attempts to construct man as *Homo Economicus*, a rational, cold, and calculated individual, basing economic decisions on logic rather than emotion, and therefore fails to understand the complexities and nuances of human behavior. She describes economics’ practice of rigor and preciseness as a carryover from the early development of modern science, which needed to separate itself from irrational presumptions and associations founded on fear of the unknown during the dark ages. Nelson (1995) argues that this reductionist mode of inquiry has served the scientific community well, producing numerous advancements. However, she suggests the tenets of science that economics is predicated upon are implicitly structured with male perspectives and problem-solution frames, limiting economics to rationalities and ultimately negating the complexities of human nature as well as experiences of women and minorities within the economic structure.

Because the specific discipline of economics is shaped by patriarchal and hierarchical notions and value orientations that ignore questions concerning power, it

neglects the effects of societal forces that help determine personal economic success. For example, within traditional meritocratic economics, if a female does not succeed, her failure is the result of incorrect, irrational choices and inadequate effort necessary for market success. This perspective negates oppressive male dominated workplace conditions women face, conclusively inhibiting their workforce success (Nelson, 1995). In addition, Nelson (1995) identifies economics' traditional focus is on problems associated with exchanging "goods, services, (and) financial assets." Consequently, areas of life outside of conventional market activities, such as the private sphere, are ignored. This is a problem for two reasons; it fails to consider the impact of home life (i.e. cooking, cleaning, and child-care services) on the market and therefore ignores the activities of women. As a result, liberal feminist seek to expose women's contributions and to increase their economic opportunities.

Despite critiquing the failings of traditional economics to consider the impact of home life on the economy, liberal feminists do not necessarily propose that matters of home life be quantified in dollar amounts. Liberal feminists seek to garner greater recognition of women's contributions and to increase economic opportunities. Nelson (1995) suggests quantification would only increase the dichotomization of men and women and emphasize the greater value of men in society, as the dollar value of women's work at home will undoubtedly be undervalued. Rather than quantification, economics should additionally focus on "measures of distribution and sustainability, and measure of human outcomes such as educational attainment and health" (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). These factors, Nussbaum (2000) argues, are central to her and Sen's concept of the capability approach (Sen, 1985). This concept suggests all individuals should have the

opportunity to generate desirable outcomes for themselves within the confines of their own abilities and external factors (Nussbaum, 2000). As such, Sen (1985) argues that economic needs should not be met if it means denying people what they are capable of actually doing or being, as wealth, in the first place, is sought for the opportunities it affords.

In addition, liberal feminists argue the reductionist economic models miss the most important predictor of child outcomes, maternal education and productive capacity, as children of educated mothers are more likely to contribute to the growth of the economy (Isaacs & Magnuson, 2011). Further, the contributions home life make to the development of the economy, through the shaping of people's values and behaviors, and a merging of both male and female "characteristics" of a market, such as a focus on both autonomy and dependence, individuation and relation, reason and emotion, mark liberal feminist discourses.

The deployment of liberal feminist discourse within the MDGs can be recognized by an emphasis on certain characteristics of social life and human behavior, often ignored by androcentric models, directly and indirectly affecting economics. As such, Nelson (1995) believes this shift would not provide a better model of economics but rather a distortion in the opposite direction due to its contradictory nature. Goals, targets, and indicators concerned with the development of human capital, such as a focus on social welfare programs and education, are characteristic of the liberal feminist economic ideology.

However, not all feminists take the same approach as the liberal variant. Some feminists, particularly those associated with the WSF, argue that the liberal economic

paradigm does not produce enough institutional change, thereby maintaining structurally disadvantageous society for women, especially in developing countries. One specific variant of feminism that is associated with the WSF is eco-feminism. It differs from liberal feminism in its focus on drawing parallels between the oppression of nature and women, and suggesting that the existing social structures need to be dismantled in order to maintain a better connection with nature (Kheel, 1991). For example, eco-feminist Vandana Shiva (2004) illustrates how the current shifting of agricultural models to increasing output in an effort to feed a growing and hungry population, actually limits women in developing countries. This shift reduces the economic sustainability of small agricultural farms, traditionally run by women, as large agribusinesses outcompete them by selling produce at substantially reduced prices. Further, mass agricultural production causes reductions in biodiversity, food security, and women's means of income (Shiva, 2004).

World Social Forum

This discourse was selected for analysis because of its attempts to unify civil society, NGOs, and social movements from around the globe with the aim of exposing and discussing methods to oppose hegemonic globalization. Additionally, this perspective presents a clearly demarcated set of fundamental assumptions in its 2001 Charter of Principles, thereby providing a basic foundation for deductive analysis.

In November 30, 1999, the World Trade Organization (WTO), an international organization that deals with rules of trade between countries, met in Washington to begin discussing and negotiating a new set of international trade regulations. However, many of the developing countries strongly disagreed with the meeting's agenda, feeling it was set

up in the interest of the rich and “poor countries were being bullied by the rich and the way their concerns were being marginalised” (Vital, 1999). Approximately 40,000 people appeared in Seattle to protest the meeting specifically and capitalist globalization generally.

In 2001, as a result of this anti- and alternative-globalization movement, the first WSF, an assembly of NGOs, and social movements from around the globe, representing developing countries, was held in Sao Paulo, Brazil (“Fórum Social Mundial,” 2001). The forum attempted to increase global solidarity and democratic international systems “at the service of social justice, equality, and the sovereignty of people” (“Fórum Social Mundial,” 2001). Although the WSF is considered a convention, it has been constructed around an agreed-upon ideology, which opposes capitalist globalization, as outlined in the forum’s Charter of Principles.

The WSF was, and continues to be, set on dates paralleling the World Economic Forum to show opposition to the economic superpowers' meeting that excludes developing countries. The first WSF meeting resulted in the creation of a Charter of Principles that would guide future forum agendas as well as the implementation of actions of organizations involved. The WSF Charter of Principles indicates the forum is a space provided for the free exchange of ideas concerning the mechanisms and prevalence of reductionist and neoliberal views of the economy and how to resist and overcome their domination. It invites the active participation of all individuals in the discussions, especially those marginalized by international institutions and governments (“Fórum Social Mundial,” 2001). Despite the Charter of Principles exposing the WSF foundational

problem-solution frame, criticisms of the MDGs within Chapter Five help to inductively clarify their preferred method for development and poverty reduction.

Many of the prominent voices from the WSF, as well as eco-feminists, view the MDGs as a top-down creation of the world economic powers, propagated in an attempt to use poverty reduction and equality as a vehicle for neoliberal economic ideological dissemination and control (Amin, 2004). Additionally, they recognize the situated power of international governance organizations, such as the IMF and World Bank, which remain under the control of developed countries. These organizations contribute to the rise of globalization and capitalist systems that directly inhibit developing countries, specifically those in sub-Saharan Africa, from development, ultimately driving them deeper into poverty. Although minimally present in the current MDGs, markers for the WSF discourse include frameworks emphasizing inclusive ownership and locally controlled decision-making, as well as peaceful increases in human rights for all through the amplification and inclusion of marginalized voices based on sex, ethnicity, or race.

Conclusion

Economic discourses pervade many aspects of society. Within the realm of development and poverty reduction, neoliberal and Keynesian ideologies have dominated and profoundly impacted the preferred problem-solution frames employed by governments and key authorities of each paradigm. Utilizing a discourse analysis, the following chapters aim to identify the construction and implementation of each competing ideology within the frameworks of the MDGs and SDGs.

The aforementioned markers signaling **neoliberalism** within the goals include an emphasis on economic deregulation, complete privatization, free trade, and a reduction in

government size and spending for the creation of a strong private sector. Contrarily, **Keynesianism** is identified within the goals as a focus on aggregate demand, increasing government run agencies to prevent mass-market fluctuations, and problems of wealth distribution.

The following chapters will also highlight liberal feminism and WSF, the prominent social discourses contending and resisting these dominant economic ideologies. **Liberal feminist** ideology is discerned by a focus on the influence of women in the economy, as well as the development of human capital through the implementation of education and social welfare programs. Similarly, **WSF** denotation is characterized by language regarding the peaceful increases in human rights for all, the amplification and inclusion of voices marginalized based on sex, ethnicity, or race, in addition to frameworks emphasizing inclusive ownership and local decision making. Though these pre-existing economic and social discourses permeate throughout MDGs and SDGs, close textual examination remains open to any emanating discourses grounded within each document.

Utilizing neoliberal and Keynesian discourses, Chapter Three will provide a historical tracing of the MDGs, highlighting key organizations and international authorities that shaped its development. Chapter Three also analyzes places within the goals, targets, and indicators that display prominent economic discourse **deployment**. The chapter concludes by exploring criticisms of the MDGs.

CHAPTER 3

THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The development paradigm sought to transform the developing world into industrialized nations. The post-WWII UN development paradigm, as well as a shift from an international world to a global world through technological advances, alleviated and propagated developmental problems with both successes and failures. In particular, the Chinese economy provided hope that all countries could fulfill similar levels of economic growth and reductions in absolute poverty through market expansion and employment opportunities. However, despite rapid economic development, human rights and environmental protection standards continue to lag behind. In addition, it is widely acknowledged that the economic benefits of globalization are dispersed unevenly, creating massive wealth disparities within and between countries (Annan, 2000).

The MDGs were designed to reinvent the paradigm and attempt to address new challenges not present in 1945. Therefore, this chapter begins by grounding the goals historically, providing an account of previous foundational UN development documents. In addition, it locates major international figures espousing each developmental paradigm, acknowledging their role in the formulation of the MDGs, and briefly acknowledges the presence of critiques of the goals. Second, this chapter seeks to explore the deployment of the reigning economic paradigms within the developmental field, specific to the MDGs and the documents preceding their creation. Finally, the chapter more thoroughly explores criticisms of the MDGs by some of its creators and other key players and academics in the development field.

Historical Tracing of the MDGs

In celebration and reflection of the new millennium, Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary General, produced a document in 2000 entitled *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*. This document traces UN summits since its formation in 1945, summarizing their outcomes and delineating an action plan for creating a newly globalized and equitable world for all (Annan, 2000). *We the Peoples* also established considerations to be made when convening at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, where 149 Heads of State Governments and other high-ranking officials met in New York at the UN Headquarters (Annan, 2000; U.N., 2000a).

Over the course of three days at the Millennium Summit, members reaffirmed their commitment to the UN Charter, a treaty of obligations that all UN member states are bound to uphold and discussed both the UN role in the international community, as well as the UN members' proposed agenda for the 21st century. The outcome of the Millennium Summit was the *Millennium Declaration*, an agreed-upon document reiterating members' mission to establish freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility (U.N., 2000b). More specifically, the document called for member states to focus on facilitating peace, increasing development in developing countries, protecting the environment, ensuring human rights and democracy, protecting the vulnerable, meeting the special needs of Africa, and re-establishing the UN as the primary international mediator (U.N., 2000b).

While *Millennium Declaration* received a great deal of praise and garnered a plethora of media attention, it eventually began paralleling the direction of past "failed" UN summit documents, losing immediate relevance within the international community

(Vandemoortele, 2011). In an attempt to revive international interest and provide a platform conducive for the perpetuation of *Millennium Declaration's* ideas, the UN sought to devise a more focused, measurable set of goals (Vandemoortele, 2011).

Consequently, in 2001 the UN formulated and released a document entitled *Road map toward the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration*. This document highlighted major developmental areas of interest and introduced eight all encompassing goals set forth to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Create a global partnership for development (U.N., 2001).

In order to concentrate efforts on specific components of the goals, targets were formulated with numerical indicators appropriated to substantiate attainment of each target and corresponding goal. In addition, *Road map* provided countries with the current status of each indicator and presented the potential implications for failure to achieve the respective goals (U.N., 2001). Producing objective and measurable goals contributed to their highly relevant and enduring nature. Although developed and packaged as the “United Nations Millennium Development Goals,” numerous international actors played key roles throughout their construction (Vandemoortele, 2011).

The Key Figures

Kofi Annan, among other members of the UN, contributed to the MDGs development. Jan Vandemoortele, the former Director of the Poverty Group at the UN Development Program, was a leading player in the creation of the MDGs (Vandemoortele, 2011). Today he remains a firm proponent of the MDGs and a leading voice for SDGs suggestions. Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, former Head of the UN Development Program and vice president of the World Bank in 1994, was also a member of the small group tasked to design the goals. He too remains a proponent of the MDGs but addresses specific concerns regarding an absence of goals and responsibilities for wealthy countries, a common criticism of goal 8 (Tran, 2012). Beyond individuals employed within the UN, other individuals within the development community seemingly influenced the MDGs formation.

Arguably, heads of the major intergovernmental organizations responsible for world economic and financial order, specifically the World Bank, the IMF, and the OECD, implemented programs framing developmental thought, which ultimately guided the formulation of the MDGs (Connell, 2014). The World Bank, led by President Alden Clausen and his successor, Sir James Wolfensohn, enforced programs and regulations such as structural adjustment programs, directly impacting the method by which developing countries found solutions to problems of economic and social development (Phillips, 2009). Similarly, former Director of the IMF, Horst Köhler, firmly advocated for globalization by means of capitalistic expansion, boasting its potential benefits (Köhler, 2003). Finally, Richard Manning, former Chair of the OECD's DAC and former Alternative Director at the World Bank, established a set of goals in 1996 while serving

as the chair to inspire and encourage both economic well-being and social development through increased exportation rates, as well as strategies for environmental protection (Manning, 2009). It should be noted that all the key figures involved in the development of the MDGs are men. Given the differences in these male authorities' developmental ideologies, a myriad of critiques are inevitable.

