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A Theoretical Research Framework

Abstract An integrated framework is advanced that provides a lens for effective research on African female entrepreneurship and highlights its poverty alleviation and socio-economic development potential, while interrogating entrepreneurship from the unique perspective of women's lived experiences. It combines Sen's capability approach, social feminism and social enterprise. Social entrepreneurship permits a close examination of the poverty alleviation potential of female entrepreneurship, and social feminism allows women's unique world view to be captured, while exploring the impact of gender on their entrepreneurship. The capability approach examines people's diverse situations, and identifies capability gaps and ways of addressing them to attain fulfilled lives that people desire. It pays close attention to women, finding that improving their well-being has the ripple effect of better lives for their families and communities.

Keywords Integrated framework • Capability approach
Social feminism • Social entrepreneurship • Gender

2.1 An Integrated Framework for Female Entrepreneurship Research

The previous chapter discussed the developmental role of entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship in particular. It also situated women's entrepreneurship against the backdrop of history and pointed to its past, present and potential role in the African context, while also discussing the broader entrepreneurship knowledge debate. In the current chapter, an integrated research framework is advanced for the accurate capture and assessment of female entrepreneurship. This facilitates a meaningful discussion later in the book, of how the field can better contribute to socio-economic development.

Female entrepreneurship has been highlighted as holding promise for the socio-economic development of Africa and beyond. However, although a lot of research exists on the field, most female entrepreneurship studies are based on a Western context. In Africa, there remains a shortage of research on women entrepreneurs, especially by African authors. This section introduces a combined framework that provides a lens for effective research on African female entrepreneurship. The elements of the framework are Sen's capability approach (CA), social feminism and social enterprise. These components are selected for their ability to spotlight the poverty alleviation potential of female entrepreneurship that promotes socio-economic development, while also interrogating entrepreneurship from the unique perspective of women's lived experiences.

The lens of social entrepreneurship, a socially responsible form of entrepreneurship, enables a close examination of the poverty alleviation potential of female entrepreneurship, to uncover how this attribute may be amplified and harnessed for greater socio-economic development. The framework applies social feminist theory in response to the call in the broader literature for more entrepreneurship studies that are based on feminist theory (Jennings and Brush 2013; Marlow 2014). Importantly, social feminism also allows women's unique world view to be captured, thereby shedding light on experiences and situations that are part of their everyday reality, but that tend to be glossed over and unacknowledged and therefore not addressed. Sen's capability approach

is compatible with both social enterprise and social feminism because it examines people's diverse situations, identifies capability gaps and finds ways of filling them to enable people to achieve fulfilment and live the lives they desire. Of particular importance is the fact that the approach pays close attention to women and finds that improving their well-being has the ripple effect of better lives for their families and communities.

2.2 Value of Capability Approach, Social Feminism and Social Entrepreneurship to the Integrated Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The Capability Approach

The capability approach, developed by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, has been applied by academics, field experts and multilateral organisations to explore solutions to deprivation. The approach focuses on capabilities needed by the poor to function and participate fully in lives that they value. The success of the approach is largely linked to its emphasis on freedom and diversity—freedom as a component of a dignified life, an end in itself, and also as a prerequisite for converting capabilities or resources into functioning lives, and diversity to ensure that varying needs of people are matched to appropriate capabilities.

Because the capability approach does not target people as a homogeneous group, it enables the different contexts of female entrepreneurs to be examined, while exploring how they may use their entrepreneurship to improve the lives of others. Both Sen and Martha Nussbaum have used the approach to seek justice, including gender equality, for all people—Nussbaum with a defined list of basic minimum capabilities to which all should be entitled, and Sen with a deliberately open-ended approach, which allows practitioners and targeted beneficiaries, to determine the most appropriate capabilities. Sen's open-ended or deliberately incomplete approach promotes agency of the beneficiaries in allowing them to participate in finding solutions to their problems, while Nussbaum's expansion of capabilities to include innate abilities allows women entrepreneurs' natural attributes to be examined

