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PRELIMINARY REPORT:

The Development of a Research Framework on Gender and Socio-Cultural Inclusion in Global Change Research

Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) department in the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

In collaboration with Green Shift Africa (GSA)

And funded by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF)

Compiled by Claudia Towne Hirtenfelder
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We wish to express our gratitude to the contributors of this report who went to great lengths in providing relevant information and their willingness to commit themselves to the project in both academic and mentoring capacities.

Lastly, we would also like to thank the staff and administrators at the HSRC for their efforts in helping to ensure that we had everything we needed for the smooth functioning of our workshops and beyond. These include Octavia Rorke, Masego Masenya, and Elsie Maritz for their administrative and logistical assistance as well as Elize Van As and Oliver Hirtenfelder for their technical help with developing the framework image.

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Preface

This Preliminary Report is an accumulation of material gathered from and together with members of the Research Reference Group. This is the first of two reports which explores the establishment and feasibility of a framework that could aid in mainstreaming gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change research.

The Preliminary Report outlines the beginning phases of the project including an explanation of the Expert Reference Group and the presentations made at the Research Reference Group meeting in August 2014. Further the Preliminary Report highlights what the next phases of the project will be, including the National Workshop, to be hosted October 2014.

Following the National Workshop material in the Preliminary Report will be further extrapolated and incorporated into a Comprehensive Report. The Comprehensive Report will build on issues raised in this first report and will add further concepts and angles. These reports act as a resource for academics and policy makers alike. They include extensive reading lists and present complicated discussions on issues of gender, socio-cultural inclusion, and global change in easily accessible language. They serve as a starting point for anyone hoping to better mainstream gender and socio-cultural inclusion into global change research, particularly in the South African context.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This project is in line with the recommendations outlined during the Plenary Panel on 'Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Global Change Research' at the 1st National Conference on Global Change organised by the Department of Science & Technology (DST) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) at the end of November 2012. As a response to the call, the project seeks to "enable the innovative design of multi-disciplinary research working frameworks and approaches, to engender, frame, sustain and resource, an inclusive, gender-balanced, socio-cultural action programme and understanding to address global change adaptation and mitigation challenges in South Africa, with transferable added-value benefits for the rest of the African continent." Gender and Socio-Cultural paradigms are both highly relevant and impactful knowledge fields that have been under-served by the developments in the South African Global Change research agenda. The South African Global Change Research Plan (DST, 2010) discusses four main cross-cutting challenges, namely:

- Understanding a changing planet: which considers adaptive management, Earth Systems, Oceans, and model predictions.
- 2. Reducing the human footprint: which looks at waste management, biodiversity, and institutional integration.
- 3. Adapting the way we live: which involves security, sustainable development and future preparations.
- 4. Innovation for Sustainability: which involves innovation, capacity building and alternative development options.

Workshops and discussions will be centred primarily on these four avenues and discussing how they can be better understood using a framework of gender and socio-cultural inclusion. Participants will be encouraged to take cognisance of leading global calls for gender equality

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such as in the Millennium Development Goals, the UN Post-2015 Agenda, the AU's Agenda 2063, the Beijing Declaration, and so forth, and how such global development indicators and policies articulate and frame the justification of the inclusion of gender related issues into the South African Global Change Agenda.

Global change causes different impacts on men and women (which also varies with age, class, race, etc.). Women are, however, generally more adversely affected by global change than their male counterparts (of the same age, racial, and class backgrounds) as they tend to be more engaged in issues of health, agriculture and community development (among others). The project motivation thus, includes the need to develop a research strategy to address the challenges of gender-balance in global change adaptation and mitigation systems. This involves the mobilisation of the research community to undertake relevant and insightful research through the adoption and application of multi-disciplinary methodologies and approaches to address these challenges. It is hoped that such approaches will assist in generating research activity and programmes at universities, research bodies and other institutions to sustain research and developments that will deliver knowledge generation in addressing the challenges of gender and socio-cultural inclusion on global change, in South Africa.

Furthermore, approaches to addressing global change concerns in South Africa need to explore the diverse socio-cultural perspectives embedded in our indigeneity, in order to generate emancipative and transformative African-centred approaches and solutions, which will engender the sustained buy-in of communities, both rural and urban. There is thus, the additional motivation for the project premised on the need for generating new knowledge (through research) that is required to improve the adaptive capacity and to develop adaptation or mitigation strategies.

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Specifically the project seeks to achieve the following main objectives:

- To engender the creation of a multi-disciplinary research hub/community working to deliver innovative research-based tools, capacities, methodologies, and pedagogy for the advancement of gender as well as women's agendas, perspectives and priorities, in the global change arena in South Africa.
- To provide networking opportunities for women within socio-cultural inclusion in global change researchers, as a means of growing the capacity and critical mass of the research pool through bringing like-minded people together to stimulate new thinking, and to foster innovation in the advancement of existing ideas.
- 3. To develop and advocate for an Afrocentric paradigm that fosters, inculcates and promotes socio-cultural and multi-disciplinary research discourse, pedagogy and mind-sets within the global change agenda in South Africa.

In order to realise these objectives the project involves detailed conceptualisation, intensive workshops, and academic outputs. The detailed project activities are shown in table 1:

Table 1: Detailed project outline

Date	Who's involved?	Brief description
03/06/2014	NRF, AISA in HSRC	Grant from the NRF signed and the project begins.
09/06/2014	GSA, AISA in HSRC	Project Core Group (PCG) is finalised – These individuals are
		tasked with additional conceptualisation of the project as well
		as its operationalization.
17/06/2014	Various outlets	Call for experts distributed.
23/07/2014	Expert Reference Group	Seven experts selected to form part of the Expert Reference
	(7)	Group (ERG). This group is tasked with providing theoretical
		and conceptual expertise to the development of the
		framework as well as act as mentors in the later stages of the
		project.
11-	Project Core Group (7),	Research Reference Group (RRG) Meeting: The group of 14
12/08/2014	Expert Reference Group	spent two days brainstorming and debating the development
	(7)	of a conceptual framework which assisted with the inclusion of

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		gender and socio-cultural dimensions within global change research. Their multi-disciplinary discussions further enable
		them to act as mentors later in the project.
25/08/2014	Various outlets	Calls for National workshop participants are distributed.
01/10/2014	Project Core Group (7)	Development of an online portal in preparation for the National Workshop.
10/10/2014	Project Core Group (7),	Successful applicants are identified and notified.
	Expert Reference Group (7)	
29-	Project Core Group (7),	A three day intensive National Workshop which involves
31/10/2014	Expert Reference Group	presentations, group work, and debates to further enhance the
	(7),	framework already developed in the Research Reference
	National Workshop	Group (RRG) Meeting. Groups from across disciplines together
	participants (28)	with a mentor (from the RRG) synthesize their ideas which are
		later used in the development of fuller papers.
03/2015	Project Core Group (7)	A panel on gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change
	AISA in HSRC	has been secured for the African Young Graduates (AYGS)
		Conference. This ensures that younger scholars also have the
		opportunity to write on the subject.
04/2015	All	Papers presented at the national workshop are finalised and
		compiled. This compilation will include detailed information
		relating to the conceptual framework, concepts, and
		innovative approaches. Importantly, it will be a synthesis of
		information and good practice(s) which brings these three
		fields together in a transformative multi-disciplinary research
		framework.