Brief Introduction to Critiques

The following critiques provide a brief introduction to the differences in opinion concerning the ideologies inherent within the MDGs and do not serve as an exhaustive list. For this reason, a more detailed discussion regarding such criticisms proceeds later in this chapter. To begin, Suzan Ilcan, University of Windsor Sociology Professor and co-author of *Governing the Poor: Exercises of Poverty Reduction, Practices of Global Aid* and Lynne Phillips, University of Windsor Anthropology Professor and author of *The Third Wave of Modernization in Latin America: Cultural Perspectives on Neoliberalism*, published a document in 2010 entitled "Developmentalities and Calculative Practices: The Millennium Development Goals." This document assessed the MDGs as a pretense for the dissemination of neoliberal ideology (Ilcan & Phillips, 2010). Similarly, Andrea Cornwall and Karen Brock, academics employed by the UN Research Institute for Social Development, illustrate unquestionable vocabulary such as "participation," "empowerment," and "poverty reduction" in development discourse. Although these terms show some infiltration of WSF discourse, "Beyond Buzzwords" contends these phrases allow for transmission of neoliberalism with little resistance (Cornall & Brock, 2005). Such appraisals are not solely limited to outside critics, as individuals within

various international organizations provide critiques of both the MDGs and the role played by their respective organizations during the MDGs development.

Most notably, Joseph Stiglitz, author of *Making Globalization Work*, and former Senior Vice President and Chief Economist at the World Bank, contests the U.S. forces other countries to accept their culture and policies in the name of development in what he refers to as “Americanization” (Stiglitz, 2007). Jeffrey Sachs, the special advisor to the UN Secretary General on the MDGs, and John W. McArthur, Senior fellow with the UN Foundation, publicize the goals as largely successful but require significant increases in official development assistance (ODA) by the richest countries to fully meet the needs of the poorest (Sachs et al., 2004).

As elucidated by these critics, the reactions to the MDGs are not homogeneously positive. Incongruence in opinion stem from various critics’ belief of the goals as reinforcing reigning economic ideologies or vested interests implemented during their development.

Deployment of Ideologies within the Goals

The following section textually analyzes how the ideologies are **deployed** in the discourses of the MDGs. Discussion of each paradigm proceeds sequentially. However, only the goals relevant to the ideologies are discussed. As outlined in Chapter Two, indicators of **Keynesian** economic ideology focus on generating aggregate demand, problems of wealth distribution, and increases in state regulatory agency as a means of minimizing mass-market fluctuations. Indicators denoting **neoliberal** economic ideology include an emphasis on economic de-regulation, complete privatization, free trade, and a reduction in government size and spending for the creation of a strong private sector.

Markers for **liberal feminism** conceptualized both socially and economically, are indicated by language concerning the development of human capital, with a concentration on education and social welfare programs focused on women. Language denoting the **WSF** perspective includes peaceful increases in human rights for all, the amplification and inclusion of marginalized voices, and frameworks emphasizing inclusive ownership and local decision-making.

Goal One: Eradicate Extreme Poverty

Beginning with goal 1, “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,” the *Road map* sets a target of halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of those suffering from hunger. The *Rome Declaration on World Food Security*, the outcome document of the 1996 World Food Summit, organized by UN Food and Agricultural Organization, provides a foundation for this goal suggesting improving crop yields will decrease prices, benefitting all impoverished individuals. This **neoliberal** assertion is based on the idea that increasing food imports and exports can help protect vulnerable areas from famine during times of crop disease, natural disasters, and climate fluctuations (Food and Agricultural Organization [FAO], 1996). Moreover, the Food and Agricultural Organization believe developing international research programs aimed at improving seeds and breeds of plants will increase productivity and crop yields.

Additionally, goal 1 focuses on increasing the efficiency of the land for agricultural activity in low-income-food-deficit countries by ensuring modernized agricultural methods and technologies are utilized (FAO, 1996). This recommendation displaces the responsibility of reducing food commodity prices onto individuals in developing countries who start internalizing this responsibility (Ilean & Phillips, 2009).

As such, these individuals begin to search for techniques to improve yields, resulting in a turn towards emulating the processes and procedures of those cultivating cash crops, increasing output and profit by any means possible. In addition, they engage in these practices without considering environmental and social costs, insisting market adjustments account for these downfalls. Such a turn may result in developing farmers increasing their reliance on the developed countries for guidance and support in implementing each new technological advance made in agriculture. While increasing yield and production are clear signs of **neoliberal** ideology, the specific emphasis on increasing trade solidifies it as neoliberal.

For example, *The Rome Declaration* strives to ensure that food, agricultural trade, and overall policies are conducive to fostering food security for all through a fair and market-oriented world trade system, reinforcing the belief that expanding food trade stimulates economic growth, providing local farmers the monetary means necessary to increase food security (FAO, 1996). This consequently perpetuates the idea that **neoliberal** free market economics provides a one-stop solution for developing countries' economic and social needs. *The Rome Declaration* also calls on local governments to establish better transportation systems to facilitate the shift towards bringing their agricultural products into the regional and global marketplace, as discussed in the 1994 Uruguay Round Agreement, a U.S. Congress Act that transformed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade into the WTO (FAO, 1996).

Beyond a reduction in hunger, goal 1 focuses on decreasing the proportion of the people living on less than the arbitrary value of \$1.25 per day, drawing on the 1995 UN World Summit for Social Development outcome report, *The Copenhagen Declaration*

(1995, 2000), which postulates suggestions for poverty reduction throughout the world. First, it points to supporting “indigenous people in their pursuit of economic... development” (U.N., 1995). This statement provides justification for intervention, presuming indigenous individuals envy the developed world and if given the chance, or provided the necessary capacity, would emulate the same **neoliberal** economic ideals and practices.

Second, in order to ensure all populations have a chance to develop, *The Copenhagen Declaration* promotes the implementation of “dynamic, open, free markets, while recognizing the need to intervene in markets” (U.N., 1995). This statement highlights the necessity of government intervention to correct for market failures but recommends a very limited role otherwise, which is characteristic of 1990s **neoliberalism** in the U.S. and the U.K. As discussed in Chapter Two, Steger and Roy (2010) indicate President Clinton “embraced major portions of neoliberalism while also seeking to incorporate parts of socially progressive agenda” (Steger & Roy, 2010).

Neoliberalism can also be seen in this goal because increasing daily salary simultaneously enhances the buying capacity of an individual, enabling market shifts in regions traditionally viewed as unprofitable and undeserving of interest or investment by corporations. While not explicit in the indicators or targets of goal 1, *Road map* continually utilizes the term “basic social service” without defining its constitutions, however, past UN conferences provide insight into this reference. In 1997, the UN Administrative Committee on Coordination produced a wall chart titled “Basic Social Services For All,” demonstrating the six key areas of basic social services discussed in prior UN conventions. The six areas the chart considers basic social services include

access to family planning and reproductive services, primary healthcare, nutrition, basic education, shelter, drinking water, and sanitation. The move towards basic social services through **Keynesian** centered government structured programs aims to boost opportunity availability for all individuals thereby leveling the field for individuals to potentially lift themselves from poverty (UN, 1995).

Goal Two: Achieve Universal Primary Education

The specific social service in goal 2 centers on ensuring equal access to educational opportunities for boys and girls alike, suggesting exclusion of girls is “not only a matter of gender discrimination but is bad economics” (U.N., 2000b). This statement illuminates the economic importance of educational equality and opportunity for both sexes through a **Keynesian** and **liberal feminist** lens. Beyond proximal effects of greater education to distal effects, goal 2 acknowledges an educated female populace can lead to decreased fertility rates and better healthcare through literacy and knowledge. Additionally, a more educated female population may increase family income as women attain new roles in the workforce, subsequently decreasing poverty rates. The 2000 United Nations Girls Education Initiative was both created and tasked specifically for purposes of achieving this goal (U.N., 2002). Moreover, the goals suggest local and national governments need to commit significant resources towards educational materials and facilities, to enable a more conducive learning environment.

Goal Three: Promote Gender Equality

Goal 3 contains the heart of the **liberal feminist** perspective within the MDGs, although some argue an emphasis on women is invaluable to accomplish all goals (Sen, 2014). Specifically, it aims to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary

education by 2005 and to all levels of education no later than 2015 (U.N., 2001). The basis for goal 3 stems from the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, a UN treaty agreed-upon in 1979 that places the groundwork for the eradication of sex-based inequalities and contains pieces seemingly utilized throughout the MDGs formation (U.N., 1979).

In part 2 of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, the document calls for the elimination of discrimination against women in the political sector, specifically focusing on women's ability to vote, hold public office, and participate in other areas of political life in their country (U.N., 1979). This treaty was carried over to the MDGs in the form of indicator 12; proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

Finally, part 3 of the document calls for equal work and income opportunities. While addressed in the goals as full work equality, indicator 11 of target 4 promotes the expansion of women in the non-agriculture sectors. This goal encourages women to move their efforts away from traditional work within agriculture to other sectors.

Goal Six: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

Within goal 6, "combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases," the WTO's implementation of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) seemingly displays **neoliberal** characteristics. TRIPS require UN member nations around the globe to integrate intellectual property right laws and policies to protect copyrighted material. The effects of such an agreement may have major implications on developing economies, as the WTO recognizes this may inflate the prices of medicines worldwide, making it difficult for struggling countries with the greatest need. However **neoliberal**

this law may appear, in November 2001, at the WTO's Ministerial Conference on public health, a declaration was produced providing countries the discretion to lift laws that would otherwise prohibit members from protecting public health. This agreement enables each country to self-determine what constitutes a national emergency and act in accordance, regardless of TRIPS (World Trade Organization, 2001). This provides recognition that the WTO understands the potential perils of a strictly market-based economy on human life.

Goal Seven: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

As evidenced in later discussion in Chapter Four, the SDGs place a much larger emphasis on sustainability, the main focus of goal 7 in the MDGs. The 1992 Earth Summit outcome document, *Agenda 21*, which will be detailed later in Chapter Four, discussed the importance of forest conservation for each nation's economic development in the form of fuel, lumber, food, and shelter (U.N., 1992). *Agenda 21* suggested incorporation of views and opinions from a variety of individuals including local communities, industries, NGOs, indigenous forest dwellers, and women are vital when considering governmental sustainability regulation, particularly implementation and planning of national forest policies, a statement suggestive of both **liberal feminist** and **WSF** discourses.

Furthermore, *Agenda 21* calls for the removal of tariff barriers in countries to increase access to products from outside the country, which help decrease the dependence on national forests for manufacturing goods and fuel. *Agenda 21* focuses on decreasing dependence through the reduction in tariffs, which highlights the importance placed on the ability of the market to solve the problem of deforestation, a **neoliberal** solution

(U.N., 1993). In addition to deforestation, goal 7 concentrates on increasing investments to water and sanitation sectors to provide greater access for the one billion people without clean water (U.N., 2001). However, the goals do not specify if the investment they referred to are in private or public utility companies.

Beyond encouraging governments to open up their borders and reduce export tariffs, the *Road map* supports the 1997 *Kyoto Protocol*, an international UN treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and believes in creating an additional market where emissions become a tradable commodity (U.N., 2001). The *Road map* views the protocol as a market solution for reducing rising CO₂ emission levels and reversing the global temperature increases resulting from greenhouse gases. In this **neoliberal** market, each country and company is allotted a number of carbon credits (amount of emissions they are allowed to release into the atmosphere each year). If countries or companies run out of credits, they may purchase unused credits from other countries or companies.

The theory behind emission trading is the creation of a market for emissions and limiting the amount a company can emit increases the expense of releasing pollutants into the air (Reyes & Gilbertson, 2010). While this may seem logical in reducing the overall greenhouse gas emissions, it fails to force companies to change their modes of production to become more environmentally friendly because companies may “find it cheaper to buy the excess credits than install new pollution-abatement equipment” (U.N., 2001, p. 32). Further, emissions trading allows large organizations to claim a global reduction in carbon emissions while ensuring industries in the developed world do not suffer a decline in production and profits due to governmental regulation of greenhouse gasses (Reyes & Gilbertson, 2010).

Goal Eight: Global Partnership for Development

Goal 8 contains the heart of the neoliberal ideology within the MDGs. First, goal 8, target 12 requests lifting restrictions of exportation and trade, enabling the flow of goods and natural resources in and out of these countries. Similarly, target 13 describes the need to ensure the least developed countries do not have tariffs for the export of their goods, potentially encouraging local businesses to expand and ship goods into the global economy. Indicator 40 of target 13 requires increasing the amount of ODA for countries focused on increasing trade capacity, thus reinforcing integration into the global economy. While these targets and indicators address the surface level **neoliberal** ideals, it should be noted many more appear in *Road map*.

Although the World Bank and IMF have provided loans and debt relief to heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs), *Road map* explicitly suggests they will only “provide relief to eligible countries (the HIPCs) once they meet a range of conditions that should enable them to service the residual debt through export earnings, aid and capital inflows” (U.N., 2001, p. 28). This statement demonstrates the need for HIPCs to fall in line with **neoliberal** conditions and ideals of the World Bank or risk defaulting on their loans, placing their country at risk for future loan obtainment. In this case, many of the HIPCs will restructure their governments to fall in line with **neoliberal** systems.

