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## Can Applying a Gender Lens to Social Innovation Promote Women's Rights and Gender Equality?

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Graduate Program in Women's Studies and Feminist Research  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy  
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## Abstract

Social innovation is not new, but it is increasingly being called on to provide solutions to some of the world's most pressing social and economic problems. Despite awareness about its importance, research in the field of social innovation is often vague, and there are competing definitions and understandings of the concept. There is also very little research that attempts to connect the field of social innovation with the fields of gender studies, women's studies, feminist research, or men and masculinity studies. This dissertation applies a gender lens to the concept of social innovation. In doing so, it aims to develop the foundations for future research at the intersection of social innovation and gender equality. To conduct this research, I sought an affiliation with the MATCH International Women's Fund, a Canadian organization that provides grants to support women's social innovations in the Global South. This is a qualitative exploratory study in which I used peer-reviewed academic research as well as practitioner tools and knowledge from a range of sectors and disciplines. These include the results of 25 in-depth interviews with people engaged in social innovation or a related field, data from Twitter Canada, and a fellowship experience at Canada's leading innovation hub, MaRS Discovery District. My research demonstrates the need for gender sensitivity and analysis in the field of social innovation. I argue that social innovation will not achieve its full potential if it does not understand how to respond to existing gender hierarchies all over the world. Innovation is about bringing together different perspectives; when we leave an analysis of gender out, we miss out on a lot. A gender analysis is not as simple as including more women in innovation; it is also about how innovation is interpreted and understood.

## Keywords

social innovation, innovation, gender equality, women's rights, women's empowerment, gender, social entrepreneurship, social enterprise, STEM, technology, scale

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## List of Abbreviations

AWID: Association for Women's Rights in Development

CRISES: Centre de Recherche sur les Innovations Sociales

CSI: Centre for Social Innovation

DFID: Department for International Development

Digital Media Zone: DMZ

FRIDA: The Young Feminist Fund

ICRW: International Centre for Research on Women

MaRS: MaRS Discovery District

MATCH: The MATCH International Women's Fund

SMS: Short Message Service

SSHRC: Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada

STEM: Science, technology, engineering, mathematics

STEAM: Science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics

SXSW: South by Southwest Festival

WFN: Women's Funding Network

WILCO: Welfare Innovations at the Local Level in Favour of Cohesion

## Chapter 1

### 1 Introduction

Innovation, as it is commonly understood, most often refers to business, science, technology, and research and development and can be defined most succinctly as “new ideas that work” (Mulgan, Tucker, Rushanara, & Sanders, 2007, p. 8). In the last decade or so, another concept, one that is intricately related to innovation, has appeared in the literature: “social innovation.” Social innovation may also be ideas or new things that work, but a key difference between innovation and social innovation is that in social innovation, the ideas must also “work” to meet social needs, and they must improve people’s lives (Mulgan et al., 2007, p. 8). The Vienna Declaration (2011) states,

The most urgent and important innovations in the 21st century will take place in the social field. This opens up the necessity as well as possibilities for Social Sciences and Humanities to find new roles and relevance by generating knowledge applicable to new dynamics and structures of contemporary and future societies. (p. 2)

Examples of what counts as social innovation are abundant, from the World Wide Web to cooperatives and Girlguiding to crowdfunding and the fair trade movement.

#### 1.1 Research Rationale and Overview

Although social innovation is not new, it has generated significant new interest in the past few years. From my perspective as a researcher, social innovation feels like an emerging field, but little is known about the concept. There are currently few comprehensive overviews or studies of the field and few data sets or long-term analyses of social innovation. Social innovation is under-researched, and the concept itself is not well understood (Rüede & Lurtz, 2012, p. 2). In spite of this, social innovation has gained interest for its perceived ability to address complicated but persistent societal issues: *wicked problems*. Social innovation is included in public policy to address social and

economic problems (Blake & Hanson, 2005; Calàs, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009; Goldenberg, Kamoji, Orton, & Williamson, 2009; Malhotra, Schulte, Patel, & Petesch, 2009). In 2010, for example, the European Union's innovation policy, the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative "Innovation Union," demonstrated its commitment to social innovation.<sup>1</sup> Challenges such as resource scarcity and climate change; economic crisis; growing poverty; widening inequality, aging populations, and chronic disease; gender inequalities; migration; pandemics; and terrorism are often referred to as wicked problems because they are, by their nature, persistent and seemingly impossible to address. The nature of these challenges, combined with "globalization and the rise of the knowledge-based economy . . . have highlighted the need for new and innovative approaches to address these social concerns, energizing what is becoming recognized as social innovation" (Goldenberg et al., 2009, p. vi).

Over the past few years, there has also been an understanding, across a range of organizations and institutions, that women and girls are critical to social and economic progress (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Malhotra et al., 2009). The advancement of gender equality<sup>2</sup> has been embraced around the world as a socially valuable policy goal by governments, nonprofit organizations, and those in the private sector, and there are a record number of investments being made to support this mandate (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Malhotra et al., 2009). The advancement of gender equality is considered essential to improving the lives of women and girls, men and boys. Gender equality is considered to be "good" policy.

Although *social innovation* and *gender equality* are both understood as essential to furthering social and economic progress, there is little interaction between the two fields. As this research will demonstrate, there is limited research bridging the fields of social innovation and gender equality, whether under the umbrella of various fields dedicated to

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<sup>1</sup> For information about the "Innovation Union" please see [http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm)

<sup>2</sup> I understand gender equality to benefit women and men, girls and boys, and I understand gender equality to be relational.

studying innovation or within gender studies, women's studies, feminist research, or studies relating to men and masculinity. Furthermore, I contend that the attention paid to gender is inadequate in the field of social innovation. Women and men face different socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional barriers that must be accounted for when understanding social innovation. To ensure that women and men benefit equitably from the opportunities and outcomes of social innovation, this research seeks to bring a gender-based analysis<sup>3</sup> to the field of social innovation. As this research demonstrates, the field of social innovation has inherited some of the flaws and biases of the broader field of innovation (the field of innovation is considered "gender-blind"<sup>4</sup> or "gender-neutral" and is often highly masculine and male dominated), and subsequently, the contributions of women and girls and non-hegemonic men and boys are not adequately recognized. This research seeks to broaden the construct of social innovation through a gender-based analysis as well as to better understand the contributions of women and girls to the field.

This research is timely. Gender equality and social innovation are each regarded as "good" policy around the world. From the Canadian perspective, Canada has a strong history of social innovation within nonprofits,<sup>5</sup> and the sector is a critical source of social innovation in Canada (Goldenberg, 2004; Goldenberg et al., 2009). For example, MaRS

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<sup>3</sup> A gender-based analysis includes women and girls, men and boys. Often "gender" is taken to mean "women." For this research, I am concerned with women and girls as well as men and boys from non-dominant racial, ethnic, and economic groups (those who may be as invisible to traditional notions of innovation as women and girls). However, at some points in this dissertation, I focus exclusively on women and girls.

<sup>4</sup> The field of innovation considers itself to be "gender-blind" or "gender-neutral" and these terms are used in innovation research. I also use both terms periodically throughout this dissertation and I refer to "blind" spots, more generally, to refer to gaps in research or in approaches to research and practice within fields related to social innovation and gender equality. I do not necessarily endorse the term "gender-blind," and my use of the word "blind" in this dissertation is intended in a respectful manner. I do not intend my use of the word "blind" to be disrespectful or derogatory to people who are blind or visually impaired.

<sup>5</sup> I engaged with two Canadian nonprofit organizations with a focus on social innovation throughout this research. I was a Studio Y fellow at MaRS Discovery District in 2014–2015 as part of their initiative to support social innovation at MaRS. I designed this research in collaboration with MATCH, and I have worked with MATCH since late 2012.

Discovery District,<sup>6</sup> a nonprofit organization located in Toronto, Ontario, was created in 2000 in response to concerns about Canada's position and Canada's contribution to the global innovation economy. MaRS is considered to be Canada's largest innovation hub. To support entrepreneurs and innovators, MaRS offers venture services, funding, systems change work, and facilities. Its focus areas include information and communications technology (ICT), clean technology, and health, and social innovation is a theme that cuts across many areas of work in the space. On any given day, there is a lot happening within the space, from speaker series to conferences to hack-a-thons. In 2004, the Centre for Social Innovation launched its space in Toronto and has more recently expanded to New York City, and Social Innovation Generation<sup>7</sup> was formed at the University of Waterloo in 2007. Most recently, the MATCH International Women's Fund<sup>8</sup> has taken an interest in social innovation. MATCH is a Canadian women's rights organization located in Ottawa, Ontario. MATCH was the brainchild of two Canadian women, Dr. Norma E. Walmsley and Ms. Suzanne Johnson-Harvor, who, after attending the UN Conference for Women in Mexico City in 1975, became inspired to launch an international organization in Canada to support grassroots women-led organizations in the global South (MATCH International, 2013, p. 5). MATCH was the first organization of its kind in Canada, and it was created to 'match' "the needs and resources of Canadian women with the needs and resources of women in the South" (MATCH International, 2013, p. 5). In 2010, the Canadian International Development Agency withdrew its funding to MATCH, leaving the organization with inadequate resources to continue its work. MATCH took time to reevaluate its role as a Canadian women's organization, particularly in light of the changing landscape of women's rights and development work, as well as to understand if there was still a need for an organization with an explicit focus on grassroots women's movements in the global South. After conducting some research

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<sup>6</sup> For further information about MaRS, please see <https://www.marsdd.com/>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://uwaterloo.ca/waterloo-institute-for-social-innovation-and-resilience/about/sigwaterloo>

<sup>8</sup> For further information about MATCH, please see <http://matchinternational.org/> and for more information about the history of MATCH, please see <http://matchinternational.org/history/>

on the Canadian international development landscape, MATCH realized that mainstream development practice in Canada had shifted so far away from serving grassroots organizations that there was indeed an urgent need for organizations like MATCH. It was at this time that the executive director, Jessica Tomlin, became intrigued with social innovation. With the support of the World University Service of Canada in 2011, and with significant additional donor support in 2012, MATCH underwent a renewal<sup>9</sup> to become Canada's first international women's fund, investing in women's social innovations.<sup>10</sup>

Goldenberg et al. (2009) indicated that Canada has a strong history of social innovation—across nonprofits, governments, and sometimes for-profits—although “Canada has not adopted broader models for public support, funding, and encouragement of social innovation as has been done in other countries” (p. 30). Canada lags behind some other countries with respect to social innovation as well as innovation writ large.<sup>11</sup> There does not appear to be a clearly Canadian model for social innovation, and the Canadian government does not have an office that is dedicated to social innovation as a crosscutting issue (Goldenberg et al., 2009, p. 22). Recent federal budgets provide more proof of Canada's inattention to social innovation. Released in March 2015 by the new majority government, the budget describes the goal of “Building a More Innovative Country” as a way to accelerate growth for the middle class in Canada.<sup>12</sup> Although the budget indicates that approximately CAN\$800 million will be invested as part of the

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<sup>9</sup> I have learned this through my experiences with MATCH, as well as through my interview with the executive director, Jessica Tomlin.

<sup>10</sup> It was around this time that MATCH changed its name from MATCH International to The MATCH International Women's Fund.

<sup>11</sup> Canada continues to be ranked only moderately by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (see rankings at <http://www.oecd.org/canada/>). The OECD is an international authority for innovation policy research. The OECD has research capacity, and it develops innovation indicators. National governments often rely on the OECD's research and policy manuals as a source of legitimacy for decision making at the national level.

<sup>12</sup> See the complete federal budget here <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2016/docs/plan/toc-tdm-en.html>

government's upcoming "Innovation Agenda" (Department of Finance Canada, 2016), it is important to note that the agenda does not currently include any stated commitment to social innovation, nor does it appear to include dedicated funding to support women and girls in innovation.<sup>13</sup> As this research will demonstrate, it is imperative that any agenda pertaining to innovation in Canada fully embrace social innovation as well as gender-based analysis. In this way, it is an opportune moment for Canada to actively engage with social innovation and to do so in a manner that understands that an analysis of gender is integral to innovation policy. Many countries have embraced social innovation, but few have done so with an appreciation for gender relations and inequality. This provides Canada with a unique opportunity to become a global leader in innovation policy and practice.

## 1.2 Overview of Research Methodology

This research is justified by gaps in academic scholarship as well as blind spots in practitioner policy and practice. Academic research on social innovation and gender equality (often, but not always, defined as women's empowerment) is rare. The International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) is one of a few organizations to produce scholarly research about how social innovations can empower women and girls and advance gender equality. This research examined innovations in three domains that intersect with areas with need and important entry points for achieving women's empowerment: (a) technology use, (b) social norm change, and (c) economic resilience (Malhotra et al., 2009, p. 5). ICRW's research has emphasized that progressive social change can be created through the introduction of appropriate technologies, shifts in

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<sup>13</sup> It is difficult to assess the full scope of the "Innovation Agenda" from a budgetary guide, although the agenda, as detailed throughout the budget, appears to be framed by the assumption that innovation is a gender-neutral endeavor. Forthcoming research from Rowe (2016) demonstrates that innovation is not gender-neutral and that gender influences the outcomes of innovation policy. Both Crowden (2003) and Pouragheli and Beckton (2013) have demonstrated that Canada's current innovation policy is framed by the assumption that innovation is gender-neutral. Therefore, I believe it is fair to question whether the latest "Innovation Agenda" will include gender-based analysis. I will discuss this further in chapter 5. Suffice it to say, it is imperative that any agenda pertaining to innovation in Canada fully embrace social innovation as well as gender-based analysis.

social attitudes about misogynistic practices, or increased access to economic opportunities and financial innovations (Malhotra et al., 2009). The research has identified seven criteria that empowering innovations have in common, including breaking boundaries for strategic purposes, engaging women in design and diffusion, cultivating champions, creating “buzz” to make it “stick,” capitalizing on opportune timing and context, targeting efforts to reach poor women, and synergizing top-down and bottom-up approaches (Malhotra et al., 2009, pp. 10–11). Innovations that make a significant difference in women’s lives are expected to fulfill at least a few of the seven established criteria. Although I do not endorse this research in its entirety, it functioned as a guideline for this project at least partially, because there is so little literature to draw upon on this topic at the present time.

This project has been built in collaboration with the MATCH International Women’s Fund. I have worked with MATCH since 2012, through their transition to become Canada’s first international women’s fund, which is also the first social innovation fund for women globally. This research is mutually beneficial as the topic of social innovation and gender equality is a current priority for MATCH. The collaboration with MATCH enabled me to conduct this research in a manner that bridges both the theoretical knowledge gaps and practical concerns about social innovation and gender equality. This research collaboration has also received three Mitacs Accelerate internship grants. Mitacs is a national research organization that connects for-profit companies (and the occasional nonprofit) to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The federal and provincial Canadian governments as well as the partnering organization (MATCH) provided funding for the grant.

Because I am one of the few academic researchers to study this topic, I have approached this research as exploratory. I have remained open to adapting the methodology throughout the research process. I hope that the issues identified by my research will provide the grounding and detail against which other related issues and research, perhaps using very different methodologies, can be tested, verified, and advanced.



I conducted a multidisciplinary literature review that draws on the fields of social innovation, gender equality, social entrepreneurship, innovation, gender and innovation, and international development to identify blind spots and to demonstrate the need for gender analysis in the field of social innovation. The literature review provided the conceptual anchors for this research, and the results of the literature review enabled me to refine and focus the questions for the semi-structured in-depth interviews.

I selected key informants in the related fields of gender, women's rights, and development as well as those engaged directly in social innovation and the closely related field of social entrepreneurship in academic, private, and nonprofit sectors. I interviewed 27 professionals in 25 interviews about their areas of professional specialization. My approach to the interviews was exploratory and adaptive, and I was continuously engaged in a process of data collection, data analysis, and the generation of new research questions and research directions.

I chose to conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews because this allows for the knowledge that is gained through research to be co-constructed (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 132). I used theme identification and explanation building as my techniques to analyze the findings from interviews. The results of the interviews are also juxtaposed with data that I developed with Twitter Canada, using their proprietary data analytics tool, Case Builder. Furthermore, all of this is contextualized through my experience as a Studio Y fellow at MaRS Discovery District, Canada's largest innovation hub. The fellowship allowed me to fully immerse myself in the professional spaces of social innovation and innovation.