Therefore, the following could all be seen as the desired outcomes or potential outcomes of the project:

 The establishment, support and sustained co-ordination and implementation of research frameworks for the delivery of systematic programmatic good practice initiatives and research projects that advance gender balance and equity in the global change arena in South Africa.

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- The advancement of women's participation in global change research, as practitioners, Principal Investigators' (Pl's), Co-Pl's, etc.
- Enhanced networking that grows the capacity and critical mass of the research pool
 by bringing like-minded people together to stimulate new thinking, and to foster
 innovation in the advancement of existing ideas.
- Developing an online portal which is rich with information and research data (both quantitative and qualitative) on gender, global change and innovative approaches and good practice on gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change, and which facilitates and engenders further knowledge production.
- A compilation of draft papers which acts as a resource and guide for researchers and policy makers, but which is also accessible to the broader public and in turn raises awareness and informs about this important issue.

Against this background the rest of this report will focus on the Research Reference Group (RRG) meeting, the conceptual framework developed at the meeting, and the National Workshop, expected to take place from 29-31 October 2014 in Pretoria (at the HSRC).

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2. DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK: RESEARCH REFERENCE GROUP MEETING (11-12 AUGUST 2014)

The South African Global Change Agenda fails to adequately account for the ways in which global change is gendered and experienced differently by different social groups when discussing its four grand challenges. Motivated by these lacunae in perspectives this research project was initiated by Dr Elizabeth Rasekoala who together with researchers from the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) worked on the concept note and sought funding from the NRF to achieve the primary goal of facilitating multi-disciplinary research in the area of global change. As explained in the introduction, the project seeks to develop a framework which could serve as a starting point to including gender and socio-cultural dimensions in global change research.

Dr Rasekoala and a small team of researchers from AISA were mobilised to facilitate further conceptualisation and operationalisation of the project to form what is referred to as 'The Project Core Group (PCG)'. Deliberations by the Project Core Group revealed the need to incorporate experts from the three core areas of interest, namely: gender, socio-cultural inclusion, and global change. This was done to ensure that the developed framework would be a fair representation of key conceptual and methodological components from each analytical area and to further facilitate rich cross-disciplinary discussions. Following a call for experts in June 2014, a small group of seven experts were selected all of who displayed strong theoretical and conceptual knowledge in their respective fields. They also demonstrated a keenness to engage in capacity building, a core outcome of this project. These individuals formed what is called 'The Expert Reference Group' (ERG). Together these two groups are the 'Research Reference Group' (RRG):

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Table 2: Research Reference Group

Research Reference Group				
(RRG)				
Project Core Group Members	Expert Reference Group Members			
(PCG)	(ERG)			
Phindile Lukhele-Olorunju, Prof	Heidi Hudson, Prof			
HSRC	University of the Free State			
Project leader from AISA and agriculture	Centre for Africa Studies			
specialist				
Elizabeth Rasekoala, Dr	Louise Vincent, Prof			
Project leader from GSA and global change	Rhodes University			
expert	Department of Political Science and			
	International Studies			
Claudia Hirtenfelder, Mrs	Munyaradzi Mujuru, Dr			
HSRC	University of Limpopo			
Project coordinator and gender analyst at AISA	Department of Water and Sanitation			
Shingirirai Mutanga, Mr	Roseline Achieng, Dr			
HSRC	The Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute			
GIS portal administrator and climate change	(TMALI)			
researcher				
Trynos Gumbo, Dr	Tawanda Runhare, Dr			
University of Johannesburg	University of Venda			
Environmental and socio-economic science	Foundations of Education Department			
researcher				
Dineo Sega	Theresa Moyo, Dr			
HSRC	University of Limpopo			
Intern at AISA: interests in governance	Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership (TGSL)			
Sibusiso Nkosi	Vuyo Mjimba, Dr			
HSRC	University of South Africa			
Intern at AISA: interests in food security	Business and Climate Change Research Fellow			

The RRG comprises senior and experienced researchers (see contributors) who engender, frame and sustain the inclusive and gender-balanced research framework which is needed to

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advance gender and socio-cultural paradigms in the Global Change community. The role of the RRG is critical to the delivery of the aims and objectives of the project, in that it acts as the 'Think-tank' for the initiative. The expertise of the RRG will also facilitate the development and transfer of research skills to national workshop participants and provide them with mentorship in the development of papers.

The initial development of the conceptual framework was achieved at the Research Reference Group Workshop held at the HSRC from the 11th to the 12th of August 2014. The intensive two day workshop began with presentations which served to 'set the scene' thereby facilitating cross-disciplinary understandings and discussions. The debate led to the development of a theoretical/conceptual framework for mainstreaming gender and socio-cultural inclusion in Global Change.

2.1. Presentation on gender methodologies

The first presenter, Professor Louise Vincent, argued for researchers to not exceptionalise debates on gender but rather to view gender within a wider context of social research. Vincent broadly discussed ontology, epistemology and methodology and how these can shape the areas of interest researchers find pertinent. Fissures in what constitutes good research are often about what (theoretical debates) and how (methodological debates) research is conducted.

Vincent then went on to discuss gender methodologies in particular. She stipulated that the basis on which gender is researched in the social sciences varies and is often dependent on the definition of gender the given researcher is applying. Some may define gender as purely biological where as others might consider gender roles or how gender is prevalent in language. Importantly, Vincent challenged the researchers to question whether they were analysing

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gender in isolation or as intersecting with others social constructs such as race, and class in a commonly used feminist methodology, first coined by Kimberly Crenshaw (1991), called 'intersectionality'. As a starting point for discussion, Vincent raised Wharton's (2005) conceptualisation of gender as:

A multi-level system of social practices that produces distinctions between men and women and organises inequality on the basis of those distinctions. It is a powerful principle of social life that is visible throughout the social world

There was some debate among the RRG about aspects of this definition including whether it is justified to include 'inequality' in a definition of gender and whether this does not presuppose such an inequality before conducting research into it. No consensus was reached on this point but the debate did illustrate the complexity of gender definitions. Thereafter Vincent highlighted what she believed to be some of the key concepts that are of relevance in gender research including: equality, difference, choice, and experience.