Similarly, target 13, indicator 41 calls for the reduction or cancellation of bilateral debt. Although this appears **Keynesian** on the surface, further examination uncovers the promotion of **neoliberal** ideology in its structure. In order for countries to gain debt relief they must create and adopt poverty reduction strategy papers, which aim to show their

country's commitment to poverty reduction in a capitalistic market driven way, such as increasing global market access.

Additionally, goal 8 promotes universal and affordable access to information and communication technologies. While goal 8 inspires countries to join the global economy by increasing connectedness to other countries, the UN Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, an initiative of the UN aimed at bridging the global digital divide, also emphasizes its ability to make cyberspace more culturally diverse. Argued from a **Keynesian** lens, diversification of the web exposes individuals to new learning communities, enabling more informed decisions concerning issues impacting them specifically and their country generally. For instance the ability of individuals to learn and incorporate different ways of farming may help produce greater crop outputs (U.N., 2000c).

Criticisms

Both a critic and supporter, Jan Vandemoortele, one of the developers of the MDGs, maintains the need to limit the power of the World Bank, IMF and the OECD in the formulation of the SDGs (Vandemoortele, 2012). He suspects including these voices inhibits the ability to provide equal perspective during goal development where developing countries' opinions are relegated. Such relegation may reduce the effectiveness of development solutions, as it allows for developing countries to more easily and out rightly reject the MDGs. Vandemoortele suggests the concern of a technocratic and overly donor-centric approach to the formulation of the MDGs can be kept in check as long as the UN limits the ability of external actors to sway future goals.

Additionally, Vandemoortele points out that although the MDGs measurability and conciseness aided in their longevity, certain numerical indicators are unable to be precisely measured (Vandemoortele, 2002). For example, without an operationalization of the terms, "poverty," "slum dweller," or "safe water," their corresponding goals and targets cannot be proven as achieved because they are unable to determine how many people fall into each category before and after implementation (Vandemoortele, 2002). Similarly, Vandemoortele contests the groups charged with measuring the goals are those whose influence is necessary to reduce. Allowing organizations such as the World Bank or the IMF to monitor progress of certain goals facilitates both intentional and unintentional "cherry picking" of the data and deriving opinions about and solutions for the MDGs based on logical fallacies.

Vandemoortele demonstrates how subtle neoliberal problem-solution frames reside within the goals. Academics Suzan Ilcan and Lynne Phillips also critique the neoliberalism inherent in some aspects of the MDGs, suggesting three forms of influence: "information profiling, responsibilitization, and knowledge networks" (Ilcan & Phillips, 2010, p. 4). First, similar to Vandemoortele, they indicate the increasing use of statistics and measuring new areas of interest has led to finding a multitude of additional "problems." Furthermore, unveiling new problems allows organizations to determine which problems and areas are most pressing. In doing so, international organizations such as the World Bank or IMF create value for themselves as "experts" on the issue and suggest solution frames corresponding to their underlying economic values (Ilcan & Phillips, 2010).

Second, Ilcan and Phillips (2010) argue the goals convince people in developing countries they can solve their own problems and are therefore responsible for seeking solutions. When searching for answers, these individuals uncover neoliberal fixes offered by the major international organizations. Last, the rise of technology and mobile phone usage has facilitated the spread of neoliberal problem-solution frames (Ilcan & Phillips, 2010). Neoliberal organizations no longer need a physical presence, permitting their ability to govern and influence from a distance, allowing easier mass ideological dissemination. However, it could also be argued technological advancements have enabled access to non-neoliberal solutions as well. Beyond direct criticisms of the goals, various individuals have criticized the ideologies of the organizations that helped create, and are responsible for, monitoring the MDGs.

Explicitly representing Keynesian ideology is former World Bank Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz. His emphatic disapproval of the World Bank's policies and procedures led him to resign from his position in 2000 (Stiglitz, 2007). Stiglitz affirms the major financial organizations do not listen to the developing countries they attempt to assist. In addition, he argues the World Bank and the IMF are not subjected to democratic accountability, as their inner-workings are kept secret from the public eye (Stiglitz, 2000). Because of this secrecy, he contends the World Bank and the IMF are able to reduce the criticisms regarding their policies thereby maintaining their dominant position in the world financial sector. Further, Stiglitz points out that globalization has brought great benefits to certain countries but the economic model of increased access to markets and technology are not suited for all countries and leaves many in further economic, social, and political difficulties (Stiglitz, 2002).

While Stiglitz feels globalization proceeded unevenly, another former World Bank economist, William Easterly, a follower of the neoliberal Chicago School of Economics, contends the failures of the MDGs do not stem from the economic model. Rather, he suggests the wording of the targets and inability of governments to provide incentives to local businesses for following neoliberal economic models contributes to their defeat. Easterly maintains the primary shortcoming of the goals is their unfairness to Africa (Easterly, 2009). He argues the MDGs do not adequately describe the positive growth in the region and instead highlight their failure. He points to goal 1 to emphasize his argument suggesting the placement of an arbitrary line to measure the amount of people in poverty negates the acknowledgement of movement in the direction of the line but fails to cross it. Additionally, Easterly asserts goal 1 lacks information concerning how far people move above the line.

Second, he claims the semantic choice of utilizing proportions rather than absolute numbers hides extensive growth in countries with low starting percentiles. For instance, decreasing poverty from 50% to 35% is a greater absolute change than a reduction from 10% to 5%, yet the goals would measure the second reduction as more successful than the first (Easterly, 2009). Third, he argues that backdating the MDGs to 1990 is unfair to Africa because the vast economic growth in East Asia and parts of South America during the 90s makes it seem as though these areas have achieved great growth since the formation of the MDGs, whereas Africa has seen little.

His last critique describes how initially low per capita averages require much larger economic growth rates to achieve the same decreases in poverty level. This results because low per capita countries have averages lower than the poverty rate, thus moving

people above the line requires a much larger percentage increase in per capita. He concludes by stating, “Africa has enough problems without international organizations and campaigners downplaying African progress when it happens” (Easterly, 2009, p. 20).

Richard Manning, former Chair of the OECD’s DAC and former Alternative Director at the World Bank, and creator of the International Development Goals (IDGs) that were used to develop the MDGs, takes a slightly different perspective. Although his actions as a member of the OECD displayed seemingly neoliberal characteristics, his opinions on the MDGs and SDGs appear to differ. Manning describes the goals as achieving an excessive amount of credit for economic and social successes in the world, arguing many programs and efforts are in existence and doing great work regardless of the implementation of the MDGs (Manning, 2009). Further, he believes the goals do not provide adequate specificity regarding the placement of donor funds, causing them to be placed outside of the productive sectors and infrastructure. Manning provides suggestions for future considerations of SDGs development.

First, he argues the goals need a major emphasis on the reduction of poverty through sustainable means (Manning, 2009). In-line with Easterly, he maintains countries should be invited to set their own targets for the goals, thereby ensuring a more fair assessment of goal attainment. In addition, he asserts the goals need to address the problem of relative poverty rather than absolute poverty. Doing so, he says, would encourage a discussion about income inequality in the developed world, rather than solely focusing on developing countries. Last, he claims goal 8 needs radical revision. Manning argues the goals cannot “demand the same degree of trade openness or resource

transfer for countries whose economic situations are objectively very different”
(Manning, 2009, p. 12).

In 2014, former Assistant Secretary General and Special Advisor to Kofi Annan, Michael W. Doyle, another MDGs creator, along with Joseph Stiglitz, provided an informative piece calling for the inclusion of “eliminating extreme inequality” in the SDGs (Doyle & Stiglitz 2014). They argue income inequalities hinder economic growth through a decrease in aggregate demand, driving economic bubbles leading to economic instability and potential depression. Moreover, they assert inequalities decrease public sector funding for technology, infrastructure, and education. As a result, an uneducated population is increasingly unable to contribute to democracy and is more likely to resort to conflict as a means of resolution. This affirmation is explained in the passage, “policies that aim for growth but ignore inequality may ultimately be self-defeating, whereas policies that decrease inequality by, for example, boosting employment and education have beneficial effects on the human capital that modern economies increasingly need” (Doyle and Stiglitz, 2014, p. 3). Given this stance, the two propose an additional goal nine, “Eliminate extreme inequality at the national level in every country” (Doyle and Stiglitz, 2014, p. 4).

Although the critiques presented highlighted some of the shortcomings of the MDGs, they fail to criticize the goals from a feminist perspective. Liberal feminist Gita Sen, Professor of Public Health at Harvard, provides a striking critique of the MDGs and is currently involved in the SDGs discussion. Sen (2013) begins by addressing a more comprehensive concern asserting the segmentation of the goals diminished each goal’s interconnectedness. As such, she advocates gender equality cuts across, and is essential

for, the success of each goal and consequently suggests the SDGs need greater emphasis on women in order to be achieved. Beginning with goal 1, she argues that because women make up a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor, accomplishing reduction in poverty demands female centered focus.

Additionally, goals 2, 4, 6, and 7 need a similar focus, as women are more likely to: not be in school, have higher mortality rates due to gender bias, suffer from HIV/AIDS, and have to collect water in areas with deficient infrastructure. As for goal 8, Sen (2013) identifies the funding for women's organizations are in decline. While pointing out the importance of a women centered focus on many of the goals, she reveals the current MDGs target for gender disparity is much too specific. Such specificity encourages countries and donors to centralize their time, money, and efforts on equality in education, allowing them to assume the completion of this goal is equal to gender equality.

Similarly, these critiques also fail to criticize the goals from a WSF perspective. Samir Amin, director of the Third World Forum, a network of intellectuals uniting researchers and civil society to develop alternative macro and micro economic strategies that benefit the developing nations and a well-known annual attendee and distinguished voice within the WSF released a piece in 2006 entitled, "A Southern critique of the Millennium Development Goals." This critique addressed his notion that the U.S., Europe, and Japan dominate and restrict UN decision-making. As such, Amin perceived the goals as a facade for pushing the superpowers' economic agenda with minimal concern for gathering the developing countries' opinion (Amin, 2006). The liberal

feminist and WSF critiques will be more thoroughly explored and detailed within Chapter Five.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an account of the previous UN development documents proven foundational in shaping the goals, targets, and indicators present within the MDGs. Major international figures Kofi Annan, Jan Vandemoortele, and Richard Manning's view of development through specific economic lenses, Keynesianism and neoliberalism, forged specific strategies, programs, practices, and language within the MDGs affecting their method of deployment. Furthermore, this chapter also acknowledged the prevalence of international organizations, the World Bank, IMF and OECD, and their programs, namely structural adjustment programs, and practices, such as emissions trading that both shaped and were strengthened by the implementation of the MDGs.

Deductively, this chapter sequentially analyzed and denoted places where language characteristic of Keynesianism, neoliberalism, liberal feminism and WSF were employed within the MDGs. Keynesianism dominates goal 2, suggesting advances in the population's health and reductions in birth rates are contingent upon producing an educated populace, and government run and enacted programs provide the best method for achieving such aims. Contrarily, goal 8, despite integrating Keynesian ideology through diversification of the Internet, harbored the most evident and pervasive implementation and exercise of neoliberal problem-solution frames. Also, it continually suggests the gross expansion of economies through boosted international trade as a means

for reaching reductions in poverty and hunger (goal 1), and lowering environmentally degrading chemicals, mainly greenhouse gases (goal 7).

This chapter concluded by highlighting some prominent criticisms of the MDGs. Most notably, it addressed the MDGs failure to effectively capture the voices and desires of all people throughout the world, particularly those most directly affected by the goals, likely minimizing their effectiveness. Moreover, the targets both undervalue the effect the MDGs have on development and also leave out the most marginalized populations. Last, Sen (2013) and Amin (2006) suggest the success of future development framework hinges on a greater inclusion of individuals in developing countries and women who disproportionately make up the world's poor.

Through close textual examination, Chapter Four inductively highlights sustainability as a new competing social developmental paradigm that emerged in grounded form from the SDGs text, and introduces the origins of the discourse. It historically traces the development of the SDGs, identifying key documents that provided influence and structure. Chapter Four ends with a sequential analysis of the SDGs, highlighting the plantation of both dominant and competing developmental ideologies within its framework.

CHAPTER 4

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

With 2015 marking the expiration of the MDGs, the UN sought to begin discussion to reassess and readdress developmental issues. The UN recognized the world's significant changes since the implementation of the MDGs in 2001, requiring the re-evaluation of the solutions previously provided to combat such matters. In addition to a changing global landscape, the criticisms of the MDGs prompted their revision and re-articulation.

No longer focused on ushering in the new millennium with new opportunities, the connotations of the MDGs are in the process of replacement by those associated with sustainability, a dominant discourse and current theme in both the scientific and political community. First, this chapter explores the origins of sustainability and how it became a dominant framing device for the revised goals. In addition, this chapter analyzes the extent to which the sustainability paradigm actually produces adjustments to the types of policies and the strategies that are deployed. Deductively, and similar to Chapter Three, this chapter interrogates the degree to which the dominant **Keynesianism** and **neoliberalism** economic discourses, and their resisting discourses, **feminism** and **WSF**, continue to thread the UN developmental paradigm, shaping and inflecting the **deployment** of the SDGs while also exploring their inflection by the **sustainability** paradigm grounded in the text.