I am dedicated to developing research that is both theoretically sound and practically useful. This approach to research has been particularly useful to this project, as both social innovation and gender equality are fields that bridge academic and practitioner research, approaches, priorities, and concerns.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

This research analyzes the field of social innovation from a gender perspective. In doing so, it documents women's and girls' contributions to social innovation. This research could strengthen Canada's contribution to the growing field of social innovation, inform Canada's approach to innovation policy, and support the establishment and future directions of the MATCH International Women's Fund.

### **Primary Objectives:**

1. To bring a gender-based analysis to the field of social innovation
2. To document women's and girls' contributions to the field of social innovation
3. To inform and influence social innovation research, policy, and practice in Canada
4. To support the work of the MATCH International Women's Fund

### **Secondary Objectives:**

- To highlight the gap in the current literature between the fields of social innovation and gender equality and to contribute toward narrowing the gap
- To contribute research to the field of social innovation with a gender analysis and point to blind spots and areas for future research
- To identify future areas of research that bridge the fields of social innovation and gender equality, with the aim of broadening both fields

## 1.4 Organization of Chapters

Chapter 1 provides a rationale for the research, an overview of its major objectives, and a summary of its theoretical and methodological contributions to the field.

Chapter 2 provides a multidisciplinary literature review that draws on the fields of social innovation, gender equality, social entrepreneurship, innovation, gender and innovation, and international development as a way to demonstrate the need for gender analysis in the

field of social innovation. The chapter also provides a discussion about the ways in which social innovation and gender equality may each advance a neoliberal agenda.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of my theoretical and methodological approach to this research. The chapter details how this research came to fruition. It provides an overview of the initial meeting with the MATCH International Women's Fund and the nature of the relationship with MATCH. I outline the interview questions, process, and analysis, and I provide a justification for the data collected with Twitter as well as a discussion about the importance of Twitter data for academic research. I also describe my experience as a Studio Y fellow at MaRS Discovery District.

Chapter 4 details the findings of the interviews. I describe and analyze the consensus and conflicts found within the interview results, and I also point to a number of blind spots and areas for further research. I include a discussion about the field of social innovation, gender and social innovation, and the concept of scale.

Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion about how this research has helped to advance the understanding of social innovation and gender equality, and it details the broader lessons learned throughout the research process as well as the challenges and opportunities of doing research on social innovation from a gender perspective. I outline suggested areas of future research and recommendations to academics and practitioners in both fields.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of social innovation as well as a number of examples of social innovation. This chapter brings together different bodies of literature, including social innovation, gender equality, innovation, gender and innovation, social entrepreneurship, and international development, as a way to illustrate the gap in research bridging the field of social innovation and gender equality. It provides justification for this thesis, and it also raises important questions about this research and its relationship to neoliberalism.

#### 2.1 The Rise of Social Innovation

In recent years, social innovation in various forms has become a topic of discussion across sectors, disciplines, and industries all around the globe. We have witnessed the surge of social innovation funds like the McConnell Social Innovation Fund;<sup>14</sup> of incubator programs like the Digital Media Zone<sup>15</sup> at Ryerson University; and of accelerator programs like the Next 36.<sup>16</sup> There are prizes and awards for social innovators, such as the Governor General's Innovations awards,<sup>17</sup> launched recently under the leadership of His Excellency the Right Honorable David Johnston, and competitions and challenges, such as Challenge.gov, put forth by the Obama administration as a way for members of the public to collectively address local, national, and global challenges.<sup>18</sup> Universities have established research centers on social innovation—for example, the INSEAD Social Innovation Centre, the Centre for Social Innovation at Stanford University, the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/de/programs/social-innovation-fund>

<sup>15</sup> See <http://dmz.ryerson.ca/>

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.thenext36org.ca/>

<sup>17</sup> See <https://innovation.gg.ca/>

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.challenge.gov/list/>

University, and the Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience at the University of Waterloo—and it has become increasingly common for universities to offer courses and professional certifications in social innovation. Even the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada supports a Canada Research Chair in Social Innovation and Community Engagement and has a CAN\$15 million fund to support social innovation research.<sup>19</sup> From think tanks like the Young Foundation; to consultancies like McKinsey and Company; to private foundations like the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation; to nonprofits like MaRS Discovery District; to charities like Nesta; and from the White House to city halls, all levels of government and civil society are becoming increasingly focused on social innovation. Even the mayor of Seoul City, Wonsoo Park,<sup>20</sup> has been nicknamed the “Social Innovation Mayor” because he identifies social innovation as central to his approach to leadership. From the creation of the World Wide Web to cooperatives, Girlguiding, crowdfunding, and the fair trade movement, examples of social innovation are everywhere.

## 2.2 Understanding Social Innovation

Social innovation is a response to the acceleration and persistence of global crises and so-called wicked problems. These challenges range from resource scarcity to climate change, economic crisis, widening inequalities, growing poverty, chronic disease, aging populations, migration, pandemics, terrorism, and gender inequality. These challenges are difficult to resolve, and existing structures and policies have been unable to address them to a point of resolution.

Although the term *social innovation* has gained prominence in the last decade or two, the concept itself is not new, and as Mulgan (2012) noted, there has been writing on social innovation for nearly two centuries. Social innovation’s history, combined with its multidisciplinary nature, has contributed to a number of meanings and uses of the term.

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<sup>19</sup> For more information about this funding, please see [http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/news\\_room-salle\\_de\\_presse/press\\_releases-communiqués/2016/ccsif-fisdcc-](http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/news_room-salle_de_presse/press_releases-communiqués/2016/ccsif-fisdcc-)

<sup>20</sup> See <http://english.seoul.go.kr/get-to-know-us/mayors-office/mayors-bio/>

Some definitions are detailed but precise. For example, Phills, Deiglmeier, and Miller (2008) defined social innovation as

a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals. Social innovation can be a product, production process, or technology (much like innovation in general), but it can also be a principle, an idea, a piece of legislation, a social movement, intervention, or some combination of them. (p. 39)

Other definitions are more encompassing. For example, the Centre for Social Innovation (n.d.), a long-running social enterprise started in Toronto, Ontario, understands social innovation to refer to

the creation, development, adoption, and integration of new concepts and practices that put people and the planet first. Social innovations resolve existing social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges. Some social innovations are systems-changing—they permanently alter the perceptions, behaviours, and structures that previously gave rise to these challenges.

*Social innovation* is often used interchangeably with terms such as *social entrepreneurship* and *social enterprise* (Phills et al., 2008; Yeung, 2007). These terms overlap in many ways but are also distinct. For example, *social entrepreneurship* is most often used to describe the behaviors and attitudes of the people who create new ventures for social purposes. According to Phills et al. (2008), the typical attributes of a social entrepreneur include traits such as the willingness to take risks, resourcefulness, ambition, and persistence, and social enterprises are the businesses and for-profit

ventures with social objectives often started by social entrepreneurs (pp. 36–37). In my experience as a social entrepreneur with a social enterprise,<sup>21</sup> the biggest distinction between a social enterprise and a traditional business is the motivation of the entrepreneur; social entrepreneurs are driven by a desire to address a social problem as well as to earn a profit. Social innovation is broader than either social entrepreneurship or social enterprise, although it often involves social entrepreneurs and supporting the organizations and enterprises that they create.

Contributions to social innovation are found in disciplines, ranging from urban planning to fashion, economics, social work, food security, and political science. The boundaries around what social innovation is are ambiguous; there is not a single, clear body of “social innovation” knowledge. According to Pol and Ville (2009), “it is an open secret that the term ‘social innovation’ is used in various and overlapping ways in different disciplines” (p. 879). This is in part due to the novelty, or perhaps heightened interest, of the term as well as to the nature of the field; social innovation looks and feels different from fields and sectors and within different contexts. Social innovation is very much a practice-led field (Mulgan, 2012). The understandings and conceptualizations of the field often emerge because of the things that people *do* on the ground, and they are supplemented by the thinking and theorizing of researchers. In agreement with Mulgan (2015), social innovation cannot be a solely academic field; it is necessary for the research to be coupled with practice.<sup>22</sup> It seems that the practice of social innovation has happened ahead of the research and theoretical understanding of the field; a number of scholars have agreed that to date, the academic field of social innovation is insufficiently

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<sup>21</sup> During my time as a Studio Y fellow at MaRS Discovery District, I launched a social enterprise that puts this research into practice. I am the cofounder and partner of a consulting firm that works with organizations (start-ups, institutions, and companies) to improve innovation with the help of gender analysis. I provide a further explanation about this in chapter 3.

<sup>22</sup> This understanding of the field has shaped my approach to the research process; I have drawn on academic and theoretical research as well as applied and practice-orientated documents, and I have also spent time in innovation spaces, both as a fellow at MaRS Discovery District, Canada’s largest innovation hub, and within the broader social innovation community. I expand on this in chapter 3.

conceptualized and theorized (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010; Montgomery, 2016; Mulgan et al., 2007).

The vagueness around social innovation has its advantages; there have been many different interpretations across disciplines and sectors. At the same time, the openness that constitutes social innovation can seem endless; the lack of clarity surrounding the term, and the openness of the field, may also have disadvantages. There have been several attempts to organize the field of social innovation (Caulier-Grice, Davies, Patrick, & Norman, 2012; Pol & Ville, 2009; Rüede & Lurtz, 2012), although there is little consensus among researchers as to how best to categorize the different meanings of the concept. According to Rüede and Lurtz (2012), previous attempts to structure the field have not used a systematically grounded methodology that accommodates the concept of social innovation across disciplines. The authors found that previous efforts to categorize the field have been limited because studies have approached the field of social innovation either too narrowly or too broadly or because their approaches have been biased toward particular fields of research. Rüede and Lurtz (2012) conducted a systemic review of the field of social innovation, and they mapped out some of the prominent conceptualizations of social innovation within a range of disciplines as a way to identify common patterns within social innovation. Their research was guided by the question: What are the different ways in which social innovation is conceptualized, and what do they mean? The authors identified seven distinct conceptualizations of social innovation:

to do something good in/for society, to change social practices and/or structure, to contribute to urban and community development, to reorganize work processes, to imbue technological innovations with cultural meaning and relevance, to make changes in the area of social work, and to innovate by means of digital connectivity. (p. 7)

Caulier-Grice et al. (2012) also completed a literature review of the field of social innovation. In agreement with Rüede and Lurtz (2012), Caulier-Grice et al. (2012) found that the field is insufficiently conceptualized, and they identified a number of core themes



and common features from their literature review. The authors indicated the following: Social innovation transcends sectors (public, private, and the third—civil society—sector), social innovation creates new roles and builds new relationships, it is open and collaborative, it is a distinct subset or offspring of innovation (business, technology, and science), it has a product and process dimension, it has particular stages and phases (from inception to diffusion and adoption, to the impact and outcomes of the social innovation), it is context specific, it tends to be community inspired and driven, it is underpinned by values (there must be an element of social good involved), it leads to specific outcomes that are an improvement on existing practices, it changes social relations concerning governance, and it empowers beneficiaries by increasing their sociopolitical capabilities and access to resources.

The research by Rüede and Lurtz (2012) was traditional academic writing,<sup>23</sup> likely read by other academics, and though rigorous in nature, Caulier-Grice et al.'s (2012) work was more applied and practitioner-friendly.<sup>24</sup> In their findings, both Rüede and Lurtz (2012) and Caulier-Grice et al. (2012) highlighted the relationship of social innovation to innovation as well as the importance of social innovation transcending sector divisions. However, only Caulier-Grice et al. (2012) discussed the progression of stages of social innovation, which included prompts, proposals, prototyping, sustaining, scaling, and systems change. The authors found the existing literature in the field to have a strong focus on the initial stage (often the ideation phase) of a social innovation as well as on the later stages of the innovation process (diffusion, replication, and scaling). The authors found the literature detailing the patterns and stages of social innovation, as well as the ways in which social innovation is implemented and supported, to be sparse. Caulier-Grice et al. (2012) also noted that the literature highlights examples of social innovation that are deemed “successful,” while there is little discussion of social innovations that are

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<sup>23</sup> The authors indicated this research to be a part of the project “Social Innovations in Germany.”

<sup>24</sup> The authors indicated that this research was commissioned as part of the Theoretical, Empirical, and Policy Foundations for Social Innovation in Europe (TEPSIE) program.

considered to be “failures.” There is a noticeable difference between the two literature reviews in terms of tone and language used as well as the recommendations noted here.

Bouchard et al. (2015) found that much of the research on social innovation has been done in the form of case studies owing to the nature of social innovation and because the concept is not well codified. For example, the authors noted a project at the Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience that is looking at historical case studies of social innovation, such as the legalization of contraception in Canada and the development of the World Wide Web, to understand the different trajectories that social innovation can take. While Bouchard et al. (2015) agreed that qualitative cross-analysis of case studies can be useful, the authors suggested that a qualitative approach may also be limiting. As such, a team of researchers from the Centre de Recherche sur les Innovations Sociales (CRISES) has developed the CRISES Database on Social Innovations. The researchers have argued that they will learn more about social innovation by using quantitative analysis on a larger number of case studies of social innovation than they will by using a qualitative analysis of a smaller group of case studies. Bouchard et al. (2015) indicate that to date, the database has drawn on research of social innovation from the province of Quebec, and they intend to include data from other provinces and countries.

## 2.3 Examples of Social Innovation

Even without an agreed-upon definition,<sup>25</sup> as the range of preceding examples indicates, it is clear that social innovation has reemerged and is in the process of being re-conceptualized or rejuvenated. Some social innovations are adaptations of or incremental improvements to existing things, such as fitting a gear system on a rickshaw to assist with the burden of pedaling uphill, or using a gravity ropeway to save time and energy when

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<sup>25</sup> Given the nature and stage of the field, I have opted not to settle on a specific definition of social innovation at this time, though I understand the need for the research discussing the definition of social innovation (or lack thereof), conceptualizations of the field of social innovation, and the principles of social innovation. I have made a concerted effort to strike a balance between the academic and practitioner perspectives in this portion of the literature review.

transporting heavy produce to markets in mountainous areas of Nepal, or attaching a cycle-like device to a manual washing machine to save time and energy, or adapting three-dimensional printing to produce low-cost prescription or customizable drugs. The Soccket is a soccer ball that, when kicked, charges and stores energy and can be a source of power in under-resourced areas.<sup>26</sup> The tableware set Eatwell helps people living with dementia to eat their meals by combining bright colors, ergonomics, and human-centered design.<sup>27</sup> Tarmac is a materials company that developed a more porous concrete called Topmix Permeable, which can absorb 880 gallons of water per minute and can help to reduce flooding on roads.<sup>28</sup> The Connectivity Lab at Facebook has been working to offer wireless Internet access to isolated regions of the world, and Facebook has been prototyping a solar-powered Internet-delivering aircraft as well as a laser that can transmit data from the aircraft.<sup>29</sup>

As Nicholls and Murdock (2012) discussed, social innovation can often be defined by its ability to cut across and/or combine the “conventionally disparate logics of the private, public, and civil society sectors” (p. 50). Some social innovations happen in the space between sectors or at their points of intersection. The Grameen Danone partnership<sup>30</sup> is an example of a social innovation that involves more than one sector. The founder of Grameen Bank, Muhammad Yunus, and the CEO of Groupe Danone, Franck Riboud, formed a partnership that bridges the private and civil society sectors to produce yogurt for children in Bangladesh. Another example is the collaboration between the Ikea Foundation and the United Nations, Better Shelter,<sup>31</sup> which distributes refugee shelters to places such as Iraq and Ethiopia. The shelters draw on the philosophy of Ikea: The shelters are modular, flat packed, and solar powered, and they are said to take only a few

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<sup>26</sup> See <http://unchartedplay.com/>

<sup>27</sup> See <http://www.eatwellset.com/>

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.tarmac.com/solutions/readymix/topmix-permeable/>

<sup>29</sup> See <https://info.internet.org/en/story/connectivity-lab/>

<sup>30</sup> See <http://www.grameencreativelab.com/live-examples/grameen-danone-foods-ltd.html>

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.bettershelter.org/>

hours to assemble. Although a bit different than the other examples, Pope Francis has recently aligned the Roman Catholic Church with the climate change movement. Francis was a trained chemist before joining the seminary, and he is now building strong alliances between the Church and the environmental movement, expanding the reach of the climate change movement by framing it as a moral issue to fellow Catholics. Although this may seem like an unlikely partnership, it may prove fruitful.