2.2. Presentation on socio-cultural inclusion

The second presenter, Dr Roseline Achieng, provided a captivating account on paradigmatic positions. Achieng defines a paradigm as the philosophical intent or position which underlies one's study. This in turn shapes researcher's methodology and methods. She went on to stipulate that there is a paucity of new knowledge generation particularly across disciplines.

Achieng went on to explain the overarching differences between positivism and interpretivisism. These were interesting to compare within the context of the workshop which was designed to bring people from the natural and social sciences together. Achieng then discussed three key paradigms within socio-cultural studies:

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- The Interpretive/Constructive paradigm posits that reality is socially constructed and can best be accessed by understanding human experience. This is achieved mostly by gathering and analysing qualitative data that helps to reflect participants' own views. Examples of positions within the Interpretive Paradigm include: Hermeneutics, Social Constructivism, and Phenomenological.
- The Transformative Paradigm seeks to achieve social reform which is informed by a
 political agenda and often makes use of mixed methods as a means of doing so.
 Examples of positions within the Transformative Paradigm include Feminism, Critical
 Race Theory, and Advocacy.
- The Pragmatic Paradigm focuses on the research problem and seeks to understand
 the issue at hand so as to inform policy changes. This approach is more practice
 oriented and mixed methods are used.

As opposed to using one of the above paradigms, Achieng believes that for the purpose of developing a framework which is multi-disciplinary we should make use of Afrocentricity as a Paradigm:¹

Afrocentricity is "a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history" (Asante, 2007).

Making use of an Afrocentric paradigm will ensure that the process of developing the framework as well as the later utilisation of the framework is viewed as African knowledge generation located within African cultural experiences thereby giving credit to Africans as

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¹ Please note that 'Afrocentricity' and 'Afrocentricism' are not the same. Afrocentricity is a position that tries to understand the African as a subject matter. It is an approach to understanding African agency, African positionalities and African experiences whereas Afrocentricism is more concerned with African values and value systems, customs, habits and traditions of the African people. It can be directly compared to Eurocentricism.





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agents "rather than spectators to historical revolution and change" (Asante, 2007: 17). Transhistorical, comparative, multi-disciplinary, discursive and gender analysis are methodological stances privileged by Afrocentric paradigms. This provides a powerful nexus between natural and social sciences through African agency.

2.3. Presentation of Global Change

The third presentation, given by Dr Elizabeth Rasekoala, focused on the Grand Challenges of Global Change (GCGC). It sought to highlight how the existing discourse on global change is parading as universal thereby failing to account for the complexity of those causing and experiencing such changes. The four key challenges of global change are:

- 1) Understanding a changing planet
- 2) Reducing the human footprint
- 3) Adapting the way we live
- 4) Innovation through sustainability

While discussing these four core challenges of Global Change Rasekoala posed questions which were more multi-disciplinary in design and which the developed framework could be utilised to answer (see Table 3). Throughout her presentation Rasekoala asked: Who benefits? What are the risks and for whom? And what are the alternatives? Rasekoala challenged researchers to be cognisant that the answers to these questions are gendered and based on socio-cultural worlds. Therefore, in order to respond to Global Change and to address its four key challenges, human beings and their social lives must be central to research which tries to come up with novel solutions.

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Table 3: Multi-disciplinary questions to address Global Change challenges

Challenge Multi-disciplinary questions the framework on gender and global change co		
	to answer	
Understanding the planet	Understanding the nature of change: what are the critical thresholds, what would the consequences of such change be and what indicators can be used to detect them?	
	Who benefits? What earth observation network models are best suited for detecting critical thresholds and promoting appropriate knowledge dissemination and action?	
	What are the priority forms of change on the land that will directly or indirectly affect atmospheric, estuarine and marine dynamics?	
Reducing the human footprint	What are the alternative solutions (policy, economic, and technological) for increasing waste minimisation and reuse for priority waste streams?	
	Understanding ecosystems and their services – how have the region's ecosystems and the societies that live within and depend upon them evolved; what are the links and what do changes in ecosystems mean for their resident societies?	
	Who benefits?: What management and governance models would be best suited to the management of the ecosystems and their services; and how can these models be promoted?	
	What are the priority environmental and developmental issues that require integration?	
	How do we develop context specific interventions (policy, technological, institutional and integrated approaches) to do more with less?	
	How do we provide evidence-based research that will assist policy makers, businesses and trade unions on how we can better do more with less?	
Adapting the way	What methods should be developed to better understand uncertainty and risk?	
we live	What are the important secondary effects of a changing climate on water security?	
	How do we best change human behaviour in terms of existing wasteful and inefficient ways of supplying (storing, transmitting) and using/consuming water?	
	What role can market mechanisms, such as payments for ecosystem service and water trading, play to facilitate water security?	
	Which wild plant and animal species are important sources of food? How will these be affected by climate change, and do alternative sources of food exist to replace such species?	
	What are the factors that would determine urban resilience? The research could consider the ways in which ecosystem concepts such as diversity, redundancy, vulnerability and ecological variability apply to the urban social-ecological system, and should include biophysical factors as well as social factors such as regulations, values and aspirations?	
	How does a city's physical form and infrastructure affect its resilience?	
	What would be appropriate monitoring and assessment tools with which to evaluate a city's on-going resilience?	

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7.			
		What are the implications of climate change risks and declining ecosystem service for decision making and policy development regarding resources allocation, settlement planning and design development in rural areas and growth and management of major cities?	
	Innovation through sustainability	How do we effectively utilise ecological engineering/industrial ecology approaches to providing municipal services (e.g. energy and potable water supply, storm water management, the collection and treatment of waste, and the harvesting of resources such as energy, water, materials and nutrients) that would achieve multiple objectives of social development, ecosystem regeneration and climate mitigation and adaptation?	
		How do we develop the management/control systems and business models for such approaches to the provision of municipal services and harvesting of resources? How do we develop novel ecological technologies, system of technologies and design solutions that respond to the pressure and problems introduced by global change,	
		especially climate change? The dynamics of innovation processes are central to resilience and capacity-building: How do we determine progress towards creating the most appropriate environment for innovation as a means for building resilience and capabilities for sustainable living?	