Origins of UN Formulations of “Sustainability”

Before delving into a historical tracing of the SDGs and the documents guiding and shaping their formulation, sustainability as a discourse garners greater explanation.

Historically, the concept of sustainability pervaded UN conferences since the late 1980s. During the 80s, neoliberal economic policies initiated by President Reagan promoted unprecedented globalized economic growth (Steger and Roy, 2010). However, the environmental policies of the 1970s were unable to keep up with such massive economic changes to the global landscape, resulting in a period of increasing environmental degradation (Steger and Roy, 2010).

In 1987, in response to the substantial deterioration of natural resources and the environment, the UN held a conference called Human Environment, which produced a 383 page document entitled “*Our Common Future*,” also known as the Brundtland Report, examining critical issues pertaining to both the environment and development and formulated solutions to address them (U.N., 1987). In addition, it provided the first full conceptualization by the UN for the meaning of sustainable development, defining the term as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (U.N., 1987, p. 41). More specifically, it described sustainable development as composed of three overlapping areas, social, environmental, and economic, where unequal focus in any category diminishes abilities of current and future generations to meet their needs. This trifecta is sometimes discerned as “People, Planet, Profit,” or “Triple Bottom Line” and is commonly used by companies to assess the effect of policies and decisions on the social community, the environment, and the economic value to the company (Elkington, 1997). This denotation is used within this thesis during the SDGs analysis to mark the specific component of sustainability each goal references.

Most recently, exponential increases in technological innovation and population growth, coupled with globalization, produced substantial and scientifically troublesome increases in greenhouse gas emission and environmental deterioration. As a result, sustainability has been re-popularized in the social and political fields, leading the UN to encapsulate and structure their post-2015 development agenda around the concept.

Historical Tracing of the SDGs

In 2010, nine years after the implementation of the MDGs, the UN convened for the MDGs Summit, a meeting to discuss the progress of, and challenges to, achieving the goals, suggesting great improvements were made in reducing the level of poverty worldwide but many countries remain expected to fail in reaching the goals (U.N., 2010). Further, as discussed in Chapter Three, many felt the MDGs lack of inclusion and transparency inhibited various countries from goal attainment, as their technocratic “one size fits all” approach proved overly simplistic and unfit for the developmental situations of all countries. The MDGs Summit’s resolution document, *Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, provided an action plan for meeting the MDGs and requested the UN Secretary General begin planning a development agenda for beyond 2015.

At the decennial Earth Summit in 2012, more commonly referred to as the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, Secretary General Ban Ki Moon called for UN member nations to recommit to, and adjust the principles of, sustainable development as previously conceptualized within the 1992 Earth Summit outcome document *Agenda 21* and the 2002 Earth Summit outcome document *Johannesburg Declaration* (U.N., 2012). Additionally, the Rio+20 encouraged Secretary General Moon

and the UN to begin the intergovernmental process of preparing the new structured sustainable development agenda, to later be known as the SDGs. Facilitating this process, the Rio+ 20 outcome document, “*The Future We Want*,” called for the establishment of two groups: Open Working Group (OWG) and High-Level Panel (U.N., 2012).

First, a 30-member OWG was created, representing 72 countries. The OWG was specifically designed to prepare a geographically “fair, equitable and balanced” proposal for the SDGs (U.N., 2012). Second, a 27-member group known as the High-Level Panel, co-led by Former President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Prime Minister of the U.K., David Cameron, and Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was tasked to oversee the OWG development of the framework for the SDGs. In addition to the formation of these two groups, *The Future We Want* highlighted the need to provide greater inclusion of all people within the forthcoming UN developmental processes (U.N., 2012). As a result, it suggested the UN produce a document amplifying the voice of marginalized individuals in addition to providing spaces for all people to voice an opinion about their present developmental concerns.

In September 2013, in response to *The Future We Want* requests for greater inclusion, the UN released a document entitled, *A Million Voices: The World We Want*, which catalogued their efforts to ensure all voices were heard during the development of the future goals, especially those impoverished and marginalized (U.N., 2013a). The UN held 88 national consultations and 11 thematic consultations around the world, inviting governments, think tanks, NGOs, civil society, and academics to generate conversations and gather input concerning the post-2015 development framework (U.N., 2013a).

In addition to *A Million Voices*, the UN simultaneously published the website, WorldWeWant2015.org. This site attempted to enable “people to engage, visualise and analyse people’s voices on sustainable development,” through the use of two polls aimed at gathering the voices of people not included in the “*A Million Voices*” publication (“The World We Want,” 2015). The first poll, “The United Nations Global Survey For A Better World” also known as the “My World Survey,” invites individuals to rate the top six issues, out of a possible 16 that matter most to them and their family. The list includes: protecting forests, rivers, and oceans; better transport and roads; an honest and responsive government; equality between men and women; political freedoms; protection against crime and violence; affordable and nutritious food; action taken on climate change; better healthcare; reliable energy at home; freedom from discrimination and persecution; access to clean water and sanitation; phone and internet access; a good education; better job opportunities; support for people who can’t work and finally, suggest a priority, which is optional (“Have Your Say,” 2014). The second poll, the SDG Score Card, enables individuals to rank the proposed SDGs on their ambition, likeliness to spur action, and how accountable they hold countries (“Sustainable Development Goals Score Card,” 2015). These surveys, in combination with *A Million Voices*, carry potential to allow for the SDGs to be driven by the voices and opinions of all people but as demonstrated in Chapter Five, have numerous pitfalls.

The Proposed Post-2015 SDGs

In 2014, utilizing the aforementioned documents (*Agenda 21, Johannesburg Declaration, the World We Want, and A Million Voices*), as well as the "My World Survey," the UN OWG released a document entitled *Open Working Group proposal for*

Sustainable Development Goals. This document proposes 17 all encompassing development goals set forth to:

- 1) End poverty
- 2) End hunger and achieve food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture
- 3) Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being
- 4) Ensure inclusive and quality education for all
- 5) Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls
- 6) Ensure availability of water and sustainable water systems
- 7) Ensure access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for all
- 8) Promote sustained economic growth and work for all
- 9) Build resilient infrastructure and promote sustainable industrialization
- 10) Reduce inequality within and among countries
- 11) Make cities and human settlements safe, resilient and sustainable
- 12) Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- 13) Take action to combat climate change
- 14) Conserve and sustainably use the oceans and its resources for sustainable development
- 15) Protect and promote use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, and combat desertification, degradation and diversity loss
- 16) Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and build accountable institutions
- 17) Strengthen the means of implementing and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development (OWG SDGs, 2014).

Additionally, targets were developed to concentrate efforts on specific components of each goal. It should be noted that the SDGs lack articulation of the distinction between numerical- and alphabetical-based targets. As indicated on the UN webpage, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) is the point of contact to answer this inquiry. When questioning the discrepancy, UN DESA sent a referral to the Division for Sustainable Development who sent the following email, “Dear Janie, Unfortunaely [sic] we are not able to provide intepretation [sic], as we are not the relevant office for that. Please contact the office of DESA” (S. Venson, personal communication, 2015).

Discourse Deployment

This section will textually analyze where the previously defined economic and political paradigms, **Keynesian**, **neoliberal**, **liberal feminist**, and **WSF** ideologies are **redeployed** within of the SDGs. Analysis also focuses on the incorporation of the new discourse of **sustainability**. Although one could argue, by definition, that sustainability is an all-encompassing discourse, relevant to every goal and target, only the most overt **deployments** will be analyzed and specified as specifically concerning “**People, Planet and/or Profit**,” the previously mentioned trifecta. Paralleling Chapter Three, discussion of ideologies will occur sequentially within the goals, addressing targets that instantiate neoliberal, Keynesian, liberal feminist, WSF, and sustainability problem-solution frames.

As previously outlined, the aforementioned markers signaling neoliberalism include an emphasis on economic de-regulation, complete privatization, free trade, and a reduction in government size and spending for the creation of a strong private sector. Keynesianism is identified within the goals as a focus on aggregate demand, increasing

government run agencies to prevent mass-market fluctuations, and problems of wealth distribution. Liberal feminist ideology is discerned by a focus on the influence of women in the economy as well as the development of human capital through the implementation of education and social welfare programs. WSF discourse denotation is characterized by language regarding the peaceful increases in human rights for all, the amplification and inclusion of voices marginalized based on sex, ethnicity, or race, in addition to frameworks emphasizing inclusive ownership and local decision-making.

Finally, based historically on the UN conceptualization of sustainable development, deployment of **sustainable discourse** within the SDGs is recognized by certain words and concepts specific to an emphasis on the employment of green technological advancements, such as renewable energy sources, environmental restrictions preventing land and water degradation, and financially responsible economic practices that ensure prosperity for today and the future.

Goal One: End Poverty

Beginning with goal 1, “end poverty in all its forms everywhere,” the *Open Working Group Proposal* sets a target of reducing by half, the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty, according to national definitions by 2030. Utilizing the terminology “according to national definitions” portrays a shift in thinking from the MDGs, extending their reach by placing responsibility of poverty reduction on all nations across the globe rather than solely developing countries.

Driving this movement towards poverty reduction was a UN document released in 2013 entitled, “*Report on the World Social Situation: Inequality Matters*,” highlighting the need for countries to reduce growing inequalities between countries and within

countries (U.N., 2013b). The report goes on to argue income inequality leads to differences in accessibility to healthcare and educational opportunities, thereby perpetuating “intergenerational transmission of unequal economic and social opportunities, creating poverty traps, wasting human potential, and resulting in less dynamic, less creative societies” (U.N., 2013b, p. 22). Additionally, it suggests income inequality is harmful for all individuals, rich and poor, as it stifles and creates reductions in aggregate demand, slowing down a country’s economic growth. This thought process reflects the **Keynesian** desire to increase demand through a more even distribution of wealth, thus reducing social and political tension and facilitating sustainable national economic growth (Inequality Matters, 2013). Moreover, it elucidates people’s views of the current austerity measures many countries are implementing as “draconian” and causing a growth in dissatisfaction and wariness in governments. Decreasing the vast divide in income inequality across the globe is described as foundational for achieving additional targets within goal 1.

Furthermore, *Inequality Matters* underlines the consequences of failing to reduce inequalities, namely an increase in vulnerability, directly impacting the ability to accomplish target 5 of goal 1, as people are unable to acquire the resources necessary to lift themselves from disaster situations (U.N., 2013b, p. 22). This target aims to increase the resilience of poor individuals by reducing their exposure and vulnerability to “economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters,” which stems from the **people-focused sustainability** discourse (OWG SDGs, 2014). *Inequality Matters* goes on to argue defenseless populations increase the likelihood of violence between income groups because individuals can see the striking differences in wealth (U.N., 2013b). The

UN believes if rising inequalities are left unimpeded they “can undermine the very foundations of development and social and domestic peace” (The United Nations Development Program, 2014, p. 1).

In addition, large gaps in income inequality can be attributed to differences in opportunities available to men and women. From a **liberal feminist** perspective, this problem is illustrated in target 4, which aims to ensure men and women “have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and finance services, including microfinance” (OWG SDGs, 2014, p. 7).

Historically, this target stems from the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. This conference, and its resultant outcome document *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, demands gender equality and the empowerment of women across the globe. Specifically, it claims the UN is determined to “ensure women’s equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication, and markets” (U.N., 1995, p. 10). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* argues the exclusion of women’s contributions to markets perpetuates sex-based inequalities due to perceived value differences between men and women, with men deemed more valuable to the economy (U.N., 1995). Such value differences negate and underestimate the role women contribute to development, potentially repressing societies from future developmental processes (U.N., 1995). Barriers contributing to poverty for women not only inhibit their ability to support their livelihood but also hinder their capacity to acquire and ingest sufficient nutritional sustenance.

Goal Two: End Hunger

Beyond a reduction in poverty, goal 2 of the SDGs aims to reduce both the number and percent of individuals, in particular women and children, suffering from hunger-based malnutrition. Setting a target of ending malnutrition by 2025, goal 2 contains special emphasis on meeting adolescent girl's and pregnant and lactating women's needs (OWG SDGs, 2014). This focus of meeting nutritional needs of mothers and children, especially from birth to age two, is considered paramount in helping improve and ensure the health and welfare of a society (U.N., 2013a).

While this rhetoric appears to have marginally changed from the MDGs, new targets assist to facilitate their achievement by encouraging certain sustainable methods of development. For example, targets 4 and 5 convey the realization that without sustainable food systems, in the form of resilient agricultural practices such as genetic diversification, both production and people become vulnerable when facing changing environmental conditions, a perspective characteristic of **people-, planet-, and profit-based sustainability** (OWG SDGs, 2014). Target B of the goal involves the prevention of trade restrictions, an inherently neoliberal ideology, to ensure people all around the world have access to food. As discussed in Chapter Two, the idea of lifting all trade related barriers is foundational to the neoliberal agenda. Also within target B is the proposal for the elimination of agricultural export subsidies (OWG SDGs, 2013). This **neoliberal** suggestion aims to reduce the amount of extremely low-priced food dumped into the global marketplace, helping medium and small farmers sell their produce at fair prices.