Some examples of social innovation are distinctive and provide new models for doing and new ways of thinking or rethinking. The field of social finance builds on traditional approaches to financial management and principles of social change. According to the MaRS Centre for Impact Investing (n.d.), social finance is understood as an approach to managing money that helps to address social challenges. Cahill (2010) argued the field of social finance rethinks traditional approaches to finance and investments and uses market systems to deliver social and economic returns. Cahill (2010) indicated a number of concepts and practices that can be considered under the umbrella of social finance, such as social venture capital, “a form of venture capital investing that provides capital to businesses and social enterprises that are deemed socially and environmentally responsible” (p. 266), and impact investing, the practice of “placing capital in businesses and funds that generate social and/or environmental good and at least a nominal return to the investor” (p. 267).<sup>32</sup> Gender lens investing<sup>33</sup> builds on the field of social finance to also integrate the knowledge and networks of those working to advance gender equality. According to Anderson and Miles (2015) in a report released by the Criterion Institute, the field of gender lens investing incorporates “a gender lens into systems of finance to get to better outcomes” (p. 8). Anderson and Miles argued that “by ensuring that gender matters in finance, the field of gender lens investing has the potential to transform the

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<sup>32</sup> See Cahill, 2010 for a better understanding of social finance, particularly pp. 266–269.

<sup>33</sup> A few of the interview participants cited the field of social finance as an example of social innovation because it has the ability to transform systems. However, a few of the participants felt that gender lens investing should not be a category of impact investing because a gender lens is imperative to all kinds of investing. They argued that the existence of the field of gender lens investing may limit gender analysis to specific pockets of investing.

core assumptions underlying a massive system of power” (p. 8). The field of gender lens investing is new, and it is evolving and expanding, as the authors have indicated, so that gender lens investing must “include women and girls in the current systems of capital, but also work to both use and transform the systems of finance so that they can affect the key challenges of equitable social change” (p. 8).<sup>34</sup> Social finance also includes microloans, community investments, and grant-making institutions like women’s funds. In particular, women’s funds are grant-making institutions that seek to “achieve lasting community gains by addressing the root causes of social problems and transforming systems, attitudes, and social norms” (Foundation Centre and Women’s Funding Network, 2009, p. x). There are now hundreds of women’s funds around the world. The Global Fund for Women<sup>35</sup> is the largest fund to date, with an international focus seeking to advance women’s human rights. Smaller examples include Mama Cash,<sup>36</sup> which is a Netherlands-based women’s fund; the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF), which is an Africa-wide grant-making foundation; and the Canadian Women’s Foundation, which is a national foundation with a domestic focus dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls.<sup>37</sup>

Leveraging the collective power of people through various forms of technology is another interesting area under the umbrella of social innovation. For example, crowdsourcing enlists the services of a number of people, often unpaid, via the Internet. Platforms like Innocentive, Challenge.gov, and OpenIdeo draw on the power of collective intelligence

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<sup>34</sup> See Anderson and Miles (2015) for an insightful analysis of the current state of the field of gender lens investing. This research comes from the work of the Criterion Institute, which has played a critical role in envisioning and developing the field of gender lens investing. The report is the result of a number of “convergences” on gender lens investing, hosted by Criterion from 2011 through 2014.

<sup>35</sup> For an overview of the Global Fund for Women and the work of the organization, please refer to <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/>

<sup>36</sup> For an overview of Mama Cash and the work of the organization, please refer to <http://www.mamacash.org/>

<sup>37</sup> For an overview of the Canadian Women’s Foundation and the work of the organization please refer to <http://www.canadianwomen.org/>

to build solutions to difficult problems, whether at the local, national, or global level. People contribute knowledge to sites with open source software such as Wikipedia; they write code to update open source software products like Drupal, a content management software; and they crowd-create books, such as the recent book titled *Innovating Women: The Changing Face of Technology*, which features research, stories, and perspectives about women's participation in the global innovation economy. Ushahidi is a nonprofit software company that develops open source software, and it was introduced during Kenya's presidential election in 2007 as a method to document violence and political corruption.<sup>38</sup> The organization uses the concept of crowdsourcing by collecting reports of violence through e-mail and text message, which are then placed on Google Maps. Similarly, HarassMap (which uses the open source platform Ushahidi) was founded by four young women in Egypt to help women document incidents of sexual harassment through SMS, their Web site, or their various social media outlets, which are then placed onto an online map of Egypt. Women Under Siege<sup>39</sup> is a global project that looks at how rape and sexual violence are used during times of conflict. The organization's Syria-specific projects crowdsource data on sexual violence in Syria, similar to HarassMap, to geolocate where acts of sexual violence occur. Similarly, Hollaback! is the name of an application for smart phones as well as a growing movement that allows people to document street harassment by posting pictures and narrative accounts of street harassment and sharing it to a publicly viewable map.<sup>40</sup> Take Back the Tech<sup>41</sup> is an initiative that gathers incidences of tech-related violence against women, such as cyberstalking and online harassment, to help combat digital violence. The organization has done an analysis of the data collected to provide insight into online violence against

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<sup>38</sup> Refer to <https://www.usahidi.com/> for a full understanding of Ushahidi.

<sup>39</sup> Refer to <http://www.womenundersiegeproject.org/> for a full understanding of Women Under Siege.

<sup>40</sup> Refer to <http://www.ihollaback.org/> for a full understanding of Hollaback! and their work.

<sup>41</sup> Refer to <https://www.takebackthetech.net/> for a full understanding of Take Back the Tech.

women to help shape advocacy strategies for women's rights organizations working in the digital space.

Crowdfunding is a collective effort of individuals pooling their money, usually via the Internet, and one of the many platforms, such as Kickstarter, Indiegogo, and GoFundMe (arguably the three most popular sites), to help people pursue degrees or fund projects. There are also a number of niche platforms that support more specific things, from disaster relief to interesting start-up companies to unique products and independent film productions. Razoo<sup>42</sup> is a crowdfunding platform specifically for nonprofit causes, whereas the Small Change Fund<sup>43</sup> helps to support groups working on issues of environmental sustainability and social justice. Barnraiser<sup>44</sup> provides a platform for food innovators to raise money for food-related projects. Unbound<sup>45</sup> is a site for hopeful writers to pitch their book ideas and get funded. Mosaic<sup>46</sup> is a platform that allows people to invest in high-quality solar projects and receive repayments with interest. Spacehive<sup>47</sup> is a platform that specializes in neighborhood improvement projects. In 2012, Catapult, a partner-based crowdfunding site exclusively for women and girls, was launched to fund gender equality projects. According to Catapult,<sup>48</sup> 432 projects have been crowdfunded with 192 partners in 86 countries (Catapult, 2014).

Social innovations can be disruptive and generative; as Caulier-Grice et al., (2012) argued, some social innovations disrupt patterns of productions, consumption, and

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<sup>42</sup> Refer to <https://www.razoo.com/us/home/> for a better understanding of the Razoo platform.

<sup>43</sup> Refer to <https://smallchangefund.org/> for a better understanding of the Small Change Fund platform.

<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.barnraiser.us/>

<sup>45</sup> See <https://www.unbound.org/>

<sup>46</sup> See <https://joinmosaic.com/>

<sup>47</sup> See <https://www.spacehive.com/>

<sup>48</sup> See <http://catapult.org/> for a further understanding of the Catapult platform.

distribution, and they can also generate new ideas or inspirations for innovations. The women's movement is an intellectual, cultural, political, and economic movement from which thousands of social innovations have grown and continue to grow. From the victories of the early women's suffrage movement and the ongoing battle for women's reproductive freedoms, from women's use of smokeless stoves in Uganda to the development of a urine-powered generator by four teenaged girls in Nigeria, the women's movement in and of itself is a definitive example of social innovation.<sup>49</sup> Periscope<sup>50</sup> allows anyone with a smart phone to share a live broadcast of whatever he or she is witnessing. Periscope can be used to live stream everything from civil war to police corruption to pets; it has provided an alternative means for people to share an unfiltered and live perspective of events from around the world. Pembient<sup>51</sup> is a biotechnology start-up that is attempting to disrupt the practice of poaching, which has endangered black rhinos, by three-dimensional printing horns with the same physical and genetic properties as wild horns.

## 2.4 Limited Engagement Between Social Innovation and Gender Equality

A substantive body of research discussing the definition of social innovation is emerging, conceptualizations of the field of social innovation are being explored, and the principles of social innovation are being discussed—all because social innovation is considered as a way to address difficult problems. At the same time as the interest in social innovation is growing, the gender equality movement continues to gain prominence and support. Gender equality has been embraced as a socially valuable policy goal by governments,

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<sup>49</sup> The MATCH International Women's Fund has drawn on my initial thesis proposal, as well as subsequent pieces of my writing (I have shared these with MATCH) to develop their understanding of social innovation (as included on their website).

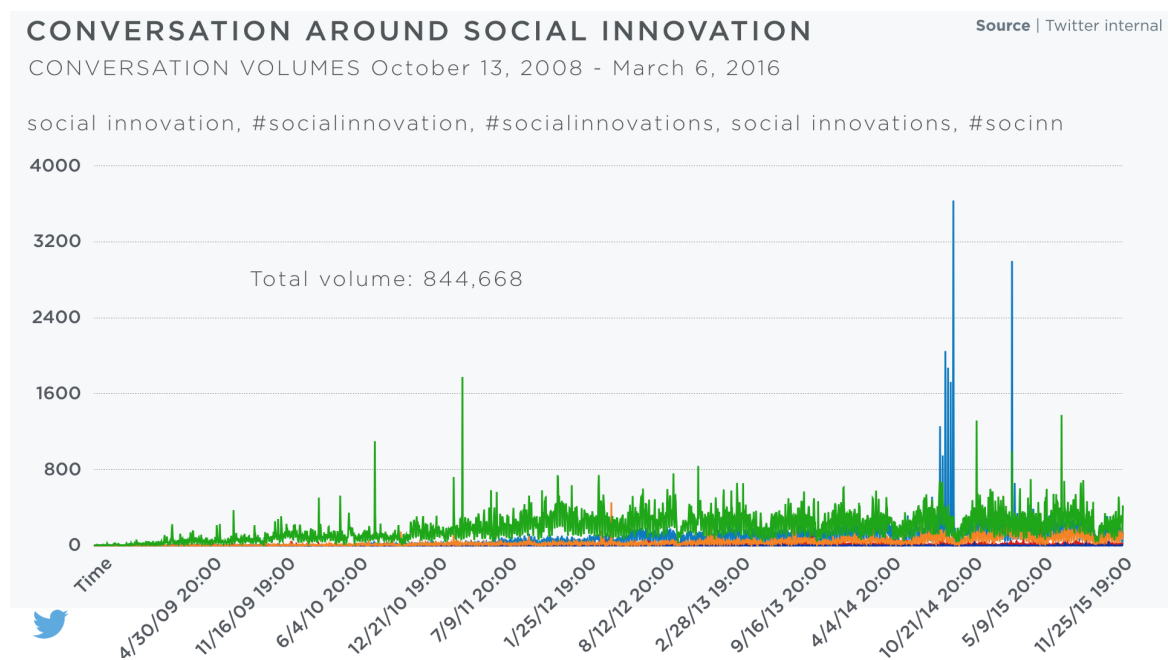
<sup>50</sup> See <https://www.periscope.tv/> for a further understanding of Periscope and how it works.

<sup>51</sup> See <http://signup.pembient.com/> for a further understanding of their work.



nonprofit organizations, and private-sector actors (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Malhotra et al., 2009).

Much has been happening around both of these conversations in the past few years. Figures 1 and 2 provide time series visualizations of tweets pertaining to “social innovation” and “gender equality.” Figure 1 (please see chapter 3 for a detailed description of the methods used to develop this chart) indicates that there were 844,668 unique tweets between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, using a number of search terms related to social innovation. Figure 2 indicates that there were approximately 49 million unique tweets between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, using search terms related to gender equality. These two search results provide an idea of the evolution and volume of each respective conversation on the Twitter platform.



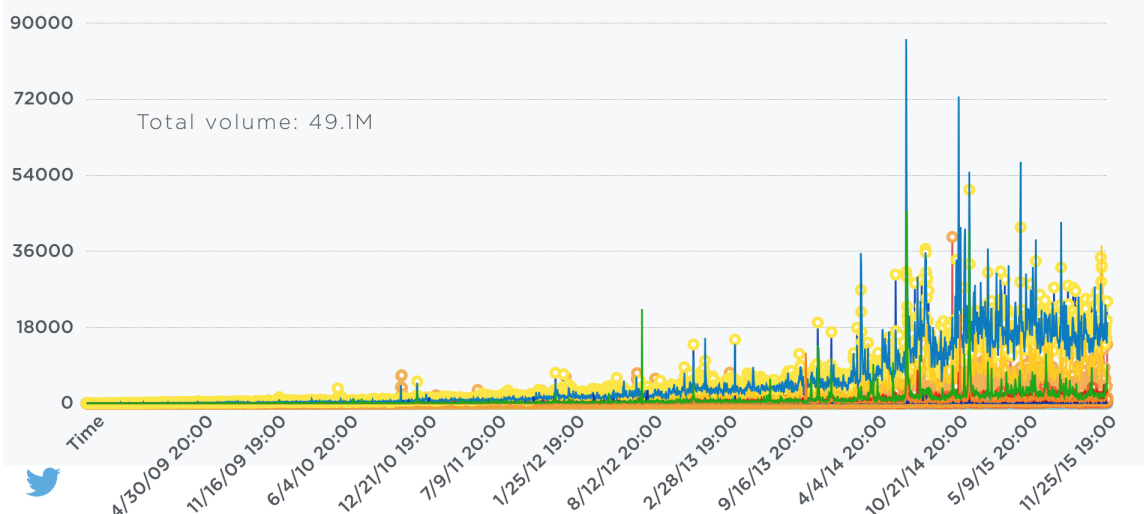
**Figure 1: Time series visualization of tweets pertaining to “social innovation.” This chart provides a visual representation of the volume of unique tweets (approximately 844,668) between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, with search terms related to “social innovation.” From Twitter internal data.**

## CONVERSATION AROUND GENDER EQUALITY

### CONVERSATION VOLUMES October 13, 2008 - March 6, 2016

Source | Twitter internal

gender equality, #genderequality, womens rights, #womensrights, feminism, #feminism, feminists, #feminists, feminist, #feminist, gender inequality, #genderinequality, feminist movement, #feministmovement, #womensmovement, sexism, #sexism, feminisms, #feminisms, women's empowerment, #womens empowerment, gender bias, #genderbias, womens movement.



**Figure 2: Time series visualization of tweets pertaining to “gender equality.” This chart provides a visual representation of the volume of unique tweets (approximately 49.1 million) between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, with search terms related to “gender equality.” From Twitter internal data.**

As Figures 1 and 2 indicate, the conversations around social innovation and gender equality have grown significantly in the past few years, and the conversation around gender equality is substantially larger than the conversation around social innovation (which is to be expected, since the gender equality, women’s, and feminist movements are long-running and powerful social movements). In late 2012, I became intrigued with the field of social innovation because, in agreement with Mulgan (2015), I understand social innovation to be about much more than a field with clearly defined boundaries; I understand social innovation to be about possibilities. I initially appreciated the optimistic feel around the concept, but as I spent more time researching the field, it quickly became apparent that there was little thought about gender inequality in the field of social innovation. In fact, there was very seldom any mention of women, women’s rights, gender, or gender equality in the scholarly and practitioner literature that I was reading at the time. If social innovation is meant to address the world’s most intractable, or “wicked,” problems, why is gender inequality not mentioned more often? Gender

inequality is a barrier to creating a more equal society—it is, by definition, a wicked problem.

In the preceding overview of the field of social innovation, I have made a concerted effort to include examples of social innovation that address gender inequalities. However, there is strong evidence to suggest that there has been limited engagement between the field of social innovation and gender theory, feminist research, women's studies, and the study of men and masculinity from an academic and practitioner's perspective.