2.4. A multi-disciplinary dialogue

The three presentations set the scene and illustrated some of the methodological and conceptual differences between the social and natural sciences. More importantly they demonstrated the willingness of experts to learn and practice across disciplines. What followed were intensive debates surrounding what should be included in the multi-disciplinary framework. As with any group endeavour, the achievement of a unified framework required compromise but more importantly a willingness to argue for and against the inclusion-exclusion as well as best placement of such concepts.

The RRG followed a deductive process and generated over 80 concepts through discussion. These were refined and collectively sorted into four non-mutually exclusive conceptual

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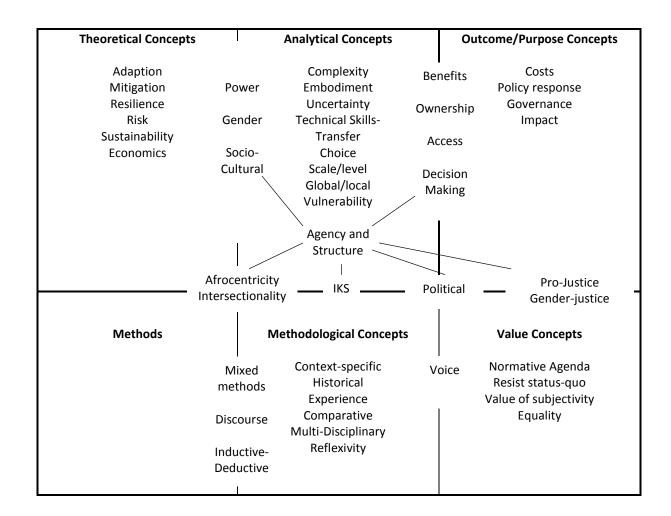
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categories: 1) Theoretical/Analytical concepts, 2) Methodology/Method concepts, 3) Value concepts, 4) Outcome/Purpose concepts (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual categories generated by the Research Reference Group



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The table illustrates the porous nature of the concepts (particularly between analytical-theoretical and method-methodology quadrants) as well as their relational character. Discussion around the location of these concepts initiated the final stage of the framework's development. Once consensus was reached that the above concepts, theories, methods, and methodological components were most central to the objective of this study it culminated in a visual framework which is rich in complexity and able to highlight core concepts vital to any study aiming to mainstream gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change research.

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3. A THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON GENDER AND SOCIO-CULTURAL INCLUSION IN GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH

Figure 2 is the final product of lengthy debates and discussions at the RRG Meeting at the HSRC in August 2014. It illustrates what the group posits to be the most vital elements for research to explore the social-cultural and gendered causes and consequences of global change.

The framework is a product of Afrocentric knowledge production (indicated by the apex) and serves as a tool to aid further Afrocentric research and debate. It is forged out of a normative agenda which seeks to resist a scientific status quo which has tended to make invisible and universal the causes and impacts of global change. Informed by theoretical and conceptual contributions from the fields of gender studies and socio-cultural inclusion this framework provides an opportunity to better answer multi-disciplinary questions.

The core tenets of the framework (gender, socio-cultural inclusion and global change) help to form the foundation of the structure as the primary research arenas. The arms of the triangle are solid indicating the firm connection between these four key nodes of the framework. Lastly, the porous rings enveloping the triangle show that the framework is shaped by values, methodology, methods, theories, and concepts which best achieve the mainstreaming of gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change (the base of the framework).

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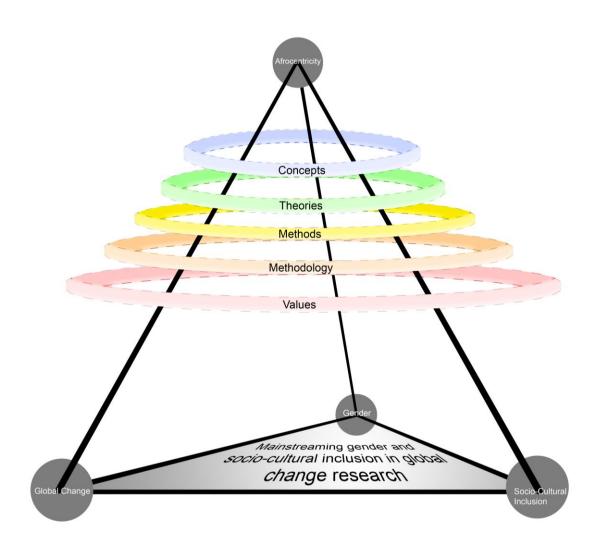


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Figure 2: Vital elements of gender, socio-cultural and global change inclusive research.



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This section is dedicated to explaining the four key nodes of the framework (Afrocentricity, gender, socio-cultural inclusion, and global change) and how they are shaped by particular values, methodologies, methods, theories, and concepts. This is followed by an overarching debate on the framework, how these nodes are connected, and what some of its limitations might be.

3.2. The apex: Afrocentricity

The origin of 'Afrocentricity', as a concept, is attributed to Molefi Kete Asante who is regarded as the first to describe it as a form of scholarship that puts traditional African knowledge and values at the centre of analysis (Ngungi wa Mungai, 2013: 46). Quoting Mazama (2003), Asante (2007: 8) attunes that the Afrocentric paradigm is not merely a worldview or even a theory as such. He contends that the Afrocentric paradigm results in the reconceptualization of the social and historical reality of African people. The Afrocentric paradigm is a revolutionary shift in thinking and constructural adjustment to black disorientation, de-centeredness and lack of agency. Furthermore, the Afrocentric Paradigm, or Afrocentricity, is revolutionary because it casts ideas, concepts, events, personalities, political and economic processes in the context of black people as subjects and not as objects (Asante 2007: 15), as such Asante (2007:15) defines Afrocentricity as:

'...a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history..' (Asante 2007:15)

It is critical, therefore, that African people see themselves as agents rather than spectators of/to historical revolution and change. Therefore, asserting the centrality of Africa to human history. Furthermore, Afrocentricity posits that the philosophy and teachings of African scholars should be given greater prominence in higher education institutions (Asante, 1986: 104).