as capabilities. This helps to give a better understanding of their actions, meanings and motivations as well as their hopes, aspirations and desires, while revealing their unique perspectives in line with social feminism. Borrowing from both versions of the approach therefore assists in studying how women entrepreneurs' lives and experience assist them to attain their goals. The framework uses 'the most basic concepts of the CA [...] as distinct from some of the more complex and technical applications in economics or other disciplines' (Zheng and Walsham 2008, p. 225). In seeking gender equality, promoting agency and freedom and embracing diversity, the capability approach merges well with the aims of social feminism, whose objective is to highlight and give a voice to women's unique world view, while respecting the legitimacy of other forms of entrepreneurship. Thus, the study of female entrepreneurship benefits from being viewed through a capability approach and social feminism inspired lens. The open-endedness of the approach further assists research by enabling it to begin with a clean slate, allowing knowledge to emerge from research participants.

2.2.2 Social Feminism

Social feminism reflects the capability approach's emphasis on diversity and believes that women have a unique world view and qualities, values and ways of thinking and also that individuals cannot be observed in isolation from their social contexts. According to social feminism, women bring valuable attributes to entrepreneurship, including valuing communal qualities and interpersonal relationships and considering business to be part of an interconnected set of relationships. Social feminism does not question the existence or legitimacy of a male reality of entrepreneurship, but seeks to carve out a parallel reality to fit women's attributes and values (Ahl 2006; Chell and Baines 1998; Eagly and Wood 1999; Brush 1992; Kanti Prasad et al. 2011; Bird and Brush 2002; Cliff 1998).

The use of social feminism responds to calls by writers such as Bruin et al. (2006, 2007), for theories that allow entrepreneurship to be viewed from a perspective that is not male-centred and allows for the

variety, depth and heterogeneity of female entrepreneurship experience to be captured. Bird and Brush (2002) endorse this and consider a feminist theoretical viewpoint necessary in helping to create a female norm in business. Kantor (2002) says that adjusting standards of business success to include not just male norms of financial success, but also indicators such as women's control of income generated and involvement in decision-making, will capture progress made in women's economic success and agency.

2.2.3 Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship may be described as 'entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose' (Austin et al. 2006, p. 1). The same authors point out that although social enterprise is founded for the purpose of creating 'social value for the public good' (Austin et al. 2006, p. 3), commercial entrepreneurship is also able to benefit society through the supply of useful goods and services and the creation of jobs, which can transform society in a positive way, and for some commercial entrepreneurs, their transformative impact becomes their driving force. This is similar to findings in female entrepreneurship research where sometimes 'social issues or problems are the impetus for women to begin businesses', and 'women business owners frequently measure success by helping others' (Brush 1992, p. 20). Social entrepreneurship is therefore an important element in the integrated framework by allowing the transformative aspect of women's business to be explored.

Social entrepreneurship is also compatible with the capability approach because both are used as tools in the fight against injustice and poverty. Both social entrepreneurship and the capability approach have a high degree of humanity through their aim of pursuing dignity for those in society who are deprived by poverty, lack of access and by being at the mercy of dysfunctional or non-existent governments and social services. Social entrepreneurship is therefore a suitable match for inclusion with the capability approach in the framework. Further justifying its inclusion in the framework, there have been calls for social entrepreneurship to be viewed from a female entrepreneurship perspective, while the prosocial motivation of social

entrepreneurs overlaps with the caring and other-centric attributes of female entrepreneurs (Batson et al. 2008; Brush 1992; Jennings and Brush 2013). The existence of both social and economic goals in social entrepreneurship means that it may be applied successfully in examining how female entrepreneurs improve the lives of others by applying both economic and social goals in their entrepreneurship.

Fotheringham and Saunders (2014) find that there is ‘potential for feminist theory to contribute to and deepen the understanding of poverty reduction for women through social enterprise’ (Fotheringham and Saunders 2014, p. 191). This call is answered through the overlapping of social entrepreneurship and social feminism in the theoretical framework. Further, in studying female entrepreneurship through the social feminism lens, aspects that have been reported as being typical of female entrepreneurship will be looked at. These include the value placed by women entrepreneurs on non-quantifiable and non-monetary measures of fulfilment and success such as working with social networks and community and extending benefits to their social circle. These values of society and community are compatible with the prosocial motivations of social enterprise. It has also been found that social enterprise creates social capital that benefits commercial enterprise, and the collaboration that happens between social entrepreneurs and different groups and resource networks opens up access for commercial entrepreneurs (Estrin et al. 2013). Female entrepreneurs also operate through networks of people through whom both business and social benefit exchanges are made. These are some of the unique attributes that a combined social feminism and social entrepreneurship lens allow to be highlighted.