Goal Three: Ensure Healthy Lives

Meeting the nutritional needs of mothers through the implementation of more sustainable food systems could facilitate a move towards achieving goal 3, target 1 of reducing the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births. This ideologically **liberal feminist** and **people-focused sustainability** target was first addressed in the MDGs but now attempts to reduce the maternal mortality ratio from the previous goal of 95 to the new goal of 70. Based on *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, women in many developing economies around the world lack access to emergency obstetric care, creating potentially dangerous and life threatening complications for expecting mothers and are “among the leading causes of mortality and morbidity of women of reproductive age” (U.N., 1995, p. 36).

The lack of reproductive care for women also demonstrates the gross healthcare inadequacies present in many countries around the world. Goal 3, target 8 calls for universal healthcare and access to basic medical services and medicines for all individuals (OWG SDGs, 2014). *A Million Voices* discusses the importance of public health in relation to achieving sustainable development, suggesting it cannot be achieved without a healthy populace, a **people-focused sustainable discourse** (U.N., 2013a). Further, deterioration in health infrastructure has been attributed to reductions in public health spending and structural adjustment (U.N., 1995).

From a **Keynesian** perspective, increasing the well-being of the public requires governmental spending to bolster health services available to individuals, as private enterprises fail to expand to developing regions due to limited financial returns on investments. Further, because of the profit-driven nature of private companies, health

services would be limited solely to wealthy individuals able to afford care (U.N., 1995). In addition to retroactive methods for increasing the health and well-being of individuals, target 9 takes a sustainable and proactive approach to health by calling for a reduction in the number of deaths attributed to human induced environmental hazards, such as pollution of water and air (OWG SDGs, 2014). This **people- and planet-focused sustainability** perspective appears in *Agenda 21*, which cites the environmental pollution, specifically in urban areas, as a main contributor to the rise in morbidity and mortality (U.N., 1993). In order to mitigate these outcomes, the UN calls on national governments, a **Keynesian** ideology, to develop new political and technical committees centered on environmental hazards and to increase the size of monitoring programs, ensuring environmental regulations and standards are being upheld (U.N., 1993).

As previously discussed in goal 6 of the MDGs, goal 3 of the SDGs reaffirms the importance of TRIPS to protect international property rights. From a **Keynesian** perspective, however, it still emphasizes the importance of enabling developing governments to provide their people with affordable and accessible medicines and vaccines to prevent the spread and incidence of various diseases, as a market-based economy may otherwise inhibit this occurrence (U.N., 1993; U.N., 2002; OWG SDGs, 2014). Creating more effective health infrastructure may also produce residual effects on other topics covered by the SDGs.

Goal Four: Inclusive and Quality Education

Within goal 4, the SDGs necessitate the completion of free and equitable primary and secondary education for all individuals, catering to **liberal feminism**, as it includes girls and boys, as well as **Keynesianism**, in proposing free education that will seemingly

be government run and sponsored. It should be noted that within the first three targets of goal 4, women/girls are placed before men/boys in the structural composition of each target sentence, suggestive of an emphasis on the importance of women when attempting to achieve this goal (OWG SDGs, 2014). This focus on girls is further signified in target 5, which seeks to eliminate gender disparities in education in hopes of increasing both the amount of women in political positions and other previously unattainable careers.

Advancing the levels of education for all individuals enables them to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for executing future sustainable development, while also reducing violence through the acceptance of diversity and increases in gender equality and human rights (OWG SDGs, 2014).

Goal Five: Gender Equality

In addition to the targets of goal 4, all of goal 5 is focused on increasing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, a main indicator of **liberal feminist** ideology. Many of the targets within this goal are carried over from *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* on the empowerment of women across the globe (U.N., 1995). Specifically, it aims to reduce discrimination, sexual violence and harmful practices such as early marriage, as well as increase women's inclusion in leadership and political roles, access to reproductive healthcare, and access to economic resources (OWG SDGs, 2014).

Goal Six: Water and Sanitation

Target 1 of goal 6, “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation,” calls for universal access to safe and affordable drinking water for all. This target, a change from a reduction in those without access as indicated in the MDGs, to universality of access, most evidently displays **people- and planet-centered**

sustainability perspectives as well as **Keynesian** ideologies in the suggested methods for goal attainment.

As specified in *Johannesburg Declaration*, water management should be accomplished through government-funded programs at the national and regional levels (U.N., 2002). Targets within this goal also advise water management should include maximizing efficiency and protection of current sources as well as the creation of new sources through technological advancements in desalination and sanitation.

Goal Seven: Sustainable Energy Access

Similarly, goal 7, target 1 necessitates “universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services” by 2030 (OWG SDGs, 2014). *Johannesburg Declaration* also calls upon governments to provide access to affordable and efficient energy (Johannesburg, 2002). Beyond supplying energy access to individuals, goal 7 aims to ensure energy is created in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, it promotes investments in technology and infrastructure enabling increases in energy efficiency and sustainable production, especially in developing regions, characteristic of both **Keynesian** and **planet-focused sustainability** ideologies (OWG SDGs, 2014).

Goal Eight: Sustained and Sustainable Economic Growth

The majority of goal 8 emphasizes the importance of providing employment opportunities for all and ensuring a constantly growing economy, similar to what is found in goal 8 of the MDGs. It suggests increasing “Aid for Trade,” where nations are provided aid in return for opening up trade within their country, something akin to the **neoliberal** structural adjustment programs (OWG SDGs, 2014). However, from a **Keynesian** and **planet-focused sustainability** perspective, target 4 as well as *Agenda 21*

make it very clear that economic growth through increases in production and consumption should not come at the expense of environmental degradation. Additionally, it suggests that governments should seek to change institutional structures “in order to enable more systematic consideration of the environment when” economic decisions are made, and it also motivates developed countries to lead this movement (U.N., 1992), (OWG SDGs, 2014).

Goal Nine: Resilient Infrastructure and Sustainable Industrialization

Keynesian ideologies can be found in goal 9, target 5, which requests governments to increase their spending on scientific research, thereby encouraging innovation necessary for industrialization (OWG SDGs, 2014). Despite industrialization as seemingly necessary for development, if left unchecked it can lead to large inequalities within and among countries. Stemming from *Johannesburg Declaration*, target A calls for technological and financial support to African countries in an effort to establish resilient and sustainable infrastructure (OWG SDGs, 2014). More generally, it aims for all nations to create new or adapt current infrastructure to be more **planet-focused sustainable**.

Goal Ten: Reduce Inequality within and among countries

Goal 10, target 5 suggests, through a **Keynesian** and **profit-focused sustainability** lens, that global financial markets and institutions should be monitored and regulated to reduce the possibility of gross inequalities. However, also within goal 10, target B encourages ODA and financial flows from private sources to areas of great need, such as those in sub-Saharan African countries (OWG SDGs, 2014). Although not all ODA has strings attached, many, particularly those in the form of loans, require funds

be allocated towards very specific projects, such as building transportation infrastructure. Some of these requirements enable the proliferation of private enterprises to tout **neoliberal** agendas within the country accepting assistance.

From a **WSF** perspective, goal 10 provides two targets that aim to increase human rights and amplify voice. Specifically, target 2 promotes social, political, and economic inclusion of all individuals regardless of “age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status” (OWG SDG, 2014). Additionally, target 6 calls for including the voice of developing countries in international economic and financial decision-making processes, potentially increasing the inclusion of their ideas and opinions, a main tenant of the WSF.

Goal Eleven: Inclusive, Safe and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements

While a growing urban populace requires the induction of more sustainable infrastructures, urbanization also requires enhancing people’s living spaces. Encompassed in the term living spaces is the need for inclusive and green public spaces for city dwellers to use (OWG SDGs, 2014). Little mention of this is made within *Johannesburg Declaration*, but *Agenda 21* calls on governments to appropriate these spaces into city development plans, a **Keynesian** and **people-centered sustainable** ideal (U.N., 1992).

Goal Twelve: Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

In addition to establishing sustainably-based infrastructure and public spaces, the SDGs lobby for greater **planet-focused sustainable** production patterns by becoming more efficient in their use of natural resources and managing production byproducts to reduce chemical contamination of air, soil, and water (OWG SDGs, 2014). *Agenda 21*

provides the framework for this goal, urging governments to create programs designed to inform consumers about how to make sustainable choices when purchasing and how to manage their waste through recycling (U.N., 1992) Although outwardly **Keynesian** because of its emphasis on governments providing such programs, it is also focused on changing individuals' consumption patterns in the market and therefore could be viewed as a **neoliberal-based** solution. Further, the **Keynesian** ideal of relying on government also supports the creation of domestic policies that encourage private sector businesses to minimize the amount of energy needed and waste created to produce their goods (U.N., 1992). These same suggestions are reiterated in *Johannesburg Declaration* (U.N., 2002).

Goal Thirteen: Action to Combat Climate Change

One of the most discussed and debated topics regarding sustainable development is global climate change. Goal 13 aims to increase awareness and education on climate change, encourage governments to implement policies addressing climate change, and strengthen the resilience of individuals and communities for when climate related disasters occur (OWG SDGs, 2014). Specifically, *Johannesburg Declaration* suggests traditional and indigenous knowledge are necessary to mitigate the effects of disasters (U.N., 2002). Advocating for education through governmental intervention embodies **Keynesian, WSF, and both people- and planet-centered sustainability** ideologies.

Goal Fourteen: Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine

Resources

Goal 14 also contains targets employing **planet-based sustainability, Keynesian,** and **neoliberal** problem-solution frames. For instance, targets 4, 5, and 6 address the importance of increasing and upholding government regulations on fishing practices to

ensure marine life health and viability (OWG SDGs, 2014). However, target B also encourages the increase in market access for small-scale fisheries, seemingly accomplished through **neoliberal** removal of restrictions on small businesses. In return, it appears as though this may increase the desire of small fisheries to increase their catch sizes because of newfound success in the marketplace, thereby depleting marine fisheries.

Goal Fifteen: Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems

Similarly, goal 15 promotes the sustainable management of land and forested areas to prevent deforestation and desertification, a **planet-centered sustainability** discourse (OWG SDGs, 2014). However, the method by which this is to be achieved remains absent and requires exploration of *Johannesburg Declaration* to provide insight. This document promotes the enlargement of government, a **Keynesian** ideal, in order to adopt policies that implement and enforce laws against unsustainable land management practices (U.N., 2002). In addition, it suggests the international community, including private sources, should help provide technical and financial support to developing countries undertaking these measures (U.N., 2002).

Goal Sixteen: Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development

In goal 16, WSF discourse is found in targets 7 and 8. Both targets aim to increase the inclusion and participation of developing countries in global decision-making and governing processes (OWG SDGs, 2014). This focus on inclusion potentially amplifies the voice of marginalized individuals in developing countries, a main objective of the **WSF**.

Goal Seventeen: Revitalize Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Goal 17 compartmentalizes various components that are necessary for achieving the SDGs. The first component discussed within the targets of goal 17 is financial. Target 2 reiterates the **Keynesian** inspired importance of developed countries meeting the agreed upon amount of 0.7% gross national income (GNI) given to developing countries, with a larger portion of that figure directed at the least developed countries (OWG SDGs, 2014). At the same time, conversely, target 4 aims to reduce indebtedness of the least developed countries through financing and debt restructuring, methods potentially lending themselves to the **neoliberal** structural adjustment programs provided and enforced by the World Bank and the IMF (OWG SDGs, 2014).

Most notably, targets 10, 11, and 12 discuss the importance of removing restrictions on trade in an effort to increase the amount of exports flowing out of developing countries. This **neoliberal** plan suggests countries remain undeveloped because of restricted market access, thus creating open markets will allow for an unprecedented level of economic growth and development, subsequently boosting the ability of nations to achieve other SDGs more easily.

CHAPTER 5

THE RESPONSE

Thus far, this thesis has analyzed the discourses governing and shaping economic and social policy on poverty and development institutionalized within the MDGs and SDGs. These discourses and their preferred methods were deductively identified in Chapter Three and Chapter Four as shaping the problem-solution frames for the eradication of poverty. Though liberal feminist and WSF discourses are evident within the MDGs they continuously challenge neoliberal and Keynesian problem-solution frames of poverty and aim to produce greater contributions to UN formulations and policy responses to the historically important poverty and development concepts.

This chapter begins by highlighting liberal feminist and WSF criticisms of the MDGs and proceeds to directly assess and evaluate the extent of UN openness and responsiveness to these criticisms within the development of, and deployments within, the SDGs. In addition, this chapter highlights new criticisms of the SDGs and exposes contradictory targets in their formulation. This chapter concludes by reviewing previous chapters, discusses this project's limitations, and addresses potential future directions for analysis.

Re-Discussion of the Liberal Feminist and WSF Discourses

As previously discussed in Chapter Two, dominant economic discourses do not monopolize the social field of development. This thesis specifically focuses on liberal feminist and WSF critiques that present competing values, representations, and problem-solution frames resisting and contesting the dominant economic discourses inherent within the MDGs and SDGs. Although liberal feminism can also be analyzed as an

economic discourse as argued in Chapter Two, it predominantly acts as a broader social developmental perspective within this thesis generally and this chapter specifically.

As referenced in prior chapters, liberal feminist discourse deployment is recognized by an emphasis of often ignored characteristics of social life and human behavior directly and indirectly affecting economics and personal rights. Traditionally, liberal feminism centers on women's subjugated position in society. While liberal feminists and WSF discourses occasionally overlap in referencing inclusion and amplification of marginalized individuals, certain characteristics provide clear distinctions. For instance, the WSF emphasizes inclusive ownership and locally controlled decision-making. Further, the WSF heavily criticizes the overly broad application of neoliberal policy agenda, citing the importance and influence of national, regional, and local differences on economic success. This distinction demonstrates this thesis' selective appropriation of feminist discourse, enabling the application of eco-feminism as a variant of feminism that coincides closely with the WSF discourse.