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It can be seen, therefore, that Afrocentricity is a structural methodology engendering a culturally appropriate conceptualisation of African reality and serves as a governing tool of active agency, which informs new approaches in interpreting social phenomenon and can aid in the redevelopment of social science research (Mazama, 2003: 5; Pellerin, 2012:150). Additionally, it encourages the implementation of principles, methods, concepts and ideas that are derived from African cultural experiences (Mazama, 2003: 5) and rejects the notion that Africans are culturally, politically and economically inadequate and deficient. Therefore, while there are variations of Afrocentric paradigms, their common feature, as argued by Ngungi wa Mungai (2013), centres around the notion that it is an intellectual perspective that "privileges African agency within the context of African history and culture, trans-continentally and transgenerationally." Key elements of this African worldview include harmony and interdependency, collectivity, and spirituality (Ndungi wa Mungai, 2013: 47), as well as beliefs in the restoration of dignity in African cultures and identity through recovery, recollection and reconstruction. Consequently, there are seven criteria for the establishment of an Afrocentric methodology (Mazama, 2003; Pellerin, 2012:150):

- 1) The African experience must guide and inform all inquiry;
- 2) The African spirituality must be given its due place;
- 3) Immersion in the subject is necessary;
- 4) Wholism is a must;
- 5) Intuition is a valid source of information:
- 6) Not everything that matters is measurable;
- 7) Knowledge generated must be liberating.

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Box 1: Components of Afrocentricity as defined by Pellerin

"Afrocentricity is the philosophical and theoretical construct in the discipline of Africana Studies where laws, generalizations, methodologies, and theories are created. In The Afrocentric Paradigm (2003), Mazama notes that there are three aspects to the Afrocentric paradigm: 1) affective, cognitive, conative; 2) structural; and 3) functional. The affective, cognitive, conative aspect is understood as the navigating principles that function as the basis for inquiry into African phenomena. This aspect equips the scholar with necessary methodological tools and principles to conduct research that is liberating for continental and diasporic Africans. The institutionalization of organizing principles generates a basis for methodological approaches that are rooted in Africana people's realities." Pellerin (2012:150).

The intention here is not to say that the agency of all Africans is the same, as that would be essentialist (Afrocentricism). Rather, the intention is to highlight that Africans are relevant and important generators of knowledge and thus have agency in finding solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges, including those found within global change. Consequently, this framework is the product of Afrocentric knowledge generation and is intended to aid further Afrocentric research on gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change.

This project, therefore, adopts an Afrocentric framework to the extent that it fundamentally values African voices, perspectives and agency. It is referred to as a framework in cognisance of the multiplicity and multidimensionality of the socio-cultural, economic and political contextual interpretations of the concept. The framework should subsequently be used in collaboration with African people's historical and cultural lives. Reflecting on the work of Reviere (2001), Pellerin (2012:150) concludes that Afrocentric methodologies are intended to be used to investigate pertinent research questions legitimately and effectively (that is, truthfully and inclusively), especially those that possess embedded assumptions about race and culture and other phenomena – such as global change.

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Box 2: The codes of Afrocentricity

- 1) Reconceptualization of the social and historical reality of African people
- 2) Revolutionary shift in thinking and constructural adjustment
- 3) That casts ideas, concepts, events, personalities, political and economic processes in the context of black people as subjects and not as objects
- 4) A consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis and actionable perspective that seeks to bring to the fore African agency
- 5) A methodology that consciously operates within African ways of knowing and existence
- 6) Derivation of concepts, ideas that spring from the life experiences of African people

3.3. The foundation: Gender, socio-cultural, and global change

In order to achieve the objectives of this project it is important to have a good understanding of the core components that form the base. However, before discussing gender and socio-cultural inclusion it is important to first understand the realm in which they are to be mainstreamed, global change.

3.3.1. Global change

'Global Change' is a fluid concept with no singular definition. This is because it refers to a variety of changes with the earth's systems which may include fluctuations in population, shifts in the economy and environmental changes (of which there are many). Nonetheless, the South African National Research Plan (2010: 5) defines global change as:

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"refer[ing] to an interconnected set of phenomena, resulting largely from human actions which have altered the environment over virtually the entire planet at an accelerating rate during modern times. It includes changes to the composition of the atmosphere; the nutrient loading of the biosphere; the global, regional, and local climate; the distribution and abundance of species; the cover and use of the land surface and the use of main resources; the size, location and resource demands of the world's human population, as well as it's patterns of governance and economic activity"

This means that global change is a broad concept including various elements of planetary changes and how human action is involved in such changes. Other key concepts related to global change which are of theoretical and analytical significance are adaptation, mitigation, resilience, vulnerability, uncertainty and risk (see box 3).

Global change and the language it uses is firmly related to sustainability, more specifically sustainable development which is most famously defined as "Meeting the needs to the present without compromising the needs of future generations" (WCED, 1987). This definition has since been subject to a range of criticisms some of the most feverent around the notion of 'needs' – Whose needs? Do these needs stay static over time? Who decides which needs are most paramount? Others, such as Barry Munslow, have tried to be more inclusive and critical in their definitions of sustainable development:

"Sustainable development is all about improving the human resource management of the natural resource base in order to maximize human welfare and maintain the environment now and for the future. In this regard two concerns are uppermost in people's minds. Firstly, existing development pathways have left many people poor. The benefits of development are unevenly distributed in an unacceptable manner. Too many people are not receiving the food, clean water, housing, healthcare, and education that they need. Secondly, until recently, the environment has been treated as a free good: nature is there to be used.the environment

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has been seen as a cupboard that never becomes bare" (Barry Munslow in Coetzee et al, 2001:498-499).

Therefore, sustainability, generally speaking, requires that practices are economically, environmentally, and socially geared toward not only maintaining but improving the Earth which intersect with one another. Sustainable development therefore is about how society can use available resources in a manner which satisfies human needs equitably or fairly while also protecting the natural environment (land, forests, ecosystems, water). This protection is needed to safeguard ecosystems and ensure that natural resources are available for human survival both today, and in future. Importantly, however, distribution to and access of such resources should be just and fair with provisions for all members of society irrespective of gender, age, race, ethnicity or class status. Injustice breeds instability in any society and therefore threatens continuity, which is an important pillar for sustainability.

While sustainable development indicates a popular turn away from considering development in purely economic terms researchers such as Sen (1999), among others, have emphasized that development is about people and must be people centred. Thus, there is now more focus on human development rather than just economic development which is concerned primarily with production and consumption of goods and services. The challenge in society is how to utilise available natural, physical, human and other resources to meet the needs of human beings. Therefore, it is necessary, imperative actually, for society to prioritise how available resources are used so that no one lacks basic needs (what these are is again problematic and difficult to identify) which is aided in the efficient useof natural resources. However, ss can be seen from Box 3, despite human footprint and action being visible in the core concepts of global change (as well as development and sustainable development) there is little explicit reflection that the contributions to and impacts of global change are both gendered and socio-culturally determined. It is here where methodologies emanating from gender and socio-cultural studies become paramount.