2.2.4 Resultant Framework and Expected Contribution

The resultant integrated theoretical framework of the capability approach, social feminist theory and social enterprise is an interesting research guide. All three components of the framework blend well

with each other and together enable valuable insights to emerge from research. The combined framework opens the way for research that is unrestricted by established norms of entrepreneurship and allows the nuances and uniqueness of women entrepreneurs to be meaningfully captured. It allows research subjects to determine what is beneficial and of value to them, reflecting the open-endedness of the capability approach and social feminism's embrace of women's world view, while the other-centric success indicators of women entrepreneurs and their caring and relational attributes will be explored in the light of social entrepreneurship. Thus, the open-endedness of the capability approach and the lack of a restrictive definition of social enterprise (Zahra et al. 2009; Dacin et al. 2010) lend a degree of freedom to research that allows knowledge to emerge without restriction.

Each element of the framework is discussed in depth in Sect. 2.3 below to provide greater context.

2.3 The Elements of the Integrated Framework in More Depth

This section provides a more in-depth understanding of the capability approach and social feminism, while social entrepreneurship which forms part of the central thesis of this book is dealt with separately in Chap. 4.

2.3.1 The Capability Approach

The capability approach (CA) evolved towards the end of the 1980s as a social justice evaluation framework. Pioneered by Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen and subsequently further developed by others, most notably Martha Nussbaum (Robeyns 2005), it is a normative framework for examining poverty, rather than a theory to explain the phenomenon. The capability approach defines poverty as the lack of desired functionings and the capabilities required to achieve them. Under this approach, poverty alleviation seeks to facilitate access to capabilities needed

to achieve desired functionings. The CA goes beyond providing commodities, to equipping people in diverse ways to lead fulfilling, dignified lives that they desire and value.

As a tool for poverty analysis, it sheds light on the causes of poverty and deprivation by removing the focus from means such as money or commodities, to ends that people value and the freedoms to enable these ends to be met. Central to the capability approach is its view of development as the process of expanding people's capabilities by expanding their entitlements. Freedom to choose is a key element in the workings of the capability approach. Of particular importance to the topic of female entrepreneurship and its potential to positively impact development is how the approach intersects poverty and gender by not only providing solutions to redressing poverty, but also serving as a means to identify and understand its underlying causes, such as gender inequality and how it may be addressed in the quest for poverty alleviation—'the question of gender inequality [...] can be understood much better by comparing those things that intrinsically matter (such as functionings and capabilities), rather than just the means like primary goods or resources. The issue of gender inequality is ultimately one of disparate freedoms' (Sen 1992, p. 125). The capability approach takes a special interest in the reasons why women are disadvantaged—'both because of biological reasons and social factors (especially as they operate with a resilient tradition of- explicit or implicit- sexism), women may have special disadvantages in converting income into particular functionings. [...] such disadvantages may apply to the capability of being nourished (e.g. because of the demands of pregnancy and neonatal care), achieving security (e.g. in single-parent families), having fulfilling work (e.g. because of stereotyping of "women's jobs"), establishing one's professional reputation early on in one's career (e.g. because of the asymmetric demands of family life). Hence the CA allows an exploration of not only the potential of women entrepreneurs, but also the underlying causes of the challenges hindering their advancement. The extent of deprivation may be underjudged if we concentrate only on the size of incomes, and the need to bring in capability failures explicitly can be particularly acute in such cases' (Sen 1992, p. 113).

