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**‘The Future Women Want’ - Gender Equality and Sustainable Development: Towards an agenda for accounting research**

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**ABSTRACT**

For at least the last thirty years accounting researchers have recognised the challenges that both sustainable development and gender equality have presented to accounting research. Yet, despite the volume of research conducted in these areas, and the critique of social and environmental accounting offered by some feminist theorists, few attempts have been made to synthesise these areas of research despite issues of social justice, equity and empowerment pervading each. This paper aims to address these issues in a number of ways: Firstly the paper will critically evaluate the role of accounting research in challenging inequality and unsustainability. We argue for an approach which links gender equality and sustainable development in the interests of social justice, and places the human central to the social side of sustainability. Secondly, the paper explores conceptual and theoretical linkages between gender equality and sustainable development and explores women’s empowerment as part of the process of sustainable development. In order to address this we draw insights from eco-feminist theory to bring more radical concepts of equality to the sustainable development agenda in accounting. Thirdly, we evaluate progress on linking gender equality and sustainable development in practice, examining the tensions inherent in this agenda, by drawing from participant observation and documentary analysis of the actions and outcomes of the Rio + 20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. In addressing these three areas we consider the role of accounting in contributing to a more egalitarian and sustainable world, and draw out implications for accounting research.

**Keywords:** accounting research, gender, sustainability, social justice, feminism