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Box 3: Important concepts in Global Change as defined by the IPCC

Adaptation:

The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects.

- 1. Incremental adaptation: Adaptation actions where the central aim is to maintain the essence and integrity of a system or process at a given scale.
- 2. Transformational adaptation: Adaptation that changes the fundamental attributes of a system in response to climate and its effects.

Mitigation:

Mitigation (of climate change): A human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases. Mitigation (of disaster risk and disaster): The lessening of the potential adverse impacts of physical hazards (including those that are human-induced) through actions that reduce hazard, exposure, and vulnerability.

Resilience:

The capacity of a social-ecological system to cope with a hazardous event or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain its essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation.

Risk

The potential for consequences where something of human value (including humans themselves) is at stake and where the outcome is uncertain. Risk is often represented as probability of occurrence of hazardous events or trends multiplied by the consequences if these events occur. This report assesses climate-related risks.

Vulnerability:

The degree to which a system is susceptible to, or unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes. Vulnerability is a function of the character, magnitude, and rate of climate change and variation to which a system is exposed, its sensitivity, and its adaptive capacity.

Taken from the glossary of "Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability"

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3.3.2. Gender and socio-cultural studies

'Gender' is subject to a wide variety of definitions depending on the purpose of a study and the components of gender which are being researched. Nonetheless, gender is one of the biggest organisers of social life and the core debates circulating gender and gender inequality are often around issues of access, ownership, and decision making power. When studying gender some may choose to focus on the embodiment whereas others may choose to look at structural differences and/or the discursive realm.

At the *descriptive* level, gender refers to the social organisation of the relationship between the sexes, traditionally associated not with sex but with the social roles of masculinity and femininity assigned to men and women or as Scott (1986: 1067) argues, it is a "constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes". But description does not help us in understanding why these relationships are constructed as they are, how they work, or how they change (Scott 1986:1056-1057). Gender as an *analytic category*, however, refers to the fact that the concept signifies relations of power. Gender becomes implicated in the conception and construction of power itself.

Consequently, one the most distinctive features of feminist social research is that it focuses on gender and gender inequality. Feminists assume that there is widespread oppression of women by men and by patriarchal social patterns and that this oppression is not natural or inevitable but can be changed. Recent scholarship also considers multiple inequalities based on race, class, and other factors. These theoretical assumptions imply a strong political and moral commitment to reduce inequality. As such, feminist methodology is engaged, not

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detached or value free (Babugura,2010) and often endorses 'gender mainstreaming' in research and policy.

Gender mainstreaming implies that gender (needs and interests of both men and women) must be taken seriously in all policy and practice. In 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted the following definition:

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (Charlesworth 2005:4).

Charlesworth (2005: 13) however argues that the definition is very narrow, in that it assumes symmetry of position between women and men and does not address "the complex way in which gender is created and sustained by social and power relations". In United Nations gender mainstreaming practice 'gender' has come to mean 'women' or 'women and children' (Enloe 1990) which is problematic as it tends towards essentialism.

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Box 4:

Gender mainstreaming and three different approaches to gender equality

In the same way that we could argue that different interpretations of gender lead to different policy interpretations, we can make a case for the theory and practice of different models of gender mainstreaming being fundamentally linked to the specific understanding of the concept 'gender equality'. The issue of gender equality is a contested notion. The kinds of answers that we come up with when we advocate for gender and socio-cultural inclusion in the global change agenda are therefore guided and informed by the way we view notions of gender and gender equality.

Broadly we can identify three perspectives on gender equality, each with its own implications for gender mainstreaming (Rees 1998; Walby 2005; Squires 2005; Verloo 2005; Verloo and Lombardo 2007:21-49): Firstly, gender equality as sameness: This is linked to the political strategy of equal treatment, opportunities and inclusion. This strategy draws on liberal feminist thinking and is often criticised for its perceived gender-neutrality, a world in which women are treated as if they were equal to men. Yet, in this world the dominant male norm is not challenged, or as Theresa Rees (1998; 2005) puts it, we simply 'tinker' with the system by adopting 'add women and stir' approaches.

Secondly, gender is used as a tool to affirm difference from the male norm, questioning the fact that women are often expected to imitate this norm. This is described as a reversal strategy, in that it seeks recognition for a specifically female gendered identity. This perspective or conceptual framework falls within the radical feminist frame. Rees (1998; 2005) refers to it as 'tailoring'. In practical terms, this approach includes so-called positive gender actions, e.g. in establishing the criteria for employment, promotions and participation in decision-making institutions (and favouring, in cases of equal merit, a woman over a man). This vision frequently is associated with radical and cultural feminists (Squires 1999; Verloo 2005).

Lastly, gender is used as a vehicle for the transformation of all established norms and standards of what is/should be female and male. In this regard one could speak of 'gendering' (as a verb) rather than 'gender' (as a noun). This (postmodern) approach is also described as a displacement strategy seeking to deconstruct those political discourses that engender the subject by adopting diversity politics. In this version of mainstreaming it is the gendered world itself that is problematised, not only the exclusion of women or the existence of a male norm. This approach therefore argues that the divides between equality and difference are fictitious.

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Now that we have established the conceptual link between a particular view of gender/gender equality and their respective strategies for gender mainstreaming, it is possible to identify more specifically and practically the three mainstreaming approaches, namely the integrationist, agendasetting and transformative approaches.

- 1. The integrative/integrationist model is known for a focus on experts and the bureaucratic creation of evidence-based knowledge in policy-making (Squires 2005:371). This model incorporates women's experiences into existing neoliberal policy frameworks. It starts off with a statistical audit of 'where are the women' in policies and programmes (collection of gender-disaggregated data) and then proceeds to develop organisational strategies to fill the gaps. A practical consequence is then that women's and feminist groups are absorbed into 'the mainstream' and then either cease or decrease resistance. The integrative model is narrowly woman-focused. While a women-focused model may promote greater visibility of women in the political sphere, it conceals the exclusion of women's experiences at the private level. A problem-solving methodology blocks a critical examination of gender relations and negates the implications of overlapping identity differences. So in the absence of gender and power analyses, planners become fixated on technical and bureaucratic processes (Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009) complete with workshops, handbooks and toolkits.
- 2. The second model, the agenda-setting model, entails a focus on the participation, presence, and empowerment of disadvantaged/marginalised groups (usually women) via consultation with civil society organisations (Squires 2005:371).
- 3. The third model, namely the transformative approach is more difficult to discern in theory and practice (Squires 2005:371-372), yet seeks to transform existing legislative and institutional frameworks to reflect a gender perspective, indicative of both men and women's experiences. A transformational strategy concentrates more on the long-term strategic analysis and transformation of gendered power relations placed within the broader transformational context of societal change (Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009). Gender mainstreaming as transformative strategy values normative shifts and is directed at changing cultural (attitudinal), structural (institutional) and behavioural (direct) patriarchal patterns. This process is incremental as it has to balance top-down with bottom-up methods and requires commitment and the ability to see the bigger picture.