Liberal Feminists Criticisms of the MDGs

Although there are many variants of feminist ideology, each with differing problem-solution frames, the most widely circulated criticisms of the MDGs were produced by individuals adopting a liberal feminist approach. As previously mentioned in Chapter Three, Gita Sen argues the necessity of integrating specific women-centered goals and policies in the developmental framework, suggesting their absence hinders development since women represent the majority of severely marginalized individuals. Further, Sen (2013) contends the attainment of MDGs goals 2 and 3 still leave women subjugated due to the narrow definition of gender equality. Additionally, Sen and

Mukherjee (2013) assert the MDGs focus on increasing women's health and education access does little to increase equality if reproductive, social, political, and economic rights remain unaddressed. Sen and Mukherjee (2013) reveal how women in the Caribbean outnumber men in school but remain restricted in access to jobs, political office, decision-making positions, and pay. Additionally, they suggest this form of gender inequality remains a global concern regardless of per capita income, citing the pay disparity between men and women in the U.S. (Sen & Mukherjee, 2013).

Feminist Ashwani Saith, a Professor of Economics in Developmental Studies at the London School of Economics and former advisor to the UN, also determines this shortcoming is the result of the MDGs developmentally narrow focus on the OECD's 1996 International Development Goals (IDGs) as opposed to the 1995 *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (Sen & Mukherjee, 2013). This focus produced a severely restricted and watered-down set of measurable targets, reversing previous improvements in women's rights (Sen & Mukherjee, 2013; Barton, 2005b; Saith, 2006; Barton, 2005a). For example, women fought to include a passage concerning the right for women's control over their sexual and reproductive rights within the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* and *Millennium Declaration* (U.N., 1995). However, many liberal feminists point out this issue is completely absent in the MDGs (Sen & Mukherjee, 2013; Saith, 2006).

Similarly, Jagdish Bhagwati, a Professor of Economics at Columbia University and a board member of Human Rights Watch, contends the MDGs ignore the problem of human trafficking, an issue addressed in the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (Bhagwati, 2010). Consequently, he argues failure to include targets addressing this issue

inhibits achievement of gender equality in education (goal 3), maternal health (goal 5), and combating disease (goal 6), since trafficking increases pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease rates in young women, and restricts educational access (goal 2) (Bhagwati, 2010).

In addition, the reductionist nature of the MDGs targets is claimed to facilitate poor governmental development practices (Saith, 2006). Additionally, this reductionist nature encourages governments to allocate resources to areas and projects producing the greatest return on investment. For example, Saith (2006) argues many governments and their officials intentionally provide resources to people just below the poverty line, as doing so moves greater numbers of individuals above the arbitrary poverty line, subsequently producing the appearance of target attainment. This practice both negates the most impoverished, typically women, and further drives income inequality within nations (Saith, 2006).

In addition to goal specificity, Kanayo Ogujiuba and Fadila Jumare, Professors of Economics at University of Western Cape in South Africa and research members for the National Institute for Legislative Studies in Nigeria, assert both the MDGs and developed countries define development as simply increasing gross domestic product (GDP) rates, neglecting human-centered development issues (Ogujiuba & Jumare 2012). For instance, Doyle and Stiglitz (2014) highlight many African countries' strong GDP growth has not translated into better human rights, arguing economic growth is unevenly distributed, thereby increasing income inequality. From the liberal feminist Human Capabilities perspective, Nussbaum (2001) and Sen (1999) would contend that meeting a country's

economic needs is meaningless if it requires denying the fundamental human rights and liberties necessary to allow individuals the capability of what they can do or be.

Beyond the problems with specificity, other liberal feminists argue achievement of specific MDGs targets prevent attainment of others by neglecting to address the deeply rooted foundational problems. Specifically, Carol Barton, former coordinator for the Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice, argues the MDGs assumption that neoliberal economic policies are the best means for poverty reduction actually inhibits the formation of universal public services necessary for development (Barton, 2005b). One of the conditions developing countries are forced to abide by when accepting poverty reduction strategy papers in exchange for loans is the abatement of expenditures allocated to programs such as healthcare (Barton, 2005b). Moreover, a reduction in trade and tariff barriers creates an influx in produce, driving down local farm profits, which disproportionately affects women (Barton, 2005b).

These diminishing profits are also exacerbated by the forceful removal of agricultural subsidies as a condition for acquiring loans. Similarly, Patrick Bond, Professor of Environmental Engineering and Director of the Center for Civil Society in India, contends the removal of government subsidies reduces a source of security farmers rely on to supplement diminishing farming profits (Bond, 2006). In addition to the removal of agricultural subsidies, neoliberal policies encourage privatization, enabling large agribusinesses to buy land in developing regions, forcing women out of their traditional role as farmers (Shiva, 2004).

As discussed in Chapter Two, not all feminists hold the same ideals as the liberal variant, such as eco-feminists, which focuses on the dismantling of existing male

centered hegemonic social structures in order to maintain a better connection with nature (Kheel, 1991). While this specific sect of feminism was also found to critique the MDGs, it did not have the same impact as criticisms from the liberal feminist discourse, likely because its core tenets run perpendicular with the dominant discourses.

For example, Shiva (2005), an eco-feminist, postulates local organic farming would stimulate attainment of MDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7. She argues organic farming requires lower input costs than industrialized farming to produce the same output. Additionally, she asserts organic farming increases food security through maintaining biodiversity. As such, this reduces the costs to farmers by decreasing reliance on agribusinesses for seeds and fertilizers, thereby increasing farmers' net gain, which could reduce hunger (goal 1) and increase purchasing power for medicines aiding children (goal 4) and pregnant women (goal 5) (Shiva, 2005). Similarly, production and consumption of organic produce contributes to MDGs goals 4 and 5 by providing greater nutritional composition per unit of food (Shiva, 2005). Further, Shiva (2005) articulates organic farming reduces agricultural chemical pollution of water sources, increasing clean water access.

Finally, Shiva (2007) argues TRIPS inhibit MDGs attainment, as they allow developed countries to patent seeds grown in the developing countries, and sell them back for higher prices with restrictions. In effect, farmers become unable to afford patented seeds, reducing the profits necessary for basic health and nutritional needs. Similar to these feminist critiques, the WSF also contests neoliberal economic policies.

WSF Criticisms of the MDGs

More generally, the WSF argue the MDGs overly technocratic and top-down approach produced inadequate vocal inclusion of the countries they aim to help, and attempt to push the superpowers' economic agendas (Amin, 2006). In this way, economically dominant countries assume development or “modernization,” conceptualized as the transition towards a “high-consumption consumer economy” (Sernau, 2013, p. 66), can only proceed using their methods (Ogujiuba & Jumare, 2012). As such, developed countries assume the traditional norms and values of developing countries hinder the adoption and adaptation to technological advances that facilitate consumer economies. More specifically, the MDGs targets fail to consider each country's “historical, cultural and political circumstance” (Bhagwati, 2010), thereby prescribing inappropriate preconceived models for development (Ogujiuba & Jumare, 2012).

Beyond failing to recognize the importance of region and culture specific modes of deployment, the MDGs exhibit technocracy in the scarcity of targets directed at developed nations. When exploring the MDGs origins, this lack of focus is unsurprising. For example, Nana Poku, a Professor of African Studies at Bradford University, U.K., and Jim Whitman, Professor of Foreign Law at Yale University, highlight how the MDGs are heavily based on the IDGs (Poku & Whitman, 2011). They suggest that because the IDGs were created by and for the wealthy developed countries, their employment of neoliberal economic principles, as specified by the goals, may not be in the best interest of developing nations (Poku & Whitman, 2011).

Moreover, many individuals from the WSF, such as Paula Lucci, an economic development researcher at the Overseas Development Institute, criticize the MDGs major

focus on what actions developing countries should execute to develop (Kelegama, 2014; Lucci, 2014). Specifically, targets and indicators for MDGs 1 through 7 are directed solely at developing countries while developed countries are addressed only within goal 8; a goal lacking measurable and time bound targets and indicators. (Marshall, 2014; Bond, 2006). As such, it becomes impossible to hold developed countries accountable for their role in helping countries develop (Lucci, 2014).

The one measurable indicator within goal 8, indicator 32, encourages developed OECD countries to give the equivalent of 0.7% of their GNI as ODA. However, as of 2013, all but Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Luxembourg failed to provide this level of assistance to developing nations (“Net ODA as percentage of OECD/DAC donors GNI,” 2014). Because the vast majority of countries failed to provide ODA at this level, Saman Kelegama, an economist and the Executive Director of the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, suggests imposing sanctions against developed countries for failing to meet this target (Kelegama, 2014).

Developed countries are able to bypass providing ODA by granting debt relief in the form of debt cancellation. Bond (2006) argues this practice, specified in target 13 of goal 8, allows for developing countries to be forced to accept neoliberal economic policies in exchange for debt cancellation. Similarly, Peggy Antrobus, an economist and founding member of the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, illustrates acceptance of these conditions inhibits the ability of countries to implement programs aimed at achieving certain MDGs, such as providing access to safe drinking water and educational facilities, as reductions in taxes diminish government funds necessary for such programs (Antrobus, 2005).

The most prominent criticism of the MDGs is that the goals fail to include the voices of civil society (Bond, 2006). Additionally, it remains unclear why various goals from past summits were included while others were overlooked. If such voices are excluded, it becomes increasingly difficult to examine which goals should be deemed most essential if not all goals can be reached (Bhagwati, 2010). Bhagwati (2010) suggests the MDGs need to be rank ordered to effectively allocate resources towards goals deemed most desirable by the people within the region receiving support.

Beyond goal 8, goals 1 through 7 garnered various critiques from the WSF. For example, the achievement of goal 1, target 2, which aims to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, would still leave a proportion of the population undernourished. As described in the feminist section prior (Saith, 2006), governments are more likely to allocate resources to reduce hunger in individuals just below the Food and Agricultural Organization's definition of undernourishment. Providing aid to these individuals yields the highest return on investment such that small amounts of money produce large reductions in hunger compared to those falling far below the line. Although contained in this section, this could also be assessed as a critique from a liberal feminist perspective.

Additionally, Michael Chibba, the director of the International Centre for Development and Poverty Reduction, argues that percentage reductions fail to describe the absolute number of undernourished individuals, therefore a country could theoretically reduce this number by half but still have many undernourished (Chibba, 2011). As such, Saith (2006) recommends shifting from a percentage decrease to a complete eradication of hunger, as this would include all individuals.

Assessment of UN Responsiveness within the SDGs

The following section begins by discussing the four methods the UN is practicing to increase vocal inclusion within the development of the SDGs. These methods include *A Million Voices*, WorldWeWant.org website, and its two polls entitled, The United Nations Global Survey For A Better World, otherwise know as the “My World Survey,” and the SDG Score Card. More specifically, this section directly evaluates the degree to which these methods actually encompass the marginalized voices within the post-2015 development discussion, assessing data representativeness and exposing methodological flaws. Additionally, this section determines the degree to which marginalized voices are or are not heard within the SDGs articulation.

Although these methods appear as attempts by the UN to address criticisms of the MDGs, the mechanism by which they are carried out, as well as how they plan to be utilized in the formation of the SDGs, calls into question the legitimacy of these attempts at increasing vocal inclusion. Specifically, it appears that liberal feminist critiques find greater responsivity within the actual deployment of the SDGs compared to their developmental process. For example, the "My World Survey" is seemingly making an attempt to ensure that women are being heard, which is evident in the approximately equal number of votes cast for men and women. However, because survey distribution methodology is not fully articulated in detail, it remains unclear whether this is a product of happenstance or their sampling procedure of distributing written surveys in the field. The WSF critiques, on the other hand, were applied more within the formation of the SDGs in their attempts to increase vocal inclusion, but many of their criticisms remain

unanswered in the SDGs text itself. The subsequent sections discuss these responses in greater detail.

Response to Shortcomings in the Development of the SDGs

As previously mentioned in Chapter Four, the UN met in 2012 at Rio+20 to discuss sustainability and how development should proceed after the expiration of the MDGs at the end of 2015. At Rio+20, Secretary General Ban Ki Moon acknowledged criticisms of the MDGs and their subsequent need for improvement (U.N., 2012). As a result, the UN sought to address some of the major criticisms afforded by international actors, NGOs, and governments by focusing on increasing the voices of individuals directly affected by the goals. Consequently, the UN invited governments, think tanks, NGOs, civil society, and academics from around the world to 88 national and 11 thematic consultations to hold conversations concerning the post-2015 framework (U.N., 2013a). To summarize these events, the UN later released the previously discussed outcome document, *A Million Voices: The World We Want*.

A Million Voices, with special emphasis on the poor and marginalized, catalogued the UN outreach in communities across the globe with the intention of using their voices to guide the development of the SDGs. In total, the UN went into the communities of 36 countries in Africa, 16 countries in Asia, 16 countries in Central and South America, 8 countries in the Middle East, and 15 countries in Eastern Europe (U.N., 2013a). Their data represents voices of children, LGBT, indigenous people, trade unions, private sectors, displaced people, homeless people, farmers, prison inmates, gang members, military members, local and national decision makers, and civil society organizations.