A comprehensive review of published academic and practitioner research demonstrates the limited engagement between the fields of social innovation and gender equality. A research report commissioned by the Canadian Policy Research Networks on social innovation in Canada made no mention of gender equality. The report identified new trends and models in social innovation, and it noted the need for further research to be conducted to increase the understanding of social innovation in Canada and internationally (Goldenberg et al., 2009); however, the research report made no mention of the terms *gender equality*, *gender*, *women*, or *girls*, nor did it refer even once to the concept of gender equality. Predictably, the recommendations for areas of future research in the field of social innovation did not include research involving gender equality. Goldenberg et al. (2009) did not address gender equality in their research, nor did Caulier-Grice et al. (2012), Jenson and Harrison (2013), Howaldt and Schwarz (2010), or Rüede and Lurtz (2012). Although there is consensus among the aforementioned authors that the field of social innovation is currently inadequately conceptualized and under-researched, and though the authors each make recommendations for areas of further research, a conversation about gender equality is absent.

An analysis of gender is also noticeably absent from Cahill (2010), Mulgan et al. (2007), and Nicholls, Simon, and Gabriel (2015), all of which are widely distributed resources for those seeking to gain a primary understanding of the field of social innovation. Interestingly, Mulgan et al. (2007) cited the feminist movement as an example of an effective social movement and listed the Women's Institute and the "innumerable

women’s organizations and innovations which have made feminism mainstream” (p. 46) as a social innovation but did not discuss the need for gender analysis in the field. Similarly, a book with multiple prominent contributors within the social innovation space, Nicholls et al. (2015), made no mention of the need for a gender analysis and offered few examples of social innovation related to women.

A research report commissioned by the International Development Research Centre investigated the range of work in progress by governments, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations in the areas of innovation, gender equality, and women’s rights. In the research, Samson (2006) found the worlds of innovation, gender equality, and women’s rights to be discrete, with little overlap between them. Similarly, a report from the Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership at Carleton University (Pouragheli & Beckton, 2013) confirmed that gender is not considered in Canadian innovation policy and that mention of the role and contribution of women in innovation is absent.<sup>52</sup> A recent study by Lindberg and Forsberg (2015) indicated that there is a knowledge gap between gender and social innovation, noting that a Scopus search using the search terms “gender” and “social innovation” yielded five results, none of which discussed gender as more than a variable in social innovation. The authors drew on “subfields” of innovation studies—inclusive innovation, social innovation,<sup>53</sup> and gendered innovation—to develop a theoretical lens, referred to as *gendered social innovation*.<sup>54</sup> The authors intended gendered social innovation to identify and analyze

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<sup>52</sup> Although Pouragheli and Beckton (2013) and Samson (2006) discussed innovation more broadly, their understanding of innovation appeared to overlap with understandings of social innovation. The slippage between the language of social innovation and innovation has been evident throughout the research process, despite my best efforts to keep the understandings distinct. In their research, Pouragheli and Beckton (2013) made recommendations for a more inclusive understanding of innovation—an understanding that may be understood as social innovation by some.

<sup>53</sup> I find it interesting that the authors referred to social innovation as a subfield of innovation, as the relationship between social innovation and innovation is not currently well understood.

<sup>54</sup> The authors defined *gendered social innovation* as “a type of social innovation that is based on the normative identification of societal challenges of gender inequality and social needs among women or men as underrepresented or disadvantaged groups in various areas, such as innovation (women) or childcare (men), motivating the development of innovative solutions for addressing these needs and challenges by

“innovative transformation of gendered structures in organizations and society” (p. 474). The authors suggested that their notion of gendered social innovation could contribute to “expanding the existing body of knowledge on innovation and to inform the design of more inclusive innovation policies” (p. 480).<sup>55</sup>

Bedell (2014) released a report titled *Mothers of Innovation*, which was funded by a grant from Nesta, a United Kingdom–based innovation foundation. The report is the result of interviews with 25 “mother-innovators,” or mothers who were involved in innovations “by mothers for and with mothers, by mothers for the market as a whole, [and] by non-mothers for and with mothers” (p. 10). The report looked at social innovations in education, health, food, and environment as well as business innovations that feature mothers as creators of new products or services (p. 10). More practically, the Young Foundation, a United Kingdom–based think tank, has recently launched an initiative called Gender Futures that seeks to bridge the gap between social innovation and gender equality. As noted in the initiative’s initial white paper (Johnson Ross & Goddard, 2015),

the potential of social innovation to increase the effectiveness and impact of gender equality goals is significant but largely untapped. Our scoping suggests that

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inclusive innovation processes, in a way that contributes to eradication of segregating and hierarchical gendered structures in organizations and society” (p. 480).

<sup>55</sup> I understand the notion of “gendered social innovation” as put forward by Lindberg and Forsberg (2015) as very much related to the idea of bringing a gender lens to the field of social innovation. However, their notion of “gendered social innovation” is highly theoretical and it is my understanding that the authors intend this to be a sub-field of innovation.

I understand bringing a gender lens to social innovation as a holistic approach – I do not wish this research to become another sub-field within innovation or social innovation – I am arguing that we must bring a gender lens, a gender analysis to both fields in a holistic manner. It will be insufficient for the field of social innovation to develop a subfield such as the field of gender and innovation in innovation studies. A gender analysis must be embedded into everything related to social innovation, at all times. Further, it is important for both academics and practitioners to do so.

gender equality and social innovation actors have yet to have opportunity and space to work in tandem to address gender inequality. Despite there being some promising areas of existing social innovation work relating to gender equality, we have found a lack of structured systematic ways in which gender equality and social innovation have been enacted together. (p. 36)

Although little research in the field of social innovation includes gender analysis, it seems there is even less research in the fields of women's rights and gender equality that addresses social innovation. With the exception of a research report from the ICRW, in which Malhotra et al. (2009) bridged the two fields, I have found few examples. Even a report as comprehensive as *The Global Gender Gap Report 2015* did not mention the concept of social innovation or innovation (World Economic Forum, 2015). Similarly, the Association for Women's Rights and Development's (AWID; Miller, Arutyunova, & Clark, 2013) report *New Actors, New Money, New Conversations: A Mapping of Recent Initiatives for Women and Girls*<sup>56</sup> has a stated purpose to contribute toward "filling the gap, particularly among women's rights organizations, in understanding the current landscape of the corporate sector and other actors 'new' to supporting women and girls" (p. 8), although the report makes no mention of social innovation, and there is limited discussion of innovation.

These findings are further supported by data from Twitter. Figure 3 (please see chapter 3 for a detailed description of the methods used to develop this chart) reveals that there were 840 tweets from October 13, 2008, to March 6, 2016, pertaining to *both* gender

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<sup>56</sup> This report is part of a series of research that AWID completed during 2013. The series includes: *Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots*; *Women Moving Mountains*; and *New Actors, New Money, New Conversations*. There is little to no mention of innovation throughout these reports, although there is a discussion about entrepreneurship. AWID has recently launched the *Where Is the Money for Women's Rights* Toolkit (WITM Toolkit) for individuals and organizations to conduct research on funding trends in women's rights and gender equality work. The toolkit may be an interesting resource to help contribute to research around social innovation and gender equality, particularly in terms of understanding how resources can be shared and grown. The toolkit can be found at <http://www.awid.org/witm-toolkit>

equality and social innovation. Figure 3 indicates that combining variations of the terms yields extremely low results. A total 840 tweets over 7.67 years is considered insignificant, especially when compared to the conversations using search terms related to social innovation (844,668) and gender equality (approximately 49 million). Furthermore, a deeper analysis of the 840 tweets demonstrates that the hashtag for social entrepreneurship (#socent) was present in a number of the tweets.<sup>57</sup>

## 2.5 Innovation and Gender

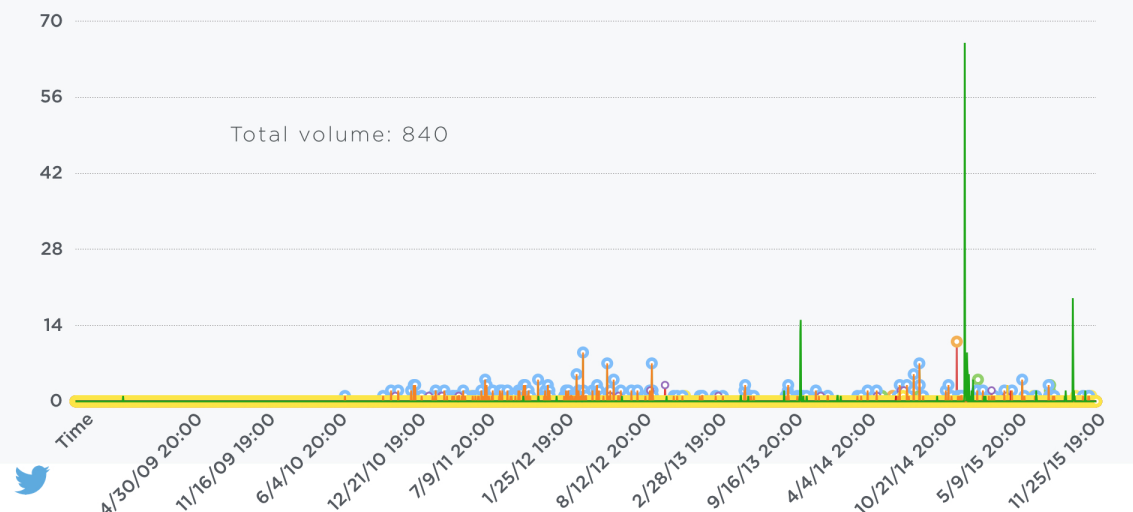
Since I began this research in late 2012, both fields—social innovation and gender equality—have been rapidly evolving from both academic and practitioner’s perspectives; it has been a daily endeavor to remain current on the respective bodies of research and to keep abreast of the conversations (Figures 1 and 2 provide a visual indication of this rise). However, despite the pace at which each field is evolving, there remains limited engagement between the two fields (Figure 3 provides a visual indication of the limited engagement). To gain a better understanding as to why this gap continues to exist, a parallel look at the fields of gender studies and innovation studies is helpful.

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<sup>57</sup> There is a lot of overlap between terms related to social innovation, and I provide a discussion of the relationship between terms such as *social innovation*, *social entrepreneurship*, and *social enterprise* in chapter 4.

**CONVERSATION COMBINING SOCIAL INNOVATION & GENDER EQUALITY** Source | Twitter internal  
 CONVERSATION VOLUMES October 13, 2008 - March 6, 2016

women & social innovation, women #socinn, #socialinnovation gender equality, social innovation feminism, social innovation feminist, social innovation gender equality, #socinn gender equality, #socinn feminist, #socinn feminism, #socialinnovation feminist, #socialinnovation feminism, women & #socialinnovation, women & #socinn, gender social innovation, gender #socinn, gender #socialinnovation, women's empowerment #socinn, women's empowerment #socialinnovation, women's empowerment social innovation



**Figure 3: Time series visualization of tweets pertaining to “gender equality” and “social innovation.” This chart provides a visual representation of the volume of unique tweets (approximately 840) between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, that combine popular searches related to “gender equality” and “social innovation.” From Twitter internal data.**

Agnete Alsos, Ljunggren, and Hytti (2013) indicated that, in general, the literature in the field of innovation presents innovation as “taking place in processes, in corporations, as spin-offs from universities and in innovation systems and does not give the innovator a specific role” (p. 237). The role of the individual is not highlighted in innovation studies, and the authors have argued, “When people are not visible in the discourse, gender easily becomes invisible” (p. 237). Until recently, gender has been thought to be invisible in the field of innovation, as Ljunggren et al. (2010) indicated, and innovation research has long been considered either gender-neutral or gender-blind.

The field of innovation is in reality neither gender-blind nor gender-neutral, and the lack of a gendered analysis in innovation studies has resulted in a highly gendered (Nählinder, Tillmar, & Wigren-Kristoferson, 2012) and male-dominated field (Ranga & Etzkowitz, 2010). Gender and innovation is an emerging subfield of innovation studies. According



to Lindberg and Forsberg (2015), in the past decade, gender and innovation has developed into a viable subfield<sup>58</sup> of innovation studies, drawing on a number of fields, including “feminist science and technology studies, political science, history of science, business economics, human/economic geography and industrial design” (p. 478), and it addresses a number of gendered aspects of innovation, such as “policies, counseling, networks, processes, management and organization” (p. 478).

The field of gender and innovation demonstrates that the image of innovation and innovators relies on stereotypical notions of gender that privilege men and particular masculinities (Andersson, Berglund, Gunnarsson, & Sundin, 2012). For example, Ljunggren et al. (2010) found that the majority of research on innovation has focused on the private sector, which includes mostly male-dominated industries such as science, business, and technology. Women-dominated or gender-balanced industries, such as service, organizational, and social industries, are rarely researched or are seen as less relevant to innovation research.

Innovation research also measures successful outcomes according to the norms of male-dominated industries. For example, Ljunggren et al. (2010) indicated that patents are an example of a commonly used measure of innovation that can indirectly exclude women’s contributions to innovation. The emphasis on male-dominated and male-driven industries and their measures recognizes men’s contributions to innovation as invaluable, while women’s contributions to innovation are undervalued and often invisible.<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, the strong association between masculinity and innovation has resulted in women being portrayed as unskilled and unable to be successful in innovation processes (Ahl, 2004). However, a study by Foss, Woll, and Moilanen (2013) indicated that women generate new ideas as often as men but that women’s ideas are less often implemented. The authors suggested that women may receive less support in bringing

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<sup>58</sup> Agnete Alsos et al. (2013) noted that the research on gender and innovation has not been extensive, and they provide an overview and synthesis of current understandings of gender and innovation.

<sup>59</sup> Kahler (2011) has provided a detailed overview of the issues around patents.

their innovations to fruition, which speaks to issues within organizational practice more so than women's abilities. As Wikhamn and Knights (2013) noted, it is not enough to simply include more women in innovation processes because there are "structural (e.g. capitalist or command rationalities) and post structural (e.g. dominance of masculine discourses and the diversity and fragmentation of identities) conditions in organizations that obstruct the pursuit of gender (and other) equalities" (p. 276).

The field of entrepreneurship<sup>60</sup> has expanded to include a gender perspective (Carter & Marlow, 2007; Gill & Ganesh, 2007). Although entrepreneurship and innovation are closely related areas, Agnete Alsos et al. (2013) found the focus on gender in entrepreneurship and innovation research to be very different because of the visibility of people as individuals within entrepreneurship. There are an increasing number of studies on gender and entrepreneurship that have demonstrated that the phenomenon of entrepreneurship is in fact gendered (Minniti, 2009). Feminist researchers are working to document and understand the role of women in entrepreneurship (Ahl, 2004; Pio, 2005) because, as Essers (2009) argued, a focus on gender, and on women in particular, is critical to furthering the field. However, Marlow (2014) argued that until recently, the focus on gender in entrepreneurship

has been almost exclusively upon women's experiences of business ownership generally articulated as explorations of female entrepreneurship. . . . Epistemological framing uncritically used gender as a variable whereby the entrepreneurial activities of men and women were compared across a range of performance indicators with women inevitably positioned in deficit such that their enterprises were condemned as smaller than, weaker than, lacking growth orientation or pejoratively dismissed as

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<sup>60</sup> Marlow (2014) has indicated that there is limited engagement with gender analysis within the closely related field of social entrepreneurship. See Marlow (2014) for an overview of the current research in the field.

home-based, part time, life style—indeed, almost every detrimental business term possible has visited upon the hapless female entrepreneur. (Marlow et al., 2009) (p. 103)

Women are included as a homogenous group within research in entrepreneurship, and this approach to research has not only resulted in women being understood as unfit or less capable within the entrepreneurial realm, it also furthers essentialist and ahistorical generalizations of women. This discourse has been embedded into policy interventions (Marlow, 2014, pp. 103–104). There is a continued need for research that brings gender analysis to entrepreneurship, and furthermore, as Marlow (2014) argued, there is a need to bring an intersectional analysis to the field. The female entrepreneur is most often assumed to be “white, middle class and operates her firm within a developed economy” (p. 113). It is not enough to use gender as a variable in the field of entrepreneurship, or women as a homogenous group; more research with a gender lens is needed.<sup>61</sup>

The absence of a gender lens in the field of innovation has remained largely unquestioned among researchers, although the field of gender and innovation has been critical in addressing some of the issues in the field of innovation. As detailed earlier, the field of innovation excludes particular social groups, such as women and non-hegemonic men, and it privileges particular types of innovation, namely, technological innovation. Although social innovation may be regarded as implicitly open and inclusive because of the qualifier of “social,” my analysis of the current research in the field indicates that social innovation has inherited some of same biases as the field of innovation. It is therefore critical and urgent to bring gender analysis to the field of social innovation. As Martin (2006) has argued, without a gendered analysis, the status quo is maintained, and gender bias and sexism remain unquestioned.