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Power is intimately related to gender but gender is not the only socio-cultural component reflected in this framework even though gender inequality has displayed tenacity in its existence in various nations, communities, and social strata. One of the issues that any form of gender analysis faces is what might it mean to employ the category of 'man' or 'woman' in analysis when the experiences of people differ so greatly – a black working class woman faces very different life circumstances as compared with say, a white wealthy woman. Can the categories of 'men' and 'women' really describe all the diverse experiences of those whom we place into these categories? Therefore, it is neither possible nor desirable to separate out gender from the other identity positions that a person occupies. Crenshaw (1991) argued that justice for black women could only come by looking at their experiences at the intersection of racism and sexism. Following from this, intersectionality therefore refers to the "forms of inequality that are routed through one another and which cannot be untangled to reveal a single cause" (Grabham et al. 2009: 1).

One of the core contributions of gender and socio-cultural studies to the development of this framework was to encourage the incorporation of 'intersectionality' as both a theoretical backing and methodological lens. There are intense debates circulating intersectionality and its usefulness in research. However, at its most basic intersectionality is about recognising that identity constructs do not exist in isolation from one another. Rather, identity constructs such as gender, race, age, class, religion, nationality, ablebodism, sexuality, and ethnicity (amongst others) intersect with and shape each other. The constructs which individuals and groups define as being most important are context specific and informed by history.

The employment of intersectionality, therefore, means that an analysis will consider how categories of difference are intertwined or related in influencing social phenomena. These human diverse differences should not be viewed as independent of one another but instead as interrelated forms of social factors that can build up multiple forms of socio-political and socio-economic discriminations in society. Intersectionality refers to how categories of

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difference (such as gender, class, race or sexuality) are interwoven as well as how they can mutually strengthen or weaken each other (Winker and Degele, 2011: 54).

Box 5: Three approaches to studying categories of difference

Hancock (2007) distinguishes between three approaches to the study of race, gender, class and other categories of difference, namely the unitary, multiple and intersectional approach. Firstly, the unitary approach works with one category of identity at a time, based on an implicit hierarchy. The multiple approach acknowledges the need to reflect on more than one category at a time, but the categories are also viewed as static, matter equally in a predetermined relationship to each other, and remain conceptually independent. It means identifying multiple sites of oppression in the name of inclusivity, with the assumption that there is a correlation between the number of oppressions and the extent of marginalisation of the individual in a compound sense. In the literature one comes across references to double and triple oppressions.

In contrast, intersectionality views the relationship between the categories as "an open empirical question and the categories themselves are conceptualized as resulting from dynamic interaction between the individual and institutional factors" (Kantola and Nousiainen 2009: 469). The first key feature of intersectionality is its plasticity, conceptually being able to bridge disciplinary (liberal vs. critical) as well as levels of analysis (from local to global) divides. Intersectionality is a critical (feminist) tool to think about difference in terms of individual identity and experiences and theorise about structures and cultural discourses. Hancock (2007: 74) concurs when she states that "intersectionality bridges part of the theoretical gap between critical theory, which often faces the dilemma of overemphasis on structural [institutional] explanations, and liberalism's privileging of the atomized individual" (agency). Intersectionality captures everyday practices and subjectivity in a way that it is locally situated yet globally underpinned. In this regard it is important to bear in mind that women in conflict areas are not always most concerned about gender equality. Often family and community take priority in their daily lives.

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Intersectionality is crucial, then, for a holistic and comprehensive analysis of gender, sociocultural inclusion and global change (which also speaks directly to the tenets of Afrocentricity). Whereas gender analysis may focus on the differential impact of climate change on women and men, intersectionality deconstructs these categories into a number of other empiricallybased and/or verified categories which are more consistent with reality. How do those empirically-based categories interact with each other and how does global change impact on those interactions?

Therefore, in order to better incorporate gender and socio-cultural dimensions into research on any global change phenomenon it is important that identity constructs are not considered in isolation as they may emerge as being intimately related to the given phenomena. Central to understanding the intersections of identity constructs and their relation to global change is, methodologically, the privileging of experience and of participant's voices recognising the value in their day to day lives and subjective experiences. However, it is also important to remain reflexive throughout the research process as to how the identity of the researcher/s can influence participants because of their own identities and historical experiences.

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Box 6: Reflexivity?

The sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu's (2004, 89) notion of reflexivity pointed to the effort on the part of social scientists to be vigilant and aware of the factors that might bias research, an effort whereby social scientists use their own instruments to understand and check themselves. Reflexivity in research involves reflection on self, process, and representation, and critically examining power relations and politics in the research process, and researcher accountability in data collection and interpretation (Sultana, 2007:376). The reflexive process involves introspection, a deep inward gaze into every interaction. It entails the ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they themselves influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge. In research reflexivity implies the ability to reflect inward toward oneself as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry. Reflexivity increases research credibility. Feminist usage of reflexivity generally posits that there is no such thing as the unbiased, neutral research but some, such as Shaw (2000: 16) use it as means of trying to achieve such:

"Research is not only about collecting data or information from those who are selected as participants. Because it involves interaction between the researcher and participants, inevitably some responses from the participants may be totally different from the researcher's prior positions or conceptualisations of the studied phenomenon. In order to avoid being partial, a researcher has to engage in self-reflection in order to arrive at an unbiased construction on reality" (Shaw, 2000: 16)

The incorporation of the above mentioned theoretical and conceptual factors ('gender equality', 'intersectionality', 'reflexivity', 'mainstreaming') is also related to the framework's Pro-Justice/Gender-Justice stance which will help to shape policy responses and ensure that research on global change has social impacts. The notion of 'gender justice' should permeate every dimension of justice: Legal justice should address the normative framework underpinning discriminatory laws and practices against women (e.g. inheritance laws that prevent women from owning property); restorative justice must deal with the violation of women's rights; and distributive justice should address structural and systematic inequalities

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of a political, economic and social nature (Heyzer, 2004:26). The tendency to concentrate on restorative justice only should therefore be avoided and rule-of-law institutions should be transformed to align with reconstruction agenda. In this regard the consistent mainstreaming of gender in all aspects of the transition can serve as an important integrative tool to facilitate the coherence of the overall transitional process.