Sen views the economic participation of women as a major influence for social change—‘the limited role of women’s active agency seriously afflicts the lives of all people – men, women, children and adults’ (Sen 1999, p. 191). In his seminal work, ‘Development as Freedom’, he encourages not only the well-being of women, but also their active participation as agents for change. The lack of importance attached to females from birth, compared to males, in certain societies, and the skewed allocation of family resources in favour of male children, leads to females being deprived of capabilities such as adequate nutrition, health care and education in comparison with male children. This leads to deprivation of functioning in areas such as work, health and social standing and consequently a lack of agency. Thus, the capability approach lends itself as a tool in the quest for socio-economic development through women’s equal access to resources, capabilities and their full economic participation in their communities.

The workings of the capability approach are explained in Fig. 2.1.

The main constituent elements of the approach are capabilities and functionings or beings and doings, where the functionings of a person are what they would value being or doing, and capabilities are those qualities or attributes, which permit them to live the life they choose. In order to have capabilities, people need to first have access to resources such as goods and services or intangible elements, which they must convert into capabilities. In Fig. 2.1, resources (goods and services) are converted into capabilities by means of factors determining a person’s circumstances. Thus, for instance a person’s role models may determine whether they use their financial resources to obtain a capability such as education. Having obtained that education, they may have the choice of a number of functionings, but their selection depends on factors such as preference, and whether people and circumstances influencing their decision are conducive to making a particular choice. For example, these factors could influence their decision to opt to become a Teacher or not. The elements influencing the conversion of resources into capabilities, and capabilities into functionings, are referred to as conversion factors, and an individual’s freedom to choose as well as their agency, have a role to play in their ability to make the conversion happen. It is possible to have the capability but be unable to turn it into

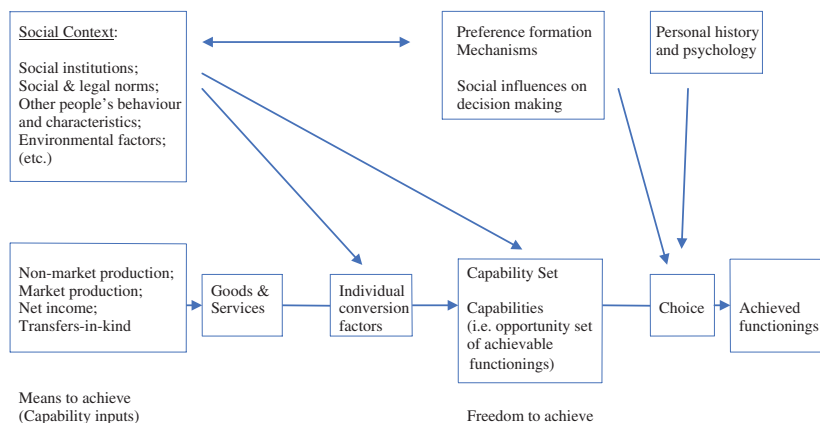


Fig. 2.1 How the capability approach works. *Source* Adapted from Robeyns (2005)

a functioning because the conversion factors such as government policy or social norms do not permit it. This is the reality for many women entrepreneurs, for whom culture, for example, is an inhibitor to converting capabilities into functionings. Thus, the capability approach sees all human endeavours as requiring functionings, which derive from the conversion of resources such as income and food into capabilities. Further, the approach takes into account not only people's freedom, or absence thereof, to engage in the choices and actions involved in this conversion process, but also diversity among humans, which impacts how they convert resources into functionings. Diversity includes physical characteristics, the state of health or lack thereof, education etc. This particular attribute of the capability approach is especially valuable in carrying out research in the African context, due to the diversity of socio-economic, cultural, traditional and national backgrounds that women come from, and which impact their entrepreneurship (Zheng and Walsham 2008; Robeyns 2005; Sen 1992).

The capability approach also emphasises freedom as being important to the conversion of capabilities to functionings. Freedom brings choice and agency to people and this element of the approach, like diversity, makes it particularly suited to the study of poverty and gender inequality and seeking ways to combat it. This is because freedom gives

the poor agency in determining the course of their lives, and its absence is considered a form of deprivation. Nussbaum (2000) in the pursuit of gender equality explains the distinction of the capability approach from other approaches as regards the aspect of choice: ‘The central question asked by the capabilities approach is not ‘How satisfied is this woman?’ or even ‘How much in the way of resources is she able to command?’ It is, instead, ‘What is she actually able to do and to be?’ (Nussbaum 2000, p. 230).