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<sup>61</sup> The field of entrepreneurship is worthy of a dedicated critique given the relationship between innovation and entrepreneurship. See Marlow (2014) for an overview.

## 2.6 Understanding Gender Analysis and Mutual Learning

Women and men face different socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional barriers that must be accounted for when understanding social innovation. We must acknowledge and document that social innovation is not gender-neutral; it occurs within systems of socially constructed and widely held beliefs about traits that are often associated with women and men, masculinity and femininity. Andersson et al. (2012) argued that advancing innovation requires challenging what is taken for granted or perceived as natural. A gendered analysis can address some of these concerns; a gendered analysis problematizes our assumptions and preconceptions (both implicit and explicit) about women and men, masculinities and femininities.

The integration of a gendered analysis, whether it comes from gender studies, feminist research, women's studies, or the study of men and masculinity, can be likened to a lens. Bringing a gender lens to the field of social innovation would serve as a viewfinder for opportunity within the field, from magnifying the small details to illuminating how gender intersects and interacts within the field. As Kaplan and Vanderbrug (2014) described, a gender lens can “highlight poorly understood inequalities, uncover new opportunities, identify blockages in the system, and find value where none was found before” (p. 36). Applying a gender lens to existing social innovation research and practice will help to uncover gender bias in the field, and it will help ensure that women and men benefit equitably from the opportunities and outcomes of social innovation. Social innovation that does not engage with how gender shapes all areas of our lives will not achieve its full potential.

I began this research seeking to broaden the field of social innovation by incorporating gender, and as it has advanced, I have realized that this research is also concerned with broadening our understanding of gender equality by incorporating social innovation. Not only has social innovation been blind to gender equality but those working toward gender equality, whether practitioners or academics, have not engaged with social innovation. As discussed earlier, some of the research on gender and entrepreneurship has viewed women as a variable within entrepreneurship, resulting in women being understood as less capable or in need of “fixing” in entrepreneurship. Women and girls do not need to

“fit” within innovation or social innovation. Gender equality, women’s rights, and feminist movements predate social innovation, and these movements cannot be limited to an example of social innovation. With that said, there is much potential for mutual learning for both fields. I am interested in understanding how we can build on the ideas and methods from the field of social innovation to advance gender equality, and I am also interested in understanding what can be learned from those working toward gender equality to advance the field of social innovation.

## 2.7 Making the Case for Social Innovation and Gender Equality

I have detailed the lack of research bridging the fields of social innovation and gender equality as well as the importance of a gendered analysis. I will now provide some examples from the field of gender and innovation to help illuminate the importance of bringing a gendered analysis to social innovation.

In 2009, the Gendered Innovations project at Stanford University, led by Dr. Londa Schiebinger, was launched to provide scientists and engineers with methods for sex and gender analysis. According to Schiebinger (2011), *gendered innovations* are defined as “the process that integrates sex and gender analysis into all phases of basic and applied research to assure excellence and quality in outcomes” (p. 154).

Schiebinger has developed a number of case studies to demonstrate the need for a sex and gendered analysis in research. The studies’ areas of focus range from issues of climate change to public transportation to assistive devices for elderly people to pregnant crash test dummies. As an example, in a case study on machine translation and gender, Schiebinger found that Google’s language-processing device, Google Translator, currently creates gender-biased translations. The study found that Google’s source databases cause a statistical bias toward male nouns and verbs in translation (Gendered Innovations, n.d.-b).

In a case study on heart research and women, Schiebinger found that ischemic heart disease has often been understood as a men’s disease and, subsequently, clinical

standards have been based on male pathophysiology and outcomes. It was assumed that men's and women's symptoms of heart disease were the same, which is untrue. By bringing a gender lens to research on heart disease, women's symptoms have become better understood, which is crucial, because heart disease is a leading cause of death for women (Gendered Innovations, n.d.-a).<sup>62</sup>

Much of the research about how stress and depression affect the human brain has focused on men, and a recent study (Gobinath, Mahmoud, & Galea, 2015) has demonstrated that there are differences in how stress affects the brains and behaviors of men and women and that treatments for depression and stress may also affect men and women differently. The findings of the study recommend

the inclusion of more female subjects, and . . . the analysis of results by sex in both preclinical and clinical research, for it is vitally important to begin to do systematically, as only in this way will we start to understand the powerful effects of sex on stress and depression risk. (p. 11)

The findings of the study recommend that the scientific community include women at all levels of the research process and pay attention to potential differences between men and women. As these brief examples that have been investigated within the field of gender and innovation indicate, a gender analysis benefits women and girls, men and boys, and it benefits all those interested in promoting innovation, irrespective of gender and industry.

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<sup>62</sup> It appears that the recent federal budget includes comprehensive support for women's heart health, with a deep appreciation for the differences between men and women in this regard. Budget 2016 proposes to "provide \$5 million over five years, starting in 2016–17, to the Heart and Stroke Foundation to support targeted research on women's heart health and to promote collaboration between research institutions across the country. This funding will help lay the ground work for ensuring women have access to high quality care that is attentive to the inherent differences in the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease and stroke in women and men" (Department of Finance Canada, 2016, p. 180).

## 2.8 Neoliberalism, Social Innovation, and Gender Equality

Social innovation is becoming understood as a solution to the world's most intractable, or wicked, problems. Social innovation is increasingly becoming understood as critical to social and economic progress (Goldenberg et al., 2009). Similarly, gender equality has been embraced globally as a socially valuable policy goal by governments, nonprofit organizations, and private-sector actors, and there is an unprecedented amount of interest, resources, and investment in gender equality (Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Malhotra et al., 2009). The uptake in interest in both social innovation and gender equality, though exciting, must also be analyzed critically.

According to Bockman (2012), *neoliberalism* can best be understood as a political tool and an economic system. Neoliberalism relies on the assumption that “governments cannot create economic growth or provide social welfare” (p. 14). The turn to neoliberalism over the past several decades has led to a significant change in the role of government. Neoliberal policies have resulted in the reduction in governments' budgets for public expenditures as well as a decrease in government's responsibility for public services. Instead, “private companies, private individuals and unhindered markets” have become understood as the most important methods for economic growth (p. 14). Both social innovation and the “empowered” woman have emerged in response to state erosion; both are being called on to address the gap left by governments' devolution and divestment of responsibilities. Jenson (2015) argued that social innovation has gained significant visibility within the broader context of neoliberalism as neoliberalism has revealed its limits, and communities have engaged with new or reworked concepts, such as social innovation, as a way to address ongoing challenges. Jenson (2015) emphasized that social innovation has helped to provide a novel way to reconfigure market relations in support of social policy initiatives. Similarly, Evers and Ewert (2014) argued that social innovation is particularly attractive in the context of economic downturn as it is considered a high-impact approach to solving challenges:

In times of banking crisis and austerity there are widespread calls for a further slimming down of welfare

benefits and services, and more especially of those parts of the latter that can be seen as consumptive and protective rather than inventive and productive (expenses for social protection, elderly care, etc.). Innovatory welfare arrangements and services . . . are conceived as possibly the most effective and efficient remedies for today's social challenges. (p. 24)

Furthermore, the increased interest in gender equality has focused on the potential of women and girls to contribute to economic growth. In this way, both social innovation and women's empowerment hold an increasingly prominent role in addressing public needs, but they do so at the risk of furthering state erosion. There is great potential for both constructs, although both risk further advancing a neoliberal agenda.

The *empowered woman* has garnered interest from a range of organizations and institutions, such as the Nike Foundation with its signature development initiative; the Girl Effect, which advocates for investment in women and girls; Gucci's campaign Chime for Change, which seeks to become a global campaign to raise funds for women and girls; and Goldman Sachs's 10,000 Women, an investment initiative to provide upward of 10,000 underserved women with a business and management education. There is also Plan International's Because I Am a Girl, CARE's I Am Powerful campaign, and Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's (2010) book-turned-global-movement *Half the Sky*, which works to "fight global poverty by unlocking women's power as economic catalysts . . . transforming bubbly teenage girls from brothel slaves into successful businesswomen" (p. xxii). The International Monetary Fund, the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), the White House, and the World Bank have also shown significant interest in and committed resources toward women's empowerment.

Despite this growing interest, women's empowerment and its relation to policy (Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall & Brock, 2005) are not fully understood. For example, the World Bank (2008) advocated for the *empowered woman*, noting that "giving women



better access to land, labor, agriculture and financial markets, will help raise their productivity and incomes, which will benefit their families and the economy as a whole.” In their definitions, both the World Bank and Kristof and WuDunn (2010) invoked the empowered woman as an instrument for economic growth. As Hickel (2014) noted, a number of organizations “converged around a campaign for women’s empowerment on the basis that it opens up investment opportunities and stimulates economic growth” (p. 1362). In this understanding, women and girls are valued for their ability to contribute to economic growth; they are not considered worthwhile investments in and of themselves. Similarly, the recent surge in support for women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-related initiatives appears to be the latest iteration of the business case for women and girls or “Gender Equality as Smart Economics,” as put forward by the World Bank (2008).<sup>63</sup> I question if we are now invoking the “woman-in-STEM” mantra more for the sake of economic growth than for the betterment and advancement of women and girls. “A woman-in-STEM” is valued for her ability to contribute to innovation, and therefore economic growth, but is she also valued for her own personal and professional development? Women have an intrinsic right to a seat at the table; women’s agency should not be invoked only to serve instrumental ends. Such understandings of empowerment, or support for women and girls, risk advancing a neoliberal agenda, often to the detriment of more structural gender equality goals (Grosser & van der Gaag, 2013; Mosedale, 2005).

This mainstream notion of the empowered woman should be carefully understood and critiqued to ensure that the concept is not adopted in a manner that may entrench unequal power relations rather than challenge them. As Rowlands (1997) noted, the language of empowerment entered development discourse in the context of the gender and development framework as a means to promote a more critical analysis of power. Women’s empowerment, as articulated within the development literature, is a radical and challenging concept. The approach addresses the issue of empowerment from the viewpoint of women in the global South, and it encourages their active participation and

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<sup>63</sup> See the World Bank (2008) for a further understanding of the “business case.”

solidarity. As Mosedale (2005) has argued, women's empowerment—as popularized in the mainstream—is not as nuanced and carefully theorized as within the scholarly literature. It is also highly individualistic.

Whereas women's empowerment is sometimes appropriated in its mainstream popularization, the very concept of social innovation is still being understood. Social innovation is often regarded as “good” policy, although there is little solid evidence to definitively prove the impact of social innovation at this time. The project Welfare Innovations at the Local Level in Favour of Cohesion (WILCO) was designed to address this gap in knowledge. WILCO was funded by the European Union's 7th Framework Programme, and it examined 77 cases of social innovation through cross-national comparative research across 20 European cities. One of the many interesting learnings from the WILCO project (Evans, Ewert & Brandsen, 2014)<sup>64</sup> casts doubt on the idea of social innovation as “good” policy: “Social innovation does not necessarily complement strategies for economic growth, nor is it necessarily an adequate substitute for existing welfare policies. It can in specific cases; but general statements to this effect should be distrusted” (Brandsen, 2014, p. 13).

Mosedale (2005) found that women's empowerment is often used to “add glamour (rather than value) to interventions which actually seek to achieve a variety of economic and social outcomes” (p. 252), and Smyth (2007) argued that the term *women's empowerment* has been hollowed out and emptied of meaning as it has been taken up by the mainstream to serve a variety of ends that often have very little to do with gender equality. Batliwala (2007) has argued that *empowerment* is likely “the most widely used and abused” buzzword “to have entered the development lexicon in the past 30 years” (p. 557). The same may be argued of the term *social innovation*, and it can certainly be argued of the term *innovation* or variations of it. As an example, the satirical news organization *The Onion*, known for its sophisticated and highly sarcastic publications on local, international, and national news, published an article about the overuse of the word

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<sup>64</sup> See Evers, Ewert & Brandsen (2014) for a complete list of learnings and recommendations from the WILCO project.

*innovate* during the culture and technology component of the South by Southwest festival (SXSW). The article “indicates” that the word was used at a rate of “8.2 times per second” and would likely be used “24 million times” before the conclusion of the annual SXSW (“Word ‘Innovate,’” 2013).<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in a more serious interview with CityLab, Dr. Lee Vinsel, an assistant professor of science and technology at the Stevens Institute of Technology, argued that the word *innovation* is overused and that the word itself “can obfuscate the bleak realities of the status quo” (Bliss, 2016). The concept of social innovation has gained significant traction despite its lack of an agreed-upon definition, and it is my hope that the meaning of the term will not be lost before it is better understood.

Montgomery (2016) articulated what he identified as two schools of social innovation—the technocratic paradigm of social innovation and the democratic paradigm of social innovation—arguing that the two schools of social innovation are in a “conflict over the very meaning of the concept” (p. 4). The technocratic paradigm, deeply rooted within its neoliberal foundations,

espouses rhetoric based upon the empowerment of communities but in its actions valorizes the role of the expert, mobilizing the technologies of governance to reduce the space for political dissent. Despite its claims being articulated under the rubric of participation, we hypothesize that its outcomes will only serve to entrench the existing vertical distributions of power in society. (pp. 18–19)

On the other hand, the democratic paradigm, advocated by those working to displace neoliberalism,

embraces not only the participation of communities but also perceives the knowledge produced within them as being of

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<sup>65</sup> Taylor (2013) also discusses the overuse of terms related to innovation.

equal merit to “experts” (Moulaert & Van Dyck, 2013; Moulaert et al., 2013; Jessop et al., 2013; Ranciere, 1991). Moreover, the democratic school conceives social innovation as being a tool for politicizing the very spaces, which neoliberals have sought to depoliticize, challenging the vertical distributions of power in society and seeking to disrupt and replace them with horizontal alternatives. (p. 19)

The two schools do not necessarily contribute to the development of an understanding of the concept of social innovation, but they do make it clear that “social innovation is never neutral but always political and socially constructed” (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012, p. 4) and must therefore be understood carefully.

Women’s empowerment and social innovation both have the potential to be radical concepts; both require effort, even for those committed to social change, to put them to progressive social use. Hajer (1993) argued that buzzwords like *women’s empowerment* may serve as bridges from one field to another. In this way, the mainstreaming of the notion of the empowered woman, though not uncomplicated, may provide a meeting ground on which a variety of actors can come together to create change. Similarly, social innovation is often at its best when it is functioning as a bridge, whether through the partnership between the DFID and Vodafone, which led to the creation of the mobile banking platform M-PESA, or Facebook working with Eutelsat Communications, a French satellite operator, to use satellites to beam Internet across a number of countries in Africa.