Therefore, the discussion on the apex and foundation of the framework are based on values, methodologies, theories, and concepts which would help to achieve the goal of mainstreaming gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change (the base).

Box 7: The value of mixed methods

Mixed methods have been identified as being particularly useful in trying to achieve the objective of mainstreaming gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change research. Simply put, Mixed methods are research designs that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches (Sosulski- & Lawrence, 2008). It is also an approach to knowledge that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints which includes both the standpoints (Burke, Onwuegbuzie & Turner (2007:113).

Campbell and Fiske in Johnson et al. (2007:113) introduced the idea of triangulation, referring to 'multiple operationalism', in which more than one method is used as part of a validation process that ensures that "the explained variance is the result of the underlying phenomenon or trait It was argued that the convergence of findings stemming from two or more methods enhances our beliefs that the results are valid and not a methodological artefact". This idea is reinforced by Sechrest and Sidana (as cited in Johnson et al. 2007:116) who identify four reasons for why methodological pluralism is useful:

- 1. for verification purposes,
- 2. to provide some basis for estimating possible error in the underlying measures,
- 3. to facilitate the monitoring of data collected, and
- 4. to probe a data set to determine its meaning.

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3.4. Delimitations of the framework

As with any other framework, the framework on gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change has to be contextualised to particular situations than applied in a wholesale manner. Although one of its strengths is its complexity, this could also be viewed as a limitation in that any researcher wanting to make use of the framework may be overwhelmed by the number of concepts and methodological considerations. In the interest of keeping the framework flexible, making it readily applicable to research of any global change phenomena, meant that as much as the framework has to be pinned down to some definitions (such as mitigation) it also required theoretical flexibility. It is for this reason that no single definition of gender, socio-cultural inclusion, and power were provided. While these concepts are 'must haves' for anyone undergoing research in global change they must be defined and applied within the context in which research in global change is pursued. For example in this framework selected definitions are highlighted to suit the research project's theme of gender and socio-cultural sensitivity to global change. Furthermore the definitions selected are also largely dependent on what components of gender and socio-cultural contexts are in focus.

Another issue for future reflection as the project progresses relates to the conceptualisation of global change and the incorporation of other, more political and economic concepts, such as globalisation and the resultant asymmetrical power relationships imbued within between the industrialised and less industrialised countries. This is evident in the emerging international trading and financial architecture and the dominance of a hegemonic economic paradigm of free markets and liberalisation. Rapid advances in technology and communication which have resulted in the emergence of global social networks are other important features of global change might be worth considering and their absence in their framework at present could be construed as a limitation. All the developments described above have profound implications for gender and social inclusion as South Africa forges ahead with its growth and human development trajectory.

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Lastly, while the framework for mainstreaming gender and socio-cultural inclusion, like most frameworks, it is not without its faults, needless to say it remains an important contribution to the field of global change research in South Africa and offers a promising example of Afrocentric knowledge generation.

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4. NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON GENDER AND SOCIO-CULTURAL INCLUSION IN GLOBAL CHANGE (29-31 OCTOBER 2014)

The National Workshop on Gender and Socio-Cultural Inclusion in Global Change acts as the next core phase of this project. It will serve as a platform from where the framework design can be deepened and further knowledge circulating its strengths and limitations can be engendered. Therefore, it is critical to the delivery of the aims/objectives of the project.

Young, emerging and mid-career level academics and researchers, particularly women, will be encouraged to apply to participate in the workshop. To be considered they will need to not only submit their CVs and a letter of motivation, but will also be required to submit a 3,000-5,000 word short paper and/or abstract discussing/critiquing/utilising the framework (the Call was sent out August 2014).

The workshop will then be used to facilitate multi-disciplinary debate and discussions between participants and the Research Reference Group. Participants will be given 'setting the scene lectures' similar to those presented at the RRG Meeting before being split into groups with mentors to discuss their paper submissions. Groups will then be required to make presentations on their papers and discussion in front of the whole group at the workshop (expected to be roughly 45 people). This will be followed by broader and deeper debates on the framework. Participants will, therefore, be exposed to knowledge paradigms from numerous disciplines and encouraged to learn from each other thereby directly contributing to the capacity building outcome of this project.

Interactions will continue beyond the closure of the conference with groups and mentors subsequently working together to strengthen participant's papers so that they are publishable as a collection of papers, book chapters or journal articles.

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It is our hope that these interactions will lead to an epistemic community that sees the benefits of multi-disciplinary research in the South African Global Change Arena. We are optimistic that this community will be energised to answer some of the most complex questions of global change in a way that is not only more sensitive to gender and socio-cultural inclusion, but which also makes them a foundational element of the research design.

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5. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The RRG for this project has demonstrated exemplary commitment, vision and drive in the development of this unique initiative in South Africa. The mainstreaming of gender and socio-cultural paradigms in global change research in South Africa is an imperative that is long-overdue for realisation, given the historical contexts in particular, to where the nation state has progressed.

In this Preliminary Report, we have mainly focused on 'setting the scene' on the three main paradigmic pillars of the project, gender, socio-cultural inclusion and global change, with a view to initiating, developing and sustaining, an informed and well-researched academic discourse and engagement on the conceptual framework that has been developed, to enable other academics and researchers to engage with the programme. The Preliminary Report, therefore, acts as a catalytic resource guide, enabling the research community to identify strategic and other multi-disciplinary gaps and perspectives in the global change debate. Furthermore, it is an empowering tool for academics, researchers, and policy-makers.

The next step of the project involves further developing the conceptual framework from the inputs, deliberations, abstracts, short papers, and discussions that will be presented and discussed at the National Workshop (aforementioned). These will be incorporated into the next report, the Comprehensive Report, on Gender and Socio-Cultural Inclusion in Global Change.

In addition to both Reports, participants and the RRG will work together to develop a series of papers which talk to the framework and consequently deepen debates and the ability of it. It is our intention that we share the intention of mainstreaming gender and socio-cultural inclusion in global change research not only through capacity building and intensive workshops but through the dissemination of academic and popular media on the subject.

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Lastly, it is our hope that as the project gains further traction we will be able to secure more funding into this critical, largely unexplored area of research in South Africa. Therefore, we look forward to and welcome feedback, contributions and suggestions from academics and researchers across the multi-disciplinary landscape in South Africa and beyond, to assist and enable us to deepen and enrich the inclusive and Afrocentric knowledge development scope and frontiers of this project.

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