Incompleteness or open-endedness is a further important characteristic of Sen’s approach. Being incomplete rather than prescriptive enables the approach to explore the full potential of disadvantaged people—what they could do or be, and what is needed to attain this potential. In other words, the CA advocates capabilities that reflect people’s specific needs and views the disadvantaged as agents in identifying their own lack, and in helping to find solutions to address it.

Nussbaum has developed the capability approach into a partial theory of justice with the aim of ensuring a basic level of human justice and dignity for all, through a list of central human capabilities. Because ‘Sen’s approach lies closer to economic theory, many economists find his approach more attractive’, whereas, Nussbaum’s work ‘is much closer to traditions in the humanities’ and ‘engages more with the power of narratives and poetic texts to better understand people’s hopes, desires, aspirations, motivations and decisions.’ Thus, her approach ‘pays more attention to people’s skills and personality traits as aspects of capabilities’ and is preferred by some scholars for its ‘potential to understand actions, meanings and motivations’ (Robeyns 2005, p. 103).

With its emphasis on diversity, agency and the expansion of human capabilities and functionings as a solution to multidimensional deprivation, the capability approach lends itself to the study of entrepreneurship and a precedent for this may be found in Gries and Naudé (2011) and Naudé (2012). Gries and Naudé (2011), cited by Naudé (2012), propose a framework where the capability approach ‘can contribute to multi-dimensional well-being by contributing towards not only what people are or have, but what they achieve through their capabilities’ (Naudé 2012, p. 7). Gries and Naudé further find that ‘the capability approach can inform both theoretical thinking on and measurement

of entrepreneurship. From a capability approach view, entrepreneurship is a human functioning that can be valued as an end, and not just as a means to other ends' (Naudé 2012, p. 7). In their model of entrepreneurship contributing to human development, Gries and Naudé (2011) see entrepreneurship as a functioning 'because it relates to how people work. And it can be valued not just for material gain, but it can also give a sense of achievement, identity and of acceptance, it can provide independence and may provide a lifestyle' (Gries and Naudé 2011, p. 217). Further explaining entrepreneurship through the capability approach, the authors emphasise the concept of agency and find that although entrepreneurship is a functioning, this ceases to be the case if people do not have a choice of whether to become an entrepreneur or not. In their view, where entrepreneurship occurs due to the absence of other options, it ceases to be a functioning, because they find that there is no agency involved on the part of the entrepreneur and this may not be an activity that is valued, but one that is entered into for want of other options. Agency is also involved in spotting and exploiting an opportunity and 'refers to the entrepreneur's locus of control, self-efficacy, confidence and ability' (Gries and Naudé 2011, p. 218). Extending the discussion to female entrepreneurship the authors state, 'it has been found that females tend to be less active in new firm start-ups than men. One reason is due to the inhibiting of their agency, through for instance cultural norms, beliefs or outright discrimination which lowers women's self-confidence' (Gries and Naudé 2011, p. 218). In addition to viewing entrepreneurship as a functioning, where there is an agency, the authors view it as a resource because 'entrepreneurial behaviour often creates wage employment for others as well as opens up other functionings i.e. what may be for one person an intrinsic good, may be for another a means to an end. In this sense it does act as "entrepreneurial capital" which can be translated into a new business firm or employment for others. It can also be translated into other functionings such as [...] better health, having better education, enjoying greater peace and security' (Gries and Naudé 2011, p. 218).

2.3.2 Debates Around the Capability Approach

Much debate exists around the incompleteness of the CA and how this affects its operationalisation, although Sen considers this an essential feature in making it applicable to different disciplines and able to be applied by practitioners without needing consensus on how to use the approach. Authors such as Alkire (2002) and Robeyns (2005) have attempted to devise ways of solving this problem to make the CA more useable. The capability approach is widely applied in areas including development thinking, welfare economics, social policy and political philosophy. It is an evaluation tool for aspects of well-being, inequality and poverty and for cost–benefit analysis or to design and evaluate policies. In development policy, it gave rise to the human development paradigm (Alkire 2002; Fukuda-Parr 2003; Fukuda-Parr and Kumar 2004; Robeyns 2003, 2005).