From a liberal feminist perspective, *A Million Voices* recognizes the MDGs have become independent silos and need greater integration and focus on women's equality to achieve all goals, a previously discussed concern of Gita Sen (2013). Additionally, it admits that the MDGs failed to incorporate agreed-upon values from the *Millennium Declaration*, such as inclusion of women in decision-making processes as well as sexual and reproductive rights (U.N., 2013a). Further, paralleling the Human Capabilities approach, *A Million Voices* acknowledges economic growth and development should center its focus on human rights. Finally, this document discusses how unrestricted agricultural subsidies in rich countries dramatically oppress women farmers in developing nations by flooding the marketplace with cheap produce (U.N., 2013a).

Similarly, from a WSF perspective, *A Million Voices* suggests future international development programs should transition from GDP as the standard to assess development, to a focus on the people and environment (U.N., 2013a). In order to produce this shift towards people and planet, the UN suggest the disaggregation of data, rather than the use of national average, as these hide specific groups left behind. Further, increases in data availability should be utilized to hold governments and financial institutions accountable for achieving targets, such as ODA provided by developed countries.

Although *A Million Voices* recognizes numerous liberal feminist and WSF criticisms of the MDGs and claims they are used during the development of the SDGs, the document is not without problem. More specifically, *A Million Voices* fails to indicate the methodology by which its survey was completed. For instance, the document discusses the inclusion of numerous individuals from around the globe in the project, but

does not indicate the process by which communities were selected. Furthermore, although it lists the countries visited, it does not specify the number of voices obtained from each country. The failure to explicitly state a procedure limits the ecological validity of the sample, as it remains unclear whether such voices are representative of the global seven billion. Additionally, utilizing an invalid sample during the formation of the SDGs is likely to produce goals and targets that do not accurately capture the voices of various individuals around the world. This potentially limits individuals in developing countries' adoption of the goals, as they may feel as though the goals are top-down driven and, once again, not in their best interest.

Concurrent to *A Million Voices*, the UN produced the WorldWeWant2015.org, a website aimed at engaging and collecting viewpoints regarding sustainable development ("The World We Want," 2015). This website includes two polls for gathering the voices of those not included in the "*A Million Voices*" publication and provides individuals an opportunity to create an account in order to post to discussion boards concerning a variety of development topics ("Topics," 2015).

After signing up for an account, each participant receives an email lauding the successes of the MDGs, indicating work still to be done, and how the website "will gather the priorities of people from every corner of the world and help build a collective vision that will be used directly by the UN and world leaders to plan a new development agenda launching in 2015, one that is based on the aspirations of all citizens!" ("The World We Want," 2015). Discussion board use, however, yields navigational difficulties resulting from both deficient structural composition and clarity, confusing the user and possibly reducing the probability of posting. For example, the available topics include

terms such as “population dynamics” and “conflict and fragility,” potentially overwhelming words for individuals lacking adequate formal education (“Topics,” 2015). As such, the discussion boards appear to cater to those most educated, recreating a technocratic, top-down approach to goal development. Further, from a liberal feminist perspective, Darrell West, the Director of Governance Studies at the Brookings Institute think-tank, argues that because women have low rates of Internet accessibility (West, 2015), presumably only the most wealthy women have website access. This presents a problem as it limits the voice of poor women in developing countries, thereby producing a set of goals that may not encompass the needs and desires of the poorest and most marginalized individuals.

For use of guiding SDGs development, the “My World Survey” invites individuals everywhere to rate the top six issues, out of a possible 16, that matter most to them and their family (“Have Your Say,” 2014). To create the list, the UN generated 24 areas of importance and then sent those themes to NGOs, academics, and policy makers, asking them to reduce the list to 15. After reviewing the lists, 16 themes continually came up and were selected for the survey (“My World 2015,” 2015). Not only is this survey available online, it is also accessible to individuals via text messaging and

“Will also be available offline in paper form – distributed through a network of grass roots [sic] organizations, faith based communities, youth groups, private sector bodies and NGO partners around the world. The support of these organizations is vital in reaching out directly into communities and drawing the digitally disconnected, illiterate and poorest communities into the global debate” (“My World 2015,” 2015).

Despite providing an opportunity for voting, predefining the issues limits individuals outside of NGOs and governments to choose the themes left out of the initial list, thereby producing a top-down shaped agenda. Additionally, it remains unclear how the OWG

plans to utilize the results, as the poll remains open for voting despite Ban Ki Moon asserting changes to the current proposed SDGs will be minimal. This assertion is suggestive that the UN feels they are experts on the needs of the poor and there is nothing else they can learn from additional survey data.

While the UN is lauding the survey as a success, (“My World Blog,” 2015) emphasizing its reach of 1 in every 1,000 people in the world, voting patterns reveal trends unrepresentative of the general populace. The most striking pattern is the education level of voting individuals. As of March 30th, 2015, a total of 7,362,015 individuals across the globe had cast their vote. As previously noted, across all levels of human development index, there are no differences in voting patterns between sexes, but this could be coincidental rather than from the result of stratified sampling (“Have Your Say,” 2014). Furthermore, the majority of individuals voting have an education beyond high school (44%), whereas only 10% have not completed primary education, despite being a common occurrence in many developing countries. As such, the current voices are representative of individuals with greater levels of education that are likely to be less affected by the perils of poverty (“Have Your Say,” 2014).

Further, although the survey is seemingly accessible to individuals across the globe, given its methods of distribution, the paper version may not be reaching developing countries equally. Currently, the country with the highest number of votes is Nigeria with 1.55 million (“Have Your Say,” 2014). Comparatively, India, despite having over seven times the population of Nigeria, has 66,000 fewer votes (“Have Your Say,” 2014). This disproportionate voting pattern could be due to unequal distributions of

NGOs and partners within countries thereby restricting the survey's validity, as it is not representative of the general population.

In addition to voting on development themes deemed most important to individuals, the OWG also released the SGD Score Card in September 2014, where individuals can vote on each goal's ambitiousness, likelihood to prompt action, and their ability to hold individuals and governments accountable ("Sustainable Development Goals Score Card," 2015). Despite this level of available involvement, only 437 people have scored the goals as of Monday, March 30th, 2015, of which only 116 people have voted on all of the proposed goals ("Sustainable Development Goals Score Card," 2015). Further, the countries with the greatest votes for the "My World Survey," Nigeria and Mexico, have only comprised 24 of the 437 votes, whereas the U.S. has contributed 101 votes (six of which occurred from an inability to access the results of the survey without re-voting) ("Sustainable Development Goals Score Card," 2015). Such low levels of voting may result for two reasons; lack of awareness and availability of access.

To date, the UN has not publicized or promoted the SDG Score Card to the level of the "My World Survey" and it appears to be only accessible online. These restrictions limit availability to people around the globe without Internet access, likely the same voices missing during the planning and implementation of the MDGs. If voices of individuals are still being collected in the "My World Survey" and the SDG Score Card, but the Secretary General Moon has stated that the SDGs are seemingly solidified, it is unlikely this information will even be used to shape the SDGs final articulation. As such, this calls into question the extent to which the UN has actually included or values the voices of the marginalized people within their first articulation of the SDGs.

Response to Shortcomings Within the Actual SDGs

In response to the criticism of the MDGs as top-down driven and overly technocratic, the SDGs repeatedly utilize the phrases “international cooperation” and “in accordance with national circumstances” or “in accordance with their respective capabilities” (OWG SDGs, 2014). These statements reflect the UN attempts to demonstrate that developed countries will make cooperative decisions with, rather than for, developing countries. Additionally, the phrase "in accordance with national circumstance" ensures the goals apply equally across all countries, rather than solely directed at developing countries, a prominent criticism from both liberal feminists and the WSF. This phrasing suggests that regardless of a country’s economic situation, attempts can still be made to achieve the SDGs. Further, and in line with WSF criticisms, the SDGs acknowledge the most effective strategies to implement and achieve the goals are locally derived, which prevents viewing the goals as a “one size fits all” approach to development (OWG SDGs, 2014).

The SDGs also note greater effort should be made to increase monetary contributions provided to developing countries, hopefully facilitating achievement of the proposed goals (OWG SDGs, 2014). This statement reflects the WSF concern that very few countries meet the agreed-upon ODA discussed in the 1970 UN General Assembly Resolution and reaffirmed in the 2002 UN International Conference on Financing for Development (“The 0.7% Target: An in-depth look,” 2006).

Additionally, the SDGs continually utilize the phrase “in particular women” across many goals, highlighting women’s critical role in achieving all targets (OWG SDGs, 2014). This comes in response to Gita Sen’s critique (2013) that the MDGs left

vulnerable individuals, typically women, out of the development process. In addition, incorporation of this phrase reflects an understanding that shifts focusing on women produce necessary steps to accomplish sustainable development, as women disproportionately constitute the underserved. However, the specific semantic choice in this phrase may be open for interpretation, as it is unclear if it means “women in particular” or “in certain women.” In this instance, the phrase “particularly for women” would provide clarity.

In response to one of the major concerns from the liberal feminist perspective, the SDGs add components of the *Millennium Declaration* omitted from the MDGs. For instance, the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* calls for greater accessibility to “reproductive health information and services,” something now included in goal 3, target 7 and goal 5, target 6 of the SDGs (U.N., 1995, p. 35). Additionally, the liberal feminist perspective (Bhagwati, 2010) criticized the MDGs for failing to include human trafficking issues, something now addressed in goal 5, target 2 and goal 16, target 2 of the SDGs. It appears that placing similar targets within different goals is an attempt by the UN to reduce the perception and application of the goals as silos.

Additionally, the SDGs recognize and address the importance of including women in economic models, a major focus of liberal feminist economists such as Nelson (1995) and Nussbaum and Sen (1993). Specifically, goal 5, target 4 of the SDGs states countries should “recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies” (OWG SDGs, 2014). In combination with target A, the SDGs respond to the criticisms that failing to include women into the economic sphere undermines the ability of nations to ensure the

end of discrimination against women. Last, in response to the criticism concerning developed countries agricultural subsidies, the SDGs call for the removal of market distorting subsidies, likely increasing women's farming profits (OWG SDGs, 2014).

In response to the major criticisms from the WSF, the SDGs address problems with goal 8 of the MDGs. For example, goal 10 of the SDGs emphasizes the problem of rising inequality within and between countries resulting from an unrestricted global economy (OWG SDGs, 2014). As such, it proposes policies protecting workers from unfair pay and improving “the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen(ing) the implementation of such regulations” (OWG SDGs, 2014). Moreover, in response to vocal exclusion of developing countries in decision-making and economic processes, the SDGs propose target 6 of goal 10 to enhance the “representation and voice of developing countries” at these meetings (OWG SDGs, 2014). As these sections have demonstrated, the UN has exhibited greater responsivity to liberal feminist critiques in the articulation of the SDGs themselves and to the WSF critiques in the SDGs process of development.

Unheard Voices

Although the SDGs respond to some liberal feminist and WSF critiques, many remain unheard. For example, Saith's (2006) claim that the reductionist nature of the MDGs leads to poor governmental practices such as improper allocation of resources remains unaddressed. The current SDGs formulation of 17 goals and 169 targets is too expansive for governments to allocate the resources that are sufficient and necessary for each target to be attained. As such, governments can now focus on specific targets they feel they are in the best position to achieve, allowing for them to claim partial

developmental success without addressing major areas of concern. For example, a country may choose to focus money and efforts on a goal concerning sustainability because they are already close to achieving it, thereby relegating a goal regarding women's rights simply because it may be more difficult, or furthest from being achieved.

Additionally, Barton's (2005b) argument that neoliberal economic development policies may actually exacerbate poverty is left out of the SDGs, likely because it would require a large systematic change. As a result, women farmers will remain subjected to the continual suppression of global produce prices, thereby reducing profits and ultimately driving them further into poverty. Even if a free market was part of the global solution to reducing poverty, specifically for women, the U.S. Government remains unwilling to reduce subsidies for its farmers, producing more distortions in global produce prices that disproportionately affect poor rural farmers. This behavior directly prioritizes the lives of individuals within the U.S. over those not fortunate enough to be born in an economically developed country.

From a liberal feminist perspective, despite the UN responding to the critique that the MDGs defined women's equality too narrowly, the targets pertaining to this issue within the SDGs appear unrealistic. For example, targets 1 and 2 of goal 5 suggest countries should aim to end all forms of discrimination and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. To support this claim, liberal feminists would argue that since all targets within goal 5 are void of time sensitive and measurable indicators, it appears the UN does not believe such targets will be achieved in the near future. If the UN were serious about achievement, they would have placed time indicators on each female centered target.

In agreement, the responses on the SDG Score Card indicate people worldwide view goal 5 as the most ambitious, suggesting attainment is perceived as improbable (“Sustainable Development Goals Score Card,” 2015). **While many of the liberal feminist criticisms were addressed within the SDGs, many of the critiques set forth by the WSF remain unanswered.** Most notably, many goals within the SDGs fail to provide time-bound and measurable targets, a common criticism of MDGs goal 8 by Marshall (2014), Bond (2006), and Lucci (2014). Presently, however, the SDGs goal 8 provides some time-bound targets, though the majority remain immeasurable since they utilize subjective and undefined terms such as “quality,” “substantially reduce,” “strengthen,” and “promote” (OWG SDGs, 2014).