## 2.9 Conclusion

As this chapter demonstrates, for social innovation to achieve its full potential, it cannot perpetuate the flaws and biases that exist within the field of innovation. It is important to broaden the field of social innovation by incorporating gender analysis as well as to broaden our understanding of gender equality by incorporating social innovation. Not only has social innovation been blind to gender equality but those working toward gender

equality, whether practitioners or academics, have also not engaged with social innovation. There is much potential for mutual learning for both fields. How can we build on the ideas and methods from the field of social innovation to advance gender equality, and what can be learned from those working toward gender equality to advance the field of social innovation? There are rising demands for economic reconfiguration that enhance human relationships and well-being, and both social innovation and gender equality hold great potential to encourage social and economic development in different and, it is hoped, better ways. It is also possible that when taken together—in a thoughtful and critical manner—social innovation and gender equality may hold even greater potential. However, the uptick in interest in both social innovation and gender equality, though exciting, must also be analyzed critically and we must continuously ask ourselves how to define and shape social innovation in such a way that it does not invite divestiture in government programs and structures.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Methodology

As discussed in the preceding chapter, there is a lack of research bridging the fields of social innovation and gender studies. My intention for this research project is to provide the foundations or building blocks for further research and conversations that bridge the fields of social innovation and gender equality as well as to support the work of the MATCH International Women's Fund. This is an exploratory study in which I used academic methods and resources as well as practitioner tools and knowledge from a range of sectors and disciplines. I conducted 25 semi-structured in-depth interviews with people working on social innovation and related fields, and I worked with an employee at Twitter Canada to use Twitter's internal analytics tool to capture the nature of the conversation around social innovation and gender equality. Finally, I was able to reflect on my research and contextualize it within a broader professional setting as a Studio Y fellow at Canada's leading innovation hub, MaRS Discovery District.

In this chapter, I discuss my methodological approach to the research and the specific methods used for this study as well as the research questions that guided my project. I also describe the theoretical anchors I brought with me to the research as well as the challenges that arose throughout the research process.

#### 3.1 Designing Collaborative Research with the MATCH International Women's Fund

As a scholar-practitioner, it is important to me that the research I develop is both theoretically sound and practically useful. I am most interested in research that can transcend the walls of the academy and effect tangible change; therefore, when selecting my area of research for my dissertation in 2012, I sent out an "offer of collaboration" to a number of organizations across Canada. I sent this offer with the intention of finding a like-minded organization in need of research that not only complemented my areas of interest but was also relevant and useful for the organization. I am in agreement with

Mulgan (2015) that “the test of research is whether it is useful, relevant and applicable, and whether the practitioners can, in fact make use of its insights” (p. xiii).

In the 3 months following my offer, I received interest from more than 200 organizations from around the world. I had correspondence with nearly all of the organizations that showed interest, which allowed me to learn a lot about a number of sectors and fields. I was most interested in an e-mail that I received from Jessica Tomlin, executive director of the MATCH International Women’s Fund (formerly MATCH International). Ms. Tomlin was enthusiastic about finding a way to collaborate on a project, and she outlined MATCH’s plans to launch as a women’s fund with a particular focus on social innovation in late 2013. However, through our conversations, it became clear that she was struggling to find research on the definitive relationship between gender equality and social innovation to assist MATCH in developing the fund. After gaining an overview of both fields, I was able to confirm the gap in research connecting gender equality and social innovation.

I have been building this research project—bridging the fields of social innovation and gender equality—in collaboration with MATCH since 2012 in the hope that it will be relevant to the organization. I have been supporting MATCH as both a researcher and a member of the Advisory Council, providing guidance and advice during the grantee selection process. It is my hope that this study will be useful to the organization as it continues to grow.

## 3.2 Support from Mitacs for Collaborative Research

The research collaboration between MATCH and me has been supported by Mitacs, a national research organization that connects for-profit companies (and occasionally not-for-profits) to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. I received funding from Mitacs in March 2014 when a special window of funding became available for research collaborations between graduate students and nonprofit organizations. At the time, Mitacs had funded few collaborations with nonprofits, but the success of our initial research collaboration enabled Mitacs to request funding to support collaborations

between graduate students and nonprofits permanently. This research collaboration has received three Mitacs Accelerate Grants.<sup>66</sup>

As I have detailed previously, a gender analysis is currently being overlooked, and possibly ignored, within the field of social innovation. Social innovation is not gender-neutral; it occurs within systems of socially constructed and widely held beliefs about the traits that are often associated with what it means to be women and men and to be masculine and feminine. Women and men face different socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional barriers, and these must be accounted for when understanding social innovation.

The primary goal of this research is to bring a gender analysis to the field of social innovation. Additionally, as I have detailed previously, there is little research bridging the fields of social innovation and gender equality, and so this research also seeks to discover what can be learned when the fields of social innovation and gender equality talk to one another. I looked at research in a range of fields and disciplines to understand how to best approach this study—from gender and innovation to social entrepreneurship to feminist geography<sup>67</sup>—and I found that an exploratory qualitative approach to research was particularly well suited for this project. As Brown (2006) noted, “exploratory

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<sup>66</sup> This collaboration received Mitacs Accelerate Grants April 15, 2013, to August 14, 2013; March 10, 2014, to July 10, 2014; and November 15, 2015, to March 14, 2016.

<sup>67</sup> In *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*, Gillian Rose (1993) explored the “masculinism” of contemporary geographical discourse. Rose built on previous work by Michele Le Doeuff, and described *masculinist* as “work, which, while claiming to be exhaustive, forgets about women’s existence and concerns itself only with the position of men. . . . Masculinist work claims to be exhaustive and it therefore assumes that no-one else can add to its knowledge; it is therefore reluctant to listen to anyone else. Masculinist work, then, excludes women because it alienates us in its choice of research themes, because it feels that women should not really be interested in producing geography, and also because it assumes it is itself comprehensive. And as Le Doeuff insists these assumptions operate not only in the realms of theory and epistemology, but also in the everyday activity of academic work” (p. 4). Rose (1993) cited the dominant subject of geography to be masculine, White, bourgeois, and heterosexual, and this reminded me of the trope of the heroic, lone innovator or entrepreneur (I discuss this trope in chapter 4). For those interested in geography, it may be interesting to apply this research to social innovation or related fields.



research tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done” (p. 43).

Feminist researchers identify new areas of research that are overlooked or ignored by the broader research community.<sup>68</sup> Feminist researchers strive to open up space for the voices and experiences of those who are often ignored by the dominant discourse. It is my hope that bringing a gendered analysis to the field of social innovation will help to broaden the construct of social innovation in a way that better accounts for the experiences of women and girls, as well as men and boys, particularly those from non-dominant racial, ethnic, and economic groups. As detailed in chapter 2, the field of gender and innovation demonstrates that the image of innovation and innovators relies on stereotypical notions of gender that privilege men and particular masculinities (Andersson et al., 2012). Women and girls and non-hegemonic men and boys are marginalized in innovation, and it is possible that the field of social innovation may have inherited some of the same flaws and biases (especially when considering Montgomery’s, 2016, notion of the technocratic paradigm of social innovation). In this way, bringing a gendered analysis of social innovation is beneficial to women and men, girls and boys; gender equality is fundamentally relational.

I hope that this contribution leads to more in-depth and varied research bridging the fields of social innovation and gender equality. As Mathison (2014) noted, exploratory research can function as a trial for the feasibility of a more extensive or intensive study. The findings of this initial, exploratory study must be further advanced and challenged as gender is but one of many lenses that may be needed to make the field of social innovation more socially just. As Singh (2007) noted, “exploratory research is the initial research which forms the basis for more conclusive research. It can even help in determining the research design, sampling methodology and data collection method” (p. 64). Although gender is the analytical construct that I have chosen for this contribution,

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<sup>68</sup> From my decision in 2012 to send out an “offer of collaboration” seeking a like-minded feminist organization in need of research to a collaborative research design with a self-identified feminist women’s fund through to this research and its objectives, I understand my research to be feminist.

in agreement with Crenshaw (1991), there is a need for further analytical and critical perspectives to be brought to the field of social innovation. Further perspectives that acknowledge other power-laden categorizations, such as race, class, and sexuality, as well as the way in which they intersect with gender are needed. Allyson Hewitt, through her role as senior fellow of social innovation at MaRS Discovery District, urged social innovation researchers to think about inclusion writ large as well as issues of sustainability and resilience. I hope this research provides a direction for researchers to pursue other intersectional research in the future.

### 3.3 Research Approach

After my initial conversation with Jessica Tomlin about MATCH's need for scholarly and practitioner knowledge bridging social innovation and gender equality, I began the research process. In November 2012, I set up Google alerts for the search terms "gender and social innovation," "women and social innovation," and "gender equality and social innovation," and I performed a keyword search of "gender equality" AND "social innovation" in a number of prominent academic databases, all of which yielded few to no results. From there, I reviewed a number of key publications on social innovation, employing a snowball technique to identify other key publications, which led me to popular white papers and thought leadership pieces released by organizations related to the field of social innovation. Still, I found that there was little to no mention of gender, gender equality, or women and girls in this initial scan. I then looked at some of the most recent work in gender studies, feminist research, women's studies, and the study of men and masculinity, where I searched for terms related to social innovation, and again, I found little to no overlap between the fields.

Once I determined that the peer-reviewed scholarship and practitioner resources on the intersection of social innovation and gender equality were limited, I looked more closely at the reference lists of the publications in social innovation. I researched within the related field of social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship and then turned to the field of innovation broadly. I learned that the field of innovation considers itself to be gender-neutral or gender-blind, and I reviewed two of the emerging subfields of innovation, including gender and innovation and inclusive innovation. Although the research in these

two subfields is limited, these fields, combined with some of the research in the field of social entrepreneurship, provided the conceptual anchors for this study as well as direction for this research.

Because there is no prior research bridging the fields of social innovation and gender equality to use as a blueprint, I used an exploratory qualitative approach to this research. I purposefully tried to develop the literature review for this study as part conceptual framework and part research literature review. Because the research on social innovation and gender equality is so limited, I conducted a broader multidisciplinary literature review, touching on the fields of social innovation, gender equality, women's empowerment, social entrepreneurship, innovation, gender and innovation, inclusive innovation, and international development.

### 3.4 Interview Questions

After completing the literature review, I developed the questions for the semi-structured in-depth interviews (Appendix A).<sup>69</sup> I began by asking questions around social innovation specifically, with no mention of women, gender, and gender equality. I asked questions such as the following: How do you define, or understand, social innovation? What are some of the major trends in the field of social innovation, either in Canada or internationally? What are some examples of social innovation that you are particularly fond of? What are the limitations of social innovation?

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<sup>69</sup> I have adapted the study and my approach to the research since compiling the list of interview questions in early 2013. The research questions are largely concerned with understanding how to broaden the construct of social innovation, although as this research has advanced (and as I have become more familiar with the field), I realize that this research must also be concerned with broadening the construct of gender equality. As I have indicated throughout this study, social innovation has been blind to gender equality, and those working toward gender equality, whether practitioners or academics, have also been unreceptive to social innovation as a field of practice (I expand on this in the results chapter). There is great potential for mutual learning for both fields. With this study, I am interested in understanding how we can build on ideas and practices from the field of social innovation to advance gender equality, and I am also interested in understanding what can be learned from those working toward gender equality to advance the field of social innovation.

Given the nature of the current research in the field of social innovation, I made a strategic decision to begin each interview by asking questions related to social innovation and to later introduce questions relating the fields of social innovation and gender equality. My rationale for doing this was to determine whether the understanding of social innovation held by those interviewed would include a gender dimension prior to being prompted with the interview questions. These questions included the following: The broader field of innovation (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) has considered itself to be gender-blind, and women have been noticeably absent from the field. Why do women continue to be largely absent from the emerging field of social innovation as well? Do women innovate differently than men, and if so, how?<sup>70</sup> If we understand women to innovate differently than men, how do we support women innovators? Can social innovations create a long-term, positive shift in gender relations? What are some defining characteristics of social innovations that are successful at creating a lasting social impact for women?

Finally, I included some of the following questions according to the area of expertise of the interviewee and the flow of the conversation: Is there a system of evaluation or accountability that can be used to measure the impact of social innovation? What are the challenges and/or opportunities for social innovation now, and in the foreseeable future, particularly in relation to women? Given your breadth of experience, do you have any lessons learned that you'd like to share? Do you have any further comments regarding the field of social innovation or this research?

### 3.5 Recruitment Process

Given that there are no specific “experts” at the intersection of social innovation and gender equality, I had to look to the fields of social innovation and gender equality, and related fields, to compile a list of potential respondents. I used social media, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook, to connect with people considered to be thought leaders in the fields of social innovation, gender equality, and related fields. I also looked to the

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<sup>70</sup> See the discussion in the results chapter regarding my views on this question and other related questions.

authors of scholarly and practitioner research in the fields. I compiled a list of 10 people whom I was interested in interviewing, and I employed a snowballing technique. I had intended to conduct 10 interviews, but given the enthusiasm I encountered and recommendations I received throughout the interviewing process, I completed 25 interviews with 27 people (I conducted 2 of the interviews with two people, and the remaining 23 interviews with one person). Toward the end of the interviewing process, I began to receive recommendations to interview people whom I had previously interviewed. I feel that the depth and diversity of the 25 interviews provided me with theoretical sufficiency as opposed to just information saturation. The interviews have allowed me to acquire enough data to justify an interesting argument and to prepare a unique contribution to scholarly discourse.

The participants reflect a diverse pool of professionals, including those in the related fields of gender equality, women's rights, development, social innovation, and social entrepreneurship across academic, private, and public sectors.

For the recruitment process, after obtaining ethics approval (Appendix B), I retrieved participants' e-mail addresses online, or I received contacts through e-mail introductions. I e-mailed participants (Appendix C) an initial note to request their participation in the research. Once I received an affirmative response, I sent the letter of information (Appendix D) as an email attachment. I found that potential participants were eager to speak with me, but they required a further understanding about the research topic. Therefore, I sent the letter of information along with the list of interview questions (Appendix A) as e-mail attachments prior to the interviews.<sup>71</sup> The letter of information

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<sup>71</sup> I understand that it is not necessarily common practice to provide prospective interview participants with a complete list of interview questions before the interview. I made the decision to share the interview guide with participants in advance of the conversation because I felt that some participants were initially hesitant to participate in this research because they were unsure of their capacity to contribute to the research. I believe this hesitation was in part due to the nature of the field, and the term "social innovation" itself. As this dissertation demonstrates, there is not a single, agreed upon understanding of "social innovation" and "social innovation" means different things to different people. For example, some people that I considered to be experts, working in the field of "social innovation," did not necessarily identify their work in such a way. Further, research relating to "gender" and those working to advance gender equality hold a diversity of approaches and perspectives. I believe the nature of this research was somewhat unique and that it was

stated that if it was their preference, their name, position, direct quotations, and other identifying information would not be used in the compilation of this research. Twenty-four of the 27 participants gave me permission to identify their names and positions in this research, and some of those participants have requested to not be directly quoted or referenced in this research (Appendix E). Three participants did not consent to having their names, positions, or direct quotations included in this research. This group is not identified in this research, nor do I make reference to them in an identifiable manner, but I do provide a general description of their areas of expertise and location in the interview profile (Appendix F).

### 3.6 Interview Process

I conducted a total of 25 semi-structured, in-depth interviews from October 18, 2013, to May 31, 2014, interviewing 27 key informants. An interview guide (Appendix A) was used for each interview and included prompting questions as well as space for further conversation. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour 25 minutes and took place at a location of the interviewee's choosing or on Skype.

The interviews provided me with a forum to investigate some of the questions that the scholarly and practitioner research was not addressing. I chose to use semi-structured, in-depth interviews to learn about the issues from the participants' perspectives. My approach to the interview process was highly exploratory and adaptive; I worked to avoid placing "researcher-imposed" categories on the participants' responses. I started each interview by explaining my research journey and my interest in this area, and I asked participants about their positions or areas of interest. Although the interviews were guided by the questions I provided to each participant before the interview, I adopted an informal style during the interviews. I made it clear from the start of the interviews that the questions were there as a guide, and I encouraged the interviewees to speak freely. I

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useful for me to share the interview guide with participants in advance of the interview to further their understanding of the research as well as to assure them of their ability to contribute to it.

view this research as highly cooperative, and in the results section of this study, I have included some direct quotations from interview respondents (from only those who gave me consent to use direct quotations) along with my own understanding and contextualization to highlight their contributions. I compiled interviewee profiles (Appendix F) in an effort to contextualize each person's interview. I continue to receive telephone calls from the research participants asking how the research is progressing as well as e-mails with links to new research.

I made the decision to identify interview participants who gave me permission to do so because I felt it was important to provide as much context as possible about each interviewee when including direct quotations. I approached this research with a bi-focal lens that explores both the academic foundations and implications of social innovation and gender equality as well as the practitioner-based understandings and implications of both fields. Therefore, I thought it would be helpful to give some context about each interviewee to indicate the area they are engaged in, whether social innovation, gender equality, or both, as well as to provide information on whether they approach their respective field as an academic, a practitioner, or both. Further, the interviewees represent a diversity of locations, perspectives, and fields and I feel that this information enriches this thesis.