The capability approach is a valuable lens for studying poverty, deprivation and gender, that is flexible and ‘can be applied differently depending on the place, situation, level of analysis, available information or even the kind of decisions involved’ (Alkire 2007, p. 91). Further, as seen above, it has been successfully adapted as a framework to study entrepreneurship (Gries and Naudé 2011; Naudé 2012). It looks at people holistically as they attempt to meet needs for full and dignified human lives, and views poverty as multidimensional and the absence of capabilities needed for lives that people value and aspire to have.

2.3.3 Social Feminism

Social feminism is a feminist theory that lends itself to the study of female entrepreneurship. Social feminism is based on standpoint epistemology and believes that individuals cannot be observed in isolation from their social contexts and that women have a unique world view and qualities, values and ways of thinking, different from men, and drawn from years of socialisation. According to social feminism, some of the valuable attributes that women bring to entrepreneurship include valuing

communal qualities and interpersonal relationships and considering business to be part of an interconnected set of relationships. Social feminism does not question the existence or legitimacy of a male reality of entrepreneurship, but seeks to carve out a parallel reality to fit women's attributes and values (Ahl 2006; Chell and Baines 1998; Eagly and Wood 1999; Brush 1992; Kanti Prasad et al. 2011; Bird and Brush 2002; Cliff 1998). The inclusion of social feminism in the integrated framework allows for the nuances and detail of women's experiences that impact their entrepreneurship to be explored. It also allows for an in-depth examination of gender and how it affects female entrepreneurs in Africa.

Female entrepreneurship authors in the broader literature express the need for a new reality of entrepreneurship to be carved out based on the experience of women. This includes new ways to measure business success that reflect women's experience and preferred entrepreneurship outcomes. Work in female entrepreneurship theory has called for more women to be included as research subjects and for the use of research methods that enable the richness of women's experiences to be revealed and documented. More recent work has included research on the context of female entrepreneurs and historic variables (Reichborn-Kjennerud and Svare 2014; Marlow 2014). The application of social feminism as part of the integrated research framework allows for the unique perspectives of women to be recorded.

Entrepreneurship has been found to be a gendered activity and is viewed as a predominantly male domain (Jennings et al. 2013; Bruin et al. 2006; Bruni et al. 2004; Orser et al. 2011; Leung 2011; BarNir et al. 2011). However 'there is now a complex and sophisticated critical analysis of the intersection of gender and entrepreneurship' (Marlow and McAdam 2013, P. 114). It is now recognised that gender is socially constructed and not a result of one's biological sex. Hence, entrepreneurship is shaped by the 'socially constructed notion of gender rather than biological sex' (Marlow 2014, p. 106). Calls for future work include further research on the influence of gender on entrepreneurship, with specific reference to 'critical analyses of the contextualised, diverse and nuanced manner in which this notion is reproduced' (Marlow 2014, p. 106); 'novel theorising related to emerging themes within the broader gender/entrepreneurship discourse' (Marlow 2014, p. 103);

as well as further research that is explicitly, rather than implicitly, grounded in feminist theories (Jennings and Brush 2013).

To understand why discussions of gender are important in the context of entrepreneurship calls for an attempt at explaining the term itself. The definition of gender is a grey area, because while the term is widely used in many contexts including academia, social justice and economic development, it has been applied differently over time. Different authors have attempted to define gender and explain how it is constructed, while feminists in all fields including biology, sociology and psychology have debated its meaning (Menkel-Meadow and Diamond 1991). Even 'how gender is theorized about is itself contested' (Menkel-Meadow and Diamond 1991, p. 224) and citing Beauvoir (1949), the same authors write that 'to focus on gender is to question everything.' It is becoming widely understood, however, that gender is not an indicator of biological sex, but is socially constructed and refers to 'socially learned behaviours and expectations that are associated with members of a biological sex category.' In the African context, Bakare-Yusuf (2003) finds that despite the importance attached to gender analysis in the sphere of economic development, 'there has been very little interrogation of the concept in terms of its relevance and applicability to the African situation. Instead, gender functions as a given: it is taken to be a cross-cultural organising principle' Against this background, African gender researchers seek to 'produce concepts grounded in African thought and everyday lived realities.' Some of the questions posed in interrogating the subject include: 'can gender, or indeed patriarchy be applied to non-Euro-American cultures? Can we assume that social relations in all societies are organised around biological sex difference? Is the male body in African societies seen as normative and therefore a conduit for the existence of power? Is the female body inherently subordinate to the male body? What are the implications of introducing a gendered perspective as a starting point for the construction of knowledge about African societies? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using explanatory categories developed within the North to understanding different African realities?' (Bakare-Yusuf 2003, p. 1). Much of the work on gender in Africa has been based on anthropology and the development sphere and has included explanations of women's work