For instance, target 3 of goal 8, “Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services,” fails to provide objective measures since “promote” lacks operationalization (OWG SDGs, 2014). Beyond goal 8, this subjectivity persists across numerous SDGs and is particularly prevalent within SDGs 10 and 17 and is especially notable in the latter. This goal, an expanded version of goal 8 of the MDGs, fails to hold developed countries accountable (Pogge & Sengupta, 2015), enabling them once again, to ignore these targets.

In addition to absent time-bound and measurable targets, the SDGs continue defining success as a reduction by half. Specifically, target 2 of goal 1 aims to “reduce at least by half, the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty and all its dimensions according to national definitions” (OWG SDGs, 2014). As discussed

previously, achieving this target implies a portion of the population will remain impoverished, presumably those most in need. While there is a fine line between not doing enough and being unrealistic, the goals should not be worded in such a way that allows for the poorest individuals to be repeatedly forgotten. Rather, the goals could place a priority on helping the poorest individuals first before attempting to increase the well-being of those who are less impoverished.

Bhagwati's (2010) suggestion that the MDGs should provide rank ordered goals to produce a higher return on investment remains unaddressed in the SDGs. Francesca Pongiglione, Professor of Philosophy and Human Rights and Researcher for the E.U.s DYNAMIX project for increasing resource efficiency, suggest without order, the SDGs merely represent a wish list of ideas (Pongiglione, 2015). She goes on to argue ranking the targets maximizes the chances others will be achieved. For instance, she highlights how increasing education subsequently reduces poverty, fertility, gender inequality, and increases health and sustainability and should therefore be prioritized over other targets (Pongiglione, 2015). Arguably, it appears that rank ordering the SDGs would also make sure countries did not prioritize less meaningful goals over more difficult goals simply because they are closer to achieving them.

Interestingly, targets within the SDGs also contradict one another. For example, goal 4, target 1 aims to "ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education" whereas goal 8, target 6 aims to "substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training" (OWG SDGs, 2014). The inclusion of work and training within the latter target would restrict their ability to achieve target 1 of goal 4. Similarly, goal 8, target 7 calls for the reduction in child labor,

while numerous targets throughout the goals suggest countries should open up trade, potentially increasing the chances children will be forced to work in countries with less stringent child labor laws (OWG SDGs, 2014). Last, target 8 of goal 3 desires access and affordable medicines (OWG SDGs, 2014), however TRIPS increases the difficulty in gaining access to such medicines unless their government declares a public health emergency. Such contradictions and incongruence make it difficult to determine how the UN sees these goals fitting together and how they can be simultaneously achieved.

New Criticisms of the SDGs

While there has been some responsiveness by the UN to criticisms of the MDGs in the SDGs, the SDGs themselves have evoked new criticisms from liberal feminists and the WSF. One repetitive criticism from both liberal feminist and WSF perspectives addresses the lack of targets that seek to change “the existing systems that channel resources and wealth from developing countries to wealthy countries and from people to corporations” (Abelenda, 2015).

Similarly, Thomas Pogge, the Director of the Global Justice Program at Yale University and frequent contributor to the WSF, and Mitu Sengupta, Professor of Politics at the University of Toronto and former consultant for the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees, suggest that although the SDGs encourage providing aid to developing nations, failure to implement goals calling for structural reforms renders these donations as obsolete. As such, they argue aid is unable to match the world economy’s powerful forces as it is currently structured (Pogge & Sengupta, 2015). While such structural reforms would require large shifts in prominent economic discourse, small shifts are also necessary.

At the outset, the SDGs aim to eliminate extreme poverty by ensuring all people live on more than \$1.25 per day (OWG SDGs, 2014). Furthermore, the UN claims the implementation of the MDGs have produced great reductions in poverty worldwide. However, Pogge and Sengupta (2015) claim this target falls short when addressing poverty. Specifically, they contend increasing the poverty line to \$1.25 per person per day in USD from \$1 in 1985, means it is now easier than ever to reduce poverty. Due to inflation, the actual quality of life and conditions of people living at this line are much worse than in 1985.

To combat this problem, they suggest the standards need to be defined and monitored by an independent agency rather than the World Bank (Pogge & Sengupta, 2015). In addition to monetary targets, the SDGs, surrounded in an aura of sustainability, now contain numerous targets addressing the issue. However, the SDGs fail to specifically address practices, such as fracking, coal burning, and beef consumption, known to negatively impact the environment (Pogge & Sengupta, 2015).

Conclusion

Deductively, this critical discourse analysis uncovered dominant economic discourse and competing social discourse deployments within the MDGs and SDGs. Through an inductive approach, close textual examination of the SDGs revealed the sustainability discourse grounded in the text. In addition, the analysis of criticisms by liberal feminists and the WSF perspective further aided in the clarification of how each socially constructs poverty and their preferred solutions. With these findings, this thesis analyzed UN responsiveness to the criticism of the MDGs leveled by the resistant discourses and concluded inclusion of liberal feminist critiques are embedded within the

SDGs, while calls from the WSF remain unanswered. This section reviews each chapter, re-emphasizing key findings, summarizes important concepts, and provides the reader with final remarks. This section then discusses the limitations of this critical discourse analysis and addresses potential areas worthy of future exploration.

To begin, Chapter Two analyzed the major economic, social, and political discourses present within the developmental field. It identified neoliberalism and Keynesianism as diametrically dominant economic and political discourses, with preferred modes of theoretical inquiry, shaping and influencing the field of development. Specifically, it labeled Keynesianism as an ideology focused on generating aggregate demand, problems of wealth distribution, and an increase in state regulatory agency as a means of minimizing mass-market fluctuations. Neoliberalism was defined as an ideology focused on economic de-regulation, privatization, free trade, and a reduction in government size and expenditures. Further, it historicized each discourse in order to understand the specific social and economic processes that gave rise to their relevance, emphasizing the influence of the Great Depression on the shift towards Keynesianism, and the perceived slowing of economic growth in the 1970s spurring its displacement in favor of neoliberalism (Steger & Roy, 2010).

Additionally, Chapter Two highlighted liberal feminism and the WSF as resistant political and social discourses with competing values and problem-solution frames that aim to establish gender equality within economic models, increase the voices of marginalized individuals, and advance locally controlled decision-making. Understanding the key tenants of these discourses provided an understanding of how each may manifest in global development frameworks for poverty alleviation.

Chapter Three began by historically tracing the MDGs with Kofi Annan's summarization of past UN summits in *We the Peoples* and its role in shaping the *Millennium Declaration*, and the MDGs. Chapter Three proceeded by introducing international authorities, such as Jan Vandemoortele and Richard Manning, and organizations, such as the World Bank and IMF, that directly influenced the MDGs formation. The majority of Chapter Three analyzes neoliberal, Keynesian, liberal feminist and WSF deployments within the MDGs, concluding numerous goals and targets propose neoliberal solutions to developmental problems, particularly in goal 8, which encourages HIPCs to accept and adopt neoliberal conditions in exchange for loans (United Nations, 2001).

The chapter also surmised that liberal feminist discourses within the MDGs are restricted to goal 5, consistent with Sen's analysis of the goals as silos (Sen, 2013). Chapter Three ended with a discussion of criticisms from academics and international figures, demonstrating methodological flaws within the MDGs. Specifically, it emphasized the MDGs failure to include marginalized voices and individuals from developing countries, leading to neoliberal economic models of increased market access that allowed development to proceed unevenly, in addition to little focus on women. This chapter provided a historical grounding of the UN attempt to facilitate a unified development agenda on a global scale as well as areas the agenda was shaped by dominant economic discourses, ultimately producing worldwide effects.

Chapter Four chronicled the evolution of the MDGs into the SDGs, highlighting the historical rise of sustainable-based discourse within the UN beginning with *Our Common Future* and continually re-articulated, re-developed, and re-affirmed in the Earth

Summit outcome documents, *Agenda 21*, *Johannesburg declaration*, and *The Future We Want*. It then addressed the initial discussions regarding post-2015 development at Rio+20, as well as the formation of two groups: The OWG to develop the SDGs, and the High-Level Panel to oversee their development.

Further, Chapter Four analyzed places of neoliberal, Keynesian, liberal feminists, WSF, and sustainable discourse deployment within the SDGs, noting a marked shift in centering sustainability in development, evident by the entanglement of people-, planet-, and profit-focused sustainable discourse throughout the goals. In addition, the chapter highlighted the increase in the prevalence of liberal feminist discourse across the SDGs, as well as the reduction of overtly neoliberal-based goals and targets, except for goals 8 and 17, which serve as a continuation of MDGs goal 8. The shifts described in this chapter retain the potential that, if appropriately enacted, they can reduce the world's carbon footprint and provide hope for marginalized individuals across the globe.

Chapter Five began by re-identifying markers for liberal feminism and WSF discourses and discussing their various criticisms of the MDGs, such as its failure to include marginalized voices within developing countries and provide time-bound and measurable targets that hold developed countries accountable. In addition, it emphasized the criticism that the UN produced a diluted set of goals, loosely based on the *Millennium Declaration*, and the UN summits from the 1990s, which omitted female-based targets such as access to sexual and reproductive rights. It then addressed the UN responsiveness to the common criticism of increasing vocal inclusion in the global development process, through the publication of *A Million Voices* and the WorldWeWant.org website.

Moreover, it analyzed the UN responsiveness within the SDGs, to liberal feminist and WSF criticisms, particularly noting the inclusion of targets pertaining to women across the goals, and the addition of targets aimed at reducing inequality, a criticism from the WSF. The analysis concluded by discussing areas where WSF and liberal feminists critiques are not addressed within the SDGs, such as failure to include time-bound, measurable goals for developed countries for the WSF, as well as the targets addressing women, for liberal feminists. Additionally it notes that within the articulation of the SDGs themselves, most of the criticisms from the liberal feminists are addressed while most of the WSF critiques remain unheard. In the development of the SDGs, findings were the opposite. Last, this chapter explored other criticisms of the SDGs, especially the negation of targets focused on structural economic reforms. Globally, this chapter suggested that despite liberal feminists achieving greater vocal inclusion in the SDGs themselves, the rest of the developing world's opinions remain ostracized from the UN developmental framework.

Authorial Remarks

Given the strength of women's movements, their successes at previous UN summits, and the ease by which dominant economic frameworks could integrate many of their core tenants, it remains unsurprising that more liberal feminist criticisms were taken into consideration during the articulation of the SDGs than the WSF. Since liberal feminists do not require a large institutional change within the hegemonic economic models, and primarily argue for an equal seat at the table, they became a more dominant discourse within the SDGs. In essence, liberal feminist critiques can more conveniently fall in line with either dominant discourse. For example, women's access to sexual and

reproductive healthcare could be achieved through a neoliberal or Keynesian solution by increasing the number of privately or publicly run facilities in the region supplying such care.

Alternatively, the WSF and its perpendicular position to dominant economic discourses not only inhibits integration, but also forces suppression of their problem-solution frames. The WSF discourse continues to remain unheard in the articulation of the SDGs because the UN failed to produce transformational systematic shifts necessary for long-term, sustainable, and equitable change for all. Though the UN designed methods with the perceived intention of gathering marginalized voices, the MDGs and SDGs should solely be viewed as persuasive rhetoric. Analyzing the implementation of these methods elucidates a foundational sampling error, producing an unrepresentative voice for the global seven billion. Therefore, integration of criticisms can and should be viewed as trivial concessional offerings rather than true conceding. As long as the goals remain steeped in power laden hegemonic frameworks, serving only as an opportunistic medium through which power interests can assert, maintain, and defend their position and preferred economic modalities, poverty eradication will remain relegated to the imagination.

Limitations

While this thesis highlights and historically traces the complexity of dominant economic discourses deployed within the MDGs and SDGs, emphasizing the reproduction of power through these texts, it remains limited in its ability to provoke public action, as it offers no prescription for opposition. Similarly, this thesis is unable to propose a preferred economic method, and consequently, does not provide a mechanistic

strategy by which development would proceed more effectively. However, it does suggest resistant social and political discourse deployment, specifically liberal feminism and WSF, may provide a more effective and efficient method for development.

Another limitation of this thesis is the potential misinterpretation of the texts. From an outsider's perspective, the complexity of the UN and other organizations' inner-workings potentially provide a limited interpretation of the methods by which the texts are employed. Further, a discourse analysis by its very nature is potentially subject to inherent and unintentional biases in both selection and interpretation of texts, even when neutrality is attempted.

Additionally, the broad scope of this analysis, coupled with time constraints, leaves areas within this topic under-explored and under-explained, as not all UN documents and criticisms could be analyzed. Similarly, the WSF is filled with organizations that may have slightly different perspectives, not fully characteristic of the WSF Charter of Principles. As such, criticisms selected and inductively analyzed could have produced a slightly off-centered view of the WSF problem-solution frame for poverty.

Future Analysis

The un-solidified nature of the current SDGs necessitates future analysis in the event changes are made in the finalized version. Additionally, given the scope of this work, future studies could utilize a similar methodological approach to analyze a specific goal, instead of the goals as a whole, with greater depth. Further, future studies could explore UN responsiveness to other oppositional discourses.

Moreover, the goals and targets within the MDGs and SDGs do not suggest how they should be achieved. As such, their actual application in the field could be analyzed to provide a greater understanding of the problem-solution frames utilized in practice. For example, a target within the SDGs that displays liberal feminist characteristics could theoretically be achieved through neoliberal methodology.

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