I also understand that there are benefits to anonymizing all of the interviews. Doing so would have allowed me, as a researcher and practitioner in these fields, to feel more comfortable when providing constructive commentary to the dataset as a whole. Professionally, I will continue to work at the intersection of gender and innovation and I do not wish to compromise my ability to work in the field, but it is also important for me to feel comfortable enough to make an honest and critical contribution to this research gap. Therefore, at times, I have also chosen not to reveal the identity of people (who have given me consent) and not directly attribute some quotations. I do believe, given the nature of this research, that it would have been difficult to guarantee anonymity for all participants because of the uniqueness and visibility of some of their positions.

The purpose of the interviews was to get a sense of people's views on the field of social innovation, across a range of sectors, as well as whether and how they understand gender to be a part of the field. I do not attempt to make any claims of universality in my findings, although I feel that this group of diverse interviewees was sufficient for this investigation. The findings of this sample provide an entry into many of the important conversations in this emerging area of research.

### 3.7 Twitter

After completing the literature review and the interview process, I connected with Twitter Canada to see if there was a creative way to capture the relationship between social innovation and gender equality. Twitter is an online social networking service that allows people to send and read messages that are 140-characters, referred to as *tweets*. Twitter was created in March 2006 and has just celebrated its 10th anniversary. Twitter can be likened to a live microphone: People take to Twitter to voice their opinions and to discuss day-to-day thoughts and world events. Twitter has played a prominent role in events from natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy to sociopolitical events such as the Arab Spring to movements such as Black Lives Matter and Occupy Wall Street to conversations at the Academy Awards with celebrities.

Kumar, Morstatter, and Liu (2013) demonstrated how Twitter is useful for researchers and practitioners alike. For example, the authors argued that researchers can verify or support their hypotheses using Twitter, and practitioners can search for patterns of information, or build real-world applications. Twitter is used as a source in the development of applications and research across a number of sectors and domains, including science, medicine, marketing, humanitarian assistance, geology, and disaster relief. For example, the U.S. government body that tracks events such as earthquakes (the U.S. Geological Survey) now uses Twitter data to augment other modes of detection ("How the USGS," 2015). Twitter has been useful to the field of epidemiology, as doctors have used Twitter data to better understand a number of interrelated public health issues ("Using Twitter Data," 2015), and Twitter data are also used by scientists to help spot aurora aurorae boreales ("Twitter Data for Research," 2015).



Mollett, Moran, and Dunleavy (2011) detailed the ways in which Twitter can be useful for academics. The fields of social innovation and gender equality are both scholarly and practitioner-based fields, and those engaged in gender equality and social innovation are likely to use Twitter as a platform to advance movements, concepts, and ideas. With the support of a colleague at Twitter Canada, I was able to use Twitter's proprietary internal analytics tool, Case Builder, to provide a guideline for and directional insight into the conversation around social innovation and gender equality.<sup>72</sup>

### 3.8 Understanding Twitter Data<sup>73</sup>

The data from Twitter is my attempt to use a balance of scholarly and practitioner tools to further this research. I worked in collaboration with a colleague at Twitter to develop Figures 1–4 using Twitter's proprietary internal analytics tool, Case Builder. The charts are a form of time series visualization. As Kumar et al. (2013) has described, time series visualization makes use of a chart with an *x*-axis representing time and a *y*-axis representing a measurement. The charts are intended to help visually demonstrate the growth of the conversation around social innovation and gender equality as well as an analysis between conversations.

Each chart depicts a timeline of 2,702 days or 7.67 years (October 13, 2008, to March 6, 2016), and the information in each graph represents unique tweets around each conversation (they do not indicate retweets or shared content). We used data available through Twitter in combination with the interview data to determine which search terms to use to develop the graphs.

Figure 1 (see chapter 2) represents the volume of tweets collected (844,668 unique tweets) between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, using the search terms social

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<sup>72</sup> There are currently many ways for academics to use Twitter for their research without needing access to Twitter internally. For example, Twitter has a search feature, and it also uses hashtags. TweetStats allows a person to measure the words used most often by experts in particular subject areas, and TwitterLocal allows a person to find tweets in a particular area. Twitter also provides a list of "trending topics." The use of Twitter for research purposes is continuously evolving.

<sup>73</sup> Kumar et al. (2013) detailed how to collect, store, and analyze Twitter data.

innovation, #socialinnovation, #socialinnovations, social innovations, and #socinn. The images of the graphs included in this thesis are not able to demonstrate the wealth of information that is available through Twitter's internal tools. Additional use of the tool revealed that of the 844,668 tweets identified using the preceding search criteria, "social innovation" was tweeted 511,722 times, #socinn was tweeted 215,266 times, and #socialinnovation was tweeted 96,766 times.

Figure 2 (see chapter 2) represents the volume of tweets collected (approximately 49 million unique tweets) between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, using the search terms gender equality, #genderequality, womens rights, #womensrights, feminism, #feminism, feminists, #feminists, feminist, #feminist, gender inequality, #genderinequality, womens movement, feminist movement, #feministmovement, #womensmovement, sexism, #sexism, feminisms, #feminisms, women's empowerment, #womensempowerment, gender bias, and #genderbias. Of the 49 million unique tweets using the search criteria, "feminist" was tweeted approximately 14.7 million times, "feminism" was tweeted approximately 14.2 million times, and "gender equality" was tweeted approximately 2.4 million times.

These two searches provide an idea of the evolution of each respective conversation on the Twitter platform as well as the relative volume of each conversation. Both of the conversations have grown significantly in the past few years, and the conversation around gender equality is substantially greater than the conversation around social innovation.

To develop the search criteria for Figure 3 (see chapter 2), I used the top three most popular tweets from the previous two searches (social innovation, #socinn, #socialinnovation, feminist, feminism, and gender equality), and I combined them to create a number of possible search terms. I also opted to add more combinations using gender and women, giving my understanding of the fields. The search terms included women & social innovation, women, #socinn, #socialinnovation, gender equality, social innovation feminism, social innovation feminist, social innovation gender equality, #socinn gender equality, #socinn feminist, #socinn feminism, #socialinnovation feminist, #socialinnovation feminism, women & #socialinnovation, women & #socinn, gender

social innovation, gender #socinn, gender #socialinnovation, women's empowerment #socinn, women's empowerment social innovation, and women's empowerment #socialinnovation.

Figure 3 reveals that there were 840 tweets from October 13, 2008, to March 6, 2016, using a combination of the terms. The volume of these tweets is extremely limited, especially in relation to the conversations using search terms related to social innovation (844,668) and gender equality (approximately 49 million), which total nearly 50 million. Figure 3 indicates that when variations of the terms are combined, there is little impact. Furthermore, a deeper analysis of the 840 tweets demonstrates that the hashtag for social entrepreneurship (#socent) was present in a number of the tweets.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, Figure 4 (presented in chapter 4) indicates that there were approximately 39,140 tweets between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, using the search terms women innovation, gender innovation, women stem, gender stem, women #stem, gender #stem, women #innovation, and gender #innovation. I have included this graph to demonstrate the volume of conversation around women and innovation. There have been nearly 40,000 tweets related to gender and innovation, although there are fewer than 1,000 tweets related to gender equality and social innovation.

My PhD supervisor, Dr. Bipasha Baruah, started a Google Alert with the terms “Gender Equality” and “Social Innovation” in January 2013. To date, she has only been alerted 24 times, and 15 of those alerts were actually just news stories in which all four words appeared. Most of the alerts were not about the relationship between social innovation and gender equality—and three of the nine relevant alerts were about the three Mitacs internships we had succeeded in securing for this project!

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<sup>74</sup> The presence of the hashtag for social entrepreneurship along with those related to social innovation reinforces my emphasis and discussion throughout this thesis about the common slippage between the terms.

### 3.9 Field Research at MaRS Discovery District

In line with an exploratory approach to research, I have remained flexible and pragmatic throughout the research process. In summer 2014, I was presented with the opportunity to reflect upon my research and build upon it through a Studio Y fellowship at MaRS Discovery District, Canada's flagship institution for innovation and entrepreneurship. Studio Y is

a learning, leadership, and innovation hub for young people rooted in one question: What bold possibilities might be realized when you bring together a group of amazing young people, give them the resources and supports they need, and put them on a mission to build audacious futures? (MaRS Discovery District, 2016)

The Studio Y fellowship provides social innovators, ages 18–29, with training in 21st-century mind-sets and skills. Throughout the program, fellows work on systems challenges with partnering organizations, as well as their own innovation project. Fellows are provided with content and curriculum to support their systems challenge and innovation projects, and they have access to a wide range of resources and opportunities within MaRS and the broader innovation sector.<sup>75</sup>

At the time that I was offered the fellowship, I had completed the interview process for this thesis and I had recently finished transcribing the interviews. I was a fellow from September 1, 2014, to May 31, 2015, and during the time at MaRS, I took courses in analytical thinking, critical thinking, design thinking, systems thinking, and entrepreneurship; I attended hack-a-thons and lectures on the future of social innovation by practitioners and academics, including the Social Enterprise Conference at Harvard University; and I toured innovation hubs in Canada. I worked on a systems challenge in collaboration with John A. Leslie Public School to support the entrepreneurial endeavors

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<sup>75</sup> To learn more about the Studio Y fellowship, please visit <https://www.marsdd.com/systems-change/studio-y/studio-y-home/>

of students in Grades 4 and 5 at the school, I hosted an event to highlight the importance of incorporating gender equality into social innovation in collaboration with MATCH, and I launched a social enterprise.

A major focus of the fellowship is to support fellows to develop their own innovation projects. This portion of the fellowship seeded a number of initiatives, and I will provide examples of a few of these. Ellen Flanagan designed an intervention to improve job prospects for people with disabilities. Charlie Katrycz invented a new technology<sup>76</sup> that helps to grow artificial circulatory systems into materials such as wearable garments. Selena Lucien Shaboian founded the Ontario Small Claims Wizard,<sup>77</sup> an online software that helps to increase access to justice by allowing people to represent themselves and gain legal guidance when starting, defending, or litigating a claim.

For my innovative project, I launched a social enterprise<sup>78</sup> called Feminuity. Feminuity is a consultancy that uses a gender lens to improve innovation. I cofounded it with Andrea Rowe, a fellow doctoral candidate at McMaster University whose research focus is at the intersection of innovation and gender equality. Together, we work with a range of organizations (start-ups, academic institutions, and corporations) to help them to identify their blind spots and to build better products, processes, and infrastructures to enhance social and economic sustainability. We offer research, consulting, and speaking services. The inspiration for Feminuity comes from the research that both Andrea and I have done at the intersection of innovation and gender equality; it is our attempt to translate our research and interests into a practical business.

Through the start-up, I am able to take the knowledge and skills that I have gained throughout the PhD process to work to achieve a broader impact—whether it is by working with start-ups to help them identify their gender blind spots in process, design,

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<sup>76</sup> Learn more about this technology here: <http://www.loonskinlabs.com/>

<sup>77</sup> Learn more about the Small Claims Wizard here: <http://smallclaimswizard.com/>

<sup>78</sup> Feminuity is a social enterprise, which means that the primary purpose of this company is to bring value to the world, while also generating income using the methods and disciplines of business as well as the power of the marketplace.

or culture; with academic institutions to ensure that gender analysis is a crosscutting approach within all departments; or with companies in helping them to shift their organizational culture or to design better products.

The fellowship experience provided me with the hands-on, practical experience necessary to launch a company. At Studio Y, I received the Multipl[Y] grant to seed the initial start-up costs for Feminuity, and I learned the skills that I needed on-demand: I learned how to build a Web site, how to write a business plan, and how to pitch to potential investors and clients. I incorporated Feminuity in February 2015 and publicly launched it in May 2015 at MaRS. Feminuity has garnered attention from start-ups, academic institutions, and a range of industries, and it has been featured in Canadian newspapers such as the *Globe and Mail*.

According to a recent article in the *Globe and Mail*, there is a growing trend of PhDs who are opting out of the traditional academic route in favor of entrepreneurial endeavors. Universities have begun to provide entrepreneurship support to students, such as Propel at Western University, *e@ubc* at the University of British Columbia, and the Banting & Best Centre for Innovation & Entrepreneurship at the University of Toronto. In an interview with Rob Annan, chief research officer at Mitacs, the author indicates that in 2014 through 2015, Mitacs funded approximately 3,300 collaborations involving PhD students, and 14% (or 462 PhD students) have started their own businesses (Bouw, 2016). I received one of the three Mitacs awards for the collaboration with MATCH during this time period, and Feminuity is one of the businesses included in this count.

The fellowship supplemented the knowledge and skills that I have gained throughout graduate school. It allowed me to translate them into a company, and it was also critical to this thesis. The evolution of the practice of social innovation is said to happen ahead of research and theory. As Mulgan (2015) has argued,

if social innovation rests on an idea—an idea about possibility—rather than being a field with clearly defined boundaries, and if its practice inevitably leads theory, then

the study of social innovation can never be just a detached, empirical object of analysis within social science. (p. xii)

Spending time within a space such as MaRS was important for my research since it enabled me to experience social innovation in a more practical sense—to step outside of the academic realm and to get a pulse for the field. The fellowship at MaRS allowed me to reflect upon and contextualize this research, and it helped me to become more engaged in the social innovation space at large. I contributed to the ideation phase of the legacy project, the Rideau Hall Foundation, for Canada’s current governor general, David Johnston. I was also part of a team at Diplohack, an event that sought to address diplomatic problems using the methods of a hack-a-thon. Diplohack combined the skills of diplomats, social entrepreneurs, developers, designers, journalists, academics, and those in business and non-profit to address diplomatic problems. For example, my team was tasked with figuring out how to leverage technology to empower citizens around UN Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace & Security). I pitched my team concept<sup>79</sup> to Their Majesties King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, and our idea was the winner of the Vox Populi Award. I traveled to Hanoi, Vietnam, where I pitched Feminuity to potential clients, presented research and delivered a workshop at the International Seminar, attended the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, invested in a social enterprise in Hanoi, and engaged in the social innovation sector in Vietnam. I am also a member of the Advisory Council for MATCH, where I provide guidance and advice during the grantee selection process.<sup>80</sup>

The fellowship, combined with the extracurricular experiences, has allowed me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of social innovation from a variety of perspectives

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<sup>79</sup> My team was tasked with finding an innovative way to leverage technology to empower citizens around UN Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace & Security), and our solution was called Connect Her/Connectées. Our idea was a free SMS- and phone call-based service that links sexual violence survivors in eastern DRC to community-based first responders who provide emergency medical care and support within those crucial 72 hours.

<sup>80</sup> MATCH provides grants to social innovations that advance gender equality. See a list of the current grantees here: <http://matchinternational.org/grantee-profiles/>

(as a researcher, practitioner, advisor, and investor) and in a variety of contexts. For example, my experience as a hacker at Diplohack was highly informative. All participants were asked to complete a survey about their area of expertise and interest before the hack. I detailed my interests about gender and innovation in the survey and was subsequently placed on a team tasked with finding an innovative way to leverage technology to empower citizens around UN Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace & Security). It became immediately evident to me that the event organizers had developed the teams based on the results of the surveys and unsurprisingly, my hack team consisted of all women. Other hack teams were tasked with more tech-related problems and consisted of mostly men. The problem with the team composition was that the teams were homogenous, not diverse; people with a strong gender focus were all on the same team and not dispersed throughout the different groups. Unsurprisingly, many of the nearly all-male teams presented ideas that did not account for gender as a variable in their idea, or that were overtly sexist or misogynist. My experience at Diplohack was the embodiment of some of the criticisms and concerns that I articulate throughout this thesis.

My experience with Feminuity has also been informative to this research. I have learned that it is important to know how to speak to each new client. Most often, presenting the "business case" to those in the corporate realm is most helpful. Much of the language and analysis that I present in this thesis is not helpful to me in terms of acquiring new clients; I have to use corporate language and pitch the clients on how the services offered through Feminuity will improve the companies' financials. This learning has allowed me to appreciate the need for instrumental arguments such as the "business case" and to simplify complex ideas and analysis into accessible and transparent language.

### 3.10 Data Analysis

My data analysis process was highly iterative, and each of the data collection techniques I employed built on one another. The results of the initial literature review were used to inform the interview recruitment process as well as the content of the interview questions.



I used close reading thematic coding to analyze the interviews. I employed line-by-line coding to identify the initial themes of the 25 interviews (once transcribed, the interviews comprised nearly 500 pages of data). I counted the number of times that themes appeared across the transcripts from each interviewee to understand the relative importance of each theme. I identified themes and I entered the qualitative data collected into Excel to calculate the percentage and frequencies of the themes.<sup>81</sup> I then employed comparative analysis to determine where there was agreement and disagreement within the themes identified, and I reviewed the themes against the interview transcripts as a whole. I discuss themes that appeared often (I provide percentages or indicators within the results chapter based on 27 respondents) within the data as well as those that were rarely or not mentioned but that I am convinced are important to the conversation about gender equality and social innovation. For example, none of the participants explicitly referenced a gender dimension when initially asked about their definition or understanding of social innovation, only 3 respondents discussed the issue of power in the field of social innovation, and only 1 person addressed a concern about social innovation and its neoliberal tendencies. These examples are not themes that are repeated throughout the data, but they are important themes and gaps that I have identified as a researcher. I discuss themes that I suspect will be important to this research in the future, regardless of the frequency of the theme in the data. In this way, I critically analyzed that which was most commonly mentioned, while also actively searching for critical blind spots within the data.

In the results section, I used explanation building, demonstrating the similarities and dissimilarities across the interviewees' responses along with my knowledge of the literature in the two fields. The results of the data are dispersed throughout the findings and they are compared and integrated within extant academic literature, gray literature, practitioner perspectives and activities, as well as the data developed through Twitter's

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<sup>81</sup> I calculated the percentages based on 27 interview respondents (two interviews were with two people). I conducted a total of 25 semi-structured, in-depth interviews, interviewing 27 key informants.

internal analytics tool to corroborate or contradict the themes. Finally, I contextualized all of this through my experience as a Studio Y fellow at MaRS Discovery District.

### 3.11 Terms: Classification, Clarification, and Challenges

As I have detailed in chapter 2 and address further in chapter 4, there is much debate and varying understandings of the definition of social innovation. From a research perspective, it has been difficult to research a concept that is widely debated, as well as one that has multiple meanings across different fields and disciplines. Also, given the nature of the field, it has been difficult to differentiate between some of the scholarly and practitioner research in the field of social innovation.

The peer-reviewed scholarship on bridging social innovation and gender equality is currently so limited that I had to also rely on “working knowledge” and gray literature—op-eds, white papers, annual reports, position papers, survey results—available from practitioner sources. Drawing upon and amalgamating both types of knowledge enabled me to fully appreciate the nature, magnitude, nuances, and complexity of the issues involved. There is much slippage between the terms *social innovation* and *innovation*, and furthermore, the overlapping use of the terms *social innovation*, *social entrepreneurship*, and *social enterprise* has made the terms challenging to disentangle and discern. I have made a consistent effort to clearly identify all of these terms throughout the research process.

### 3.12 Positionality and Bias

I have tried to remain open-minded and reflexive throughout the research process, and I acknowledge that my social position and my biases are present within this research.

Although women and girls may be marginalized in the realms of innovation, and likely with regard to social innovation as well, my position as a researcher in this space is influenced by my embodiment as a White, able-bodied, class-privileged, cis-gendered woman. These privileges have enabled my critique of the innovation space by allowing me to get close enough to study and analyze it. It is important to acknowledge this.

Agnete Alsos et al. (2013) identified a methodological challenge regarding research in the field of gender and innovation. The authors indicated that the gendered nature of the concept of innovation can cause problems in the research process:

It is not only researchers who see “nuts and bolts” when they visualize innovations—but also the informants. Hence, approaching research participants with survey or interview questions that aim to probe various aspects of innovations easily pushes the informants to emphasize certain innovations and downplay others. We need to look for more gender-neutral concepts to use when we empirically examine innovation and related issues (Nählinder et al., 2012) and to develop methods to examine what people do rather than how they talk about it. (p. 248)

I suggest that the same difficulties may be present when conducting research in the field of social innovation. As a researcher, it can be tempting to cite some of the most exciting examples in the field, whether a new technology or a smart phone application, but it is important to be cognizant of the reasons why these examples can be appealing and to provide a range of less glamorous but perhaps more socially useful examples.

### 3.13 Conclusion

This research is based on literature and data gathered from a range of sources, including peer-reviewed scholarship, as well as “working knowledge” from practitioner research from a range of disciplines, including gender theory, feminist research, women’s studies, the study of men and masculinity, social innovation, social entrepreneurship, innovation, and gender and innovation. The primary empirical component of this research includes the results of a series of 25 interviews with experts in fields such as gender equality, women’s rights, development, social innovation, and social entrepreneurship across academic, private, and public sectors. It also includes some creative application of data developed using Twitter’s proprietary internal analytics tool, Case Builder, as well as my observations and reflections from a Studio Y fellowship at MaRS Discovery District.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Results

The findings and discussion in this chapter have been generated from a series of 25 in-depth semi-structured interviews. I prepared an interview guide with a series of suggested questions for the interviews (Appendix A). I posed a number of questions to all interviewees, including a question about their definition or understanding of social innovation as well as a question about the possible reasons why the field of social innovation lacks an engagement with gender and a question about the concept of scale. Given that the interviewees came from a diversity of sectors, roles, and disciplines, I thought it best to appeal to the strengths and areas of interest of each participant and to let the interviewees speak freely about them. Some questions resonated deeply with some interview participants, whereas others did not. Similarly, some questions led to further discussion, and others did not. Some questions also lent themselves well to a number of emerging and related themes, and I outline these in this chapter.

This research has been an iterative process. I designed interview questions in early 2013, and my approach to this research has continued to evolve. I have chosen to filter the results from my interviews about gender, women, and social innovation into three main headings that flow (loosely) in a similar sequence to the questions from the interview guide. I detail the research findings and contextualize each section within the applicable secondary literature. I complement this with results from the data from Twitter Canada and my observations as a Studio Y fellow at MaRS Discovery District.

#### 4.1 Social Innovation: Possibilities and Concerns

This section is based on the results of the questions pertaining to social innovation, including the respondents' definition and understanding of social innovation, the challenges and opportunities in the field, and major trends in the field.

#### 4.1.1 No Mention of a Gender Dimension in Social Innovation

As I have detailed extensively in previous chapters, limited research bridges the fields of social innovation and gender equality. Given the nature of the current research in the field of social innovation, I made a strategic decision to begin each interview by asking questions related to social innovation without reference to gender. I did this to determine whether the respondent's understanding of social innovation would include a gender dimension without prompting from me as the interviewer.

None of the interviewees explicitly referenced a gender dimension when initially asked about their definition or understanding of social innovation, or framed differently, 100% of respondents' initial understanding of social innovation did not include a gender dimension. The words *girl*, *women*, *gender*, or *gender equality* were never mentioned. This finding meshes well with my analysis of the secondary literature in the field of social innovation, which demonstrates a limited gender analysis in the field of social innovation. It also supports the research in the field of gender and innovation, which discusses the gender-biased nature of the field of innovation. As previously noted, the interviewees received the interview guide and the letter of information prior to the interview; it is possible that some interviewees viewed the interview guide prior to the interview and saw that a question about social innovation and gender equality would be asked later in the interview.

#### 4.1.2 No Common Definition of Social Innovation

The analysis of the interviews also reveals a lack of agreement by respondents on a definition or understanding of social innovation. 100% of the interviewees had distinct understandings and definitions of social innovation, and this finding is in agreement with the secondary literature in the field of social innovation; the definition and understanding of social innovation differ across disciplines, sectors, and fields (see chapter 2 for a discussion). 55% (15 of the 27) of interviewees mentioned the notion of "newness" as being important to a definition, and 67% (18 of the 27) discussed social innovation as something socially good or as something that brings social benefit. 15% (4 of the 27)

interviewees separated the two words and defined *social* and *innovation* individually as part of their definition.

11% (3 of the 27) of respondents chose not to provide a definition of social innovation, and one interviewee expressed a lack of interest in defining social innovation, referring to it as an academic pursuit; one felt that social innovation did not need to be defined, and another felt that it could not be defined but can only be realized by a “gut feeling” or the “goose bump effect.”

18% (5 of the 27) respondents were less interested in defining social innovation and more interested in understanding why the field exists. Through her role as executive director of the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI), Tonya Surman was less interested in providing a definition per se (although she did share with me the definition used at CSI, which is included in chapter 2) and more interested in understanding the origin of the concept. Surman believed the language of social innovation to be the result of a general frustration with the social change movement because of its lack of traction within mainstream systems. She felt that social innovation is the result of a fatigue, particularly with the “old left,” but Surman also cautions us about how it might be taken up: “Will we be able to keep it substantive, real, meaningful, and really having an impact on people and the planet, or is it really just another excuse for corporatization, globalization, scale-scale-scale, big-big-big, better-better-better, economy-economy-economy?”

Similarly, Joy Anderson, founder and president of Criterion Institute, was also less interested in defining social innovation and more interested in understanding its origins. As a seasoned historian, Anderson provided an overview of the evolution of the merging of social good and business. For Anderson, social innovation provides a way to rethink our approach to finance; it allows us to ask important questions regarding the concept of scale, distribution, and business models.

Vicki Saunders, founder of SheEO Inc., was also less interested in providing a definition of social innovation. For Saunders, the joining of the words *social* and *innovation* is a call for us to focus on people, profit, and the planet. Saunders found,

I have a bit of trouble with the language around it [social innovation]. I feel like when business first started out, and when innovation first came about, it wasn't separated; it was integrated. When a lot of people started their companies, they looked at something in their community that needed work and they decided to create a business around it. It didn't start with maximizing profits at the expense of the people on the planet. It started much more connected and then increasingly we moved the pendulum over to this place where people and planet had nothing to do with business and in order to get ourselves back to the center, from the pendulum way out of balance, we had to put "social" in front of the words "business" or "innovation." We just got out of sync with ourselves, and we're using "social" to come back to center. I don't really look at it as being some quality of thing that has never existed before. I think it's been around forever. We just didn't name it that, and we're having to put these new labels on things for people to think more broadly again.

Similarly, Hamoon Ekhtiari, through his role as founding director of Studio Y at MaRS Discovery District, described social innovation as the intersection between innovation and impact: "You have a purpose and you want to create something meaningful that brings value to society and makes the world a better place and the way you go about doing it is to bring an innovative lens to your work." Overall, the respondents did not provide any simple definitions of social innovation, and their understandings of the concept varied. Some could not define social innovation, and some chose not to define it. I understand Surman, Anderson, and Saunders as viewing social innovation as a conceptual tool to advance social change.

### 4.1.3 Slippage Between the Terms

55% (15 of the 27) of interviewees defined the term *social innovation* in relation to the concepts of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. 18% (5 of the 27) of participants also noted there to be a number of divides and slippages around the definition of social innovation as well as between the related concepts of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise.

Allyson Hewitt, through her role as senior fellow of social innovation at MaRS Discovery District, discussed the challenges she faces when helping people to understand the concept of social innovation. She noted that for some people, social innovation can mean social enterprise, or social entrepreneurship, or simply innovation with a social lens. Hewitt did stress the importance of developing a clear definition: “It’s really important to clarify a definition, or to agree upon a definition right upfront. Many discussions are about what it [social innovation] means, and I suggest people become clear on a definition that works for them in a particular instance, and work from there.” Donna Morton, managing partner at Principium, understood social innovation to be highly distinctive from both social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. Morton understood social innovation to be the most inclusive in its definition, whereas social enterprise is often limited to businesses in the nonprofit realm, and social entrepreneurship refers to the skills of an entrepreneur to attain social good.

In agreement with the secondary literature, there is often slippage between the three terms, and I experienced this throughout the interview process. As an interviewer, I had to make a conscious effort to avoid the slippage between the three terms.

### 4.1.4 Vagueness of the Term

The interviewees understood the reasons for the vagueness around the definition of social innovation to be complicated. 18% (5 of the 27) viewed the vagueness around the definition as enabling—allowing social innovation to span across sectors, disciplines, and audiences. Chris Grumm, former president and CEO of the Women’s Funding Network, noted that a major upside to the field of social innovation is the opportunity that the language, in and of itself, presents. In agreement, Hamoon Ekhtiari, through his role as



founding director of Studio Y at MaRS Discovery District, felt that there is no need for an agreed-upon definition of social innovation, noting that it is important for the field to be relatable for people in order for them to feel comfortable engaging with the sector.

Other respondents, about 11% (3 of the 27) felt that social innovation risks becoming elusive, slippery, and something easily emptied of meaning without an agreed-on definition. Surman articulated the difficulty around the language well, asserting,

There's this wonderfully dangerous tension here because on the one hand we want it to be taken up by all of these different sectors, and on the other hand, we want to make sure it's still there, right, that it's still substantive.

Furthermore, Mark Goldenberg, adjunct professor at University of Ottawa and author of “Social Innovation in Canada: An Update,” elaborated on this tension—we need to allow social innovation to be loose enough so that it can continue to grow and evolve, but we also need to have some structure and agreed-upon definitions. From the perspective of government, Goldenberg described the tension between “over-structuring and over-defining the field and the need to legitimize it to acquire resources and support for it; social innovation isn't the result of spontaneous combustion.” Ryan Lock, through his role as director of social enterprise for the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation, discussed the difficulties that he has faced with a lack of a clear definition of social innovation, particularly within the context of the provincial government:

Some of this stuff is just not tidy, which is why we have academics like you trying to shine a little bit more light on it. I've been around many tables where the conversation gets bogged down around definitions and people struggle to advance it to the next step. . . . People who've been around this for a little bit longer and are tired of having the definitional discussion ad nauseum are more apt to take the next step. They'll pay lip service to the definitions but they

want to move on. People who are new to it get hung up on the definitions. Government can also get a little hung up on the definitions.

As Lock notes, it is difficult for governments to function without definitions. Governments tend to operate in siloes, and in this way, *social innovation* may be contrary to how governments operate.<sup>82</sup> From a researcher perspective, I found that the vagueness around the field encouraged me to take a big-tent approach to the research. I was able to engage with an array of interesting people from a range of sectors and disciplines, which resulted in a number of interesting conversations. At the same time, the vagueness around the definition was challenging throughout the interview process, and Joy Anderson, founder and president of Criterion Institute, encouraged me to be more concrete in my use of the term. The vagueness has also made it difficult to interpret the data and to determine how best to present the results in terms of ease of understanding and readability. I can empathize with the comments from Goldenberg and Lock, particularly in relation to the way in which traditional sectors, such as the government, relate to social innovation. At this time, however, I am most in agreement with Mulgan (2015), who argued that there is a need to be patient in terms of allowing social innovation to become better understood:

As the field of social innovation grows, and becomes more subtle and complex, there is a need to be patient. It is at least fifty years since the innovation studies field took shape, led by such great figures as Richard Nelson, Christopher Freeman, Carlota Perez and Giovanni Dosi. Yet it is, in some respects, heartening to know that after half a century there are few agreed definitions of

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<sup>82</sup> Cels, De Jong, and Nauta (2012) provided a good analysis of the challenges that those working to advance social good encounter within bureaucratic structures. The authors argued that many of the world's organizations—public, private, or nonprofit—continue to function in line with Max Weber's definition of bureaucracy. The authors detailed Weber's principles of bureaucracy in relation to innovation. For this discussion, please see pp. 9–11.

innovation; few agreed metrics (and some certainty that the dominant ones, like patents and R&D spend, are misleading); and little confidence about what works when it comes to policy. Indeed, one of the conclusions of a major review of global innovation policy evidence was that relatively little is known, and that how policy is implemented matters as much as the policy itself (Rigby and Ramlogan, 2012). (p. xv)

In the interim, it appears that the range and variety that constitute social innovation defy simple categorization. Jenson (2015) noted that social innovation can be understood as a “quasi-concept”.<sup>83</sup>

A quasi-concept benefits from relying