in relation to 'gender roles, kinship, conjugal relations and the connections between reproduction and production' (Lewis 2005, p. 1). In my past research on the realities of women entrepreneurs, as well as in subsequent conversations, gender appeared to be closely intertwined with women's entrepreneurship, because of roles and responsibilities assigned to them by society.

As mothers, society assigns women the predominant responsibility for caring for children and the home; as members of patrilineal or matrilineal communities, they may or may not have land inheritance rights and this impacts directly on being able to raise collateral for loans; even as educated and successful businesswomen, they may still be required to have their husbands or male relations sign as loan guarantors; and as wives, they may be seen as undermining a husband's predominance by gaining success and financial independence. Chamlee (1993) in her research on West African traders also found that gender was closely linked to how they operated. She writes that 'the conjugal unit, while not incidental, rarely replaces gender specific groupings as the primary relationship. The mother-daughter relationship, for instance, plays a primary role throughout a women's life [...] The strict division of labour across gender perpetuates the importance of same sex peer groups into adulthood as women work side by side with one another. The traditional role female cooperation plays in production, child rearing and the enforcement of social norms also perpetuates the influence of a gender specific culture into adulthood' (Chamlee 1993, p. 81).

Thus, the discussion of gender in this book, as it impacts women entrepreneurs is based on the narratives and contexts of women and takes into account the views of Le Roux (2005), who writes: 'there is not one single, monolithic category of gender, or of poor women, or of African women - there is no single "Third World woman" whose life is identical or interchangeable with every other Third World woman. Indeed, there are women who lead basically similar lives in every society, just as there are also those who break out those conventions. [...] what is important for gender studies in Africa is to be acutely aware of both context and agency - to recognise that women's lives differ even under the same or similar conditions, and even within the same societies.' By applying the integrated framework to research, context and agency

form part of the basis for the research through the capability approach emphasising people's diversity and social feminism allowing women's unique situations, experiences and contexts to be recorded.

The ubiquity and broad application of the term 'gender' is evidenced by the fact that in the quest to fight all dimensions of poverty and attain equality for all, especially women, multilateral and other organisations place a lot of emphasis on 'gender'. Emphasising the socio-economic implications of the term, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), defines gender as 'the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution' (FAO 2004, p. 1). Further explanations of gender are that it relates to both women and men, but is often used to focus attention on women and their unequal relationships with men in terms of their roles, access to, control over and distribution of resources (FAO 2004); 'Gender relations determine household security, family well-being, planning, production and many other aspects of life' (Bravo-Baumann 2000, p. 5); and, gender is important to human societies as 'one of the major ways that human beings organise their lives' (Lorber 1994, p. 98). It is used as a determinant in allocating scarce resources, parenting responsibilities, dividing of labour and creating societal values, and affects all areas of human life. 'The process of gendering and its outcomes are legitimated by religion, law, science, and the society's entire set of values' (Lorber 1994, p. 98).

Thus, it is becoming widely understood that rather than being an indicator of biological sex, gender is socially constructed and refers to 'socially learned behaviours and expectations that are associated with members of a biological sex category – it "is an acquired identity" (Menkel-Meadow and Diamond 1991, p. 223). Butler (1986) makes use of Beauvoir's famous statement as the basis for the following alternative explanation of the term. "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"—Simone de Beauvoir's formulation distinguishes sex from gender and suggests that gender is an aspect of identity gradually acquired. The distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the long-standing feminist

effort to debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny; sex is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas gender is the cultural meaning and form that that body acquires, the variable modes of that body's acculturation. With the distinction intact, it is no longer possible to attribute the values or social functions of women to biological necessity, and neither can we refer meaningfully to natural or unnatural gendered behavior: all gender is, by definition, unnatural. Moreover, if the distinction is consistently applied, it becomes unclear whether being a given sex has any necessary consequence for becoming a given gender' (Butler 1986, p. 35).

'Gender is so pervasive that in our society we assume it is bred into our genes. Most people find it hard to believe that gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the order and texture of social life' (Lorber 1994, p. 96). Gender and biological sex tend to be conflated and assumed to be the same thing. It is assumed that men and women behave in certain ways and assume certain roles due to distinct natural identities resulting from their biological sex. However, gender is created by humans and results from socially ascribed roles and behaviours allocated to men and women. This arises because, due to socialisation and gender stereotyping, men tend to relate to what is masculine—the roles and behaviours ascribed to men by tradition and society, while women likewise tend to identify with the feminine or behaviours socially ascribed to their sex. Simone de Beauvoir reflects this in her statement 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (Beauvoir 1953, p. 273). This point is illustrated by West and Zimmerman (1987) who assert that 'Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential or biological. Once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the essentialness of gender' (West and Zimmerman 1987, p. 137). Gender is repeatedly created through human interaction and social life. It depends on people continuously and repeatedly learning and practising created ways of being that become subsumed in their identities, becoming part of an assumption of what is natural to men and women—it becomes conflated with sexual identity. Men learn and assume male behaviours, while women learn and take on female behaviours. The learning process

is subtle and occurs from birth through to adulthood and mostly by unconsciously copying observed behaviours of the society into which we are born, or as West and Zimmerman (1987) state, we do 'gender as an ongoing activity embedded in everyday interaction' (West and Zimmerman 1987, p. 130).

Lorber (1994) describes gender's construction from the moment of our birth, with girl and boy babies given different names identified as male or female and dressed and spoken to differently. These are gender markers, which begin the socialisation process by which girls become females and boys are turned into males. Girls and boys are treated differently based on the gender markers attached to them and this elicits different behavioural responses as they grow and see themselves as one gender or another (West and Zimmerman 1987; Lorber 1994). From an early age, girls and boys learn to behave differently according to the gender attached to them and with which they have come to identify. For example, 'little boys appropriate the gender ideal of "efficaciousness," that is, being able to affect the physical and social environment through the exercise of physical strength or appropriate skills. In contrast, little girls learn to value "appearance," that is, managing themselves as ornamental objects' (West and Zimmerman 1987, p. 141).

Many roles and professions are gendered with some being seen as the domain of males and others the domain of females. When the exception to this rule occurs, they are labelled—a 'male' nurse and a 'female' doctor are considered exceptions to a gender 'norm' attached to those roles. Parenting is also a gendered role, with men seen as the material provider and women responsible for housework and care giving (West and Zimmerman 1987). In these different ways, gender is insinuated into the consciousness of people who behave in specific ways and expect others to do the same, because it is the accepted and practiced norm. Gender is thus constructed socially through people's interactions with one another, inter- and intra-generationally throughout the stages of their lives, as they learn and pass on behaviours and ways of being that apply to each sex, making them either male or female children, adolescents and adults. 'Personality characteristics, feelings, motivations and ambitions flow from these different life experiences so that the members of these different groups become different kinds of people' (Lorber 1994, p. 98).

Because gender is constructed and is not a biological occurrence, it is not static and can change in the same way that culture can evolve. Roles traditionally assigned by gender have changed, and it is now quite common to find examples of women as leaders of industry and fathers as the predominant childcare giver. Thus, gender is not biological, and men and women may display some atypical gender characteristics. Hence, Joan Williams warns of the danger of gender stereotyping and blindness towards individuals' gender identity—to break free of traditional gender ideology that distorts our vision we need to see how men nurture people and relationships and how women are competitive and powerful' (Williams 1989, p. 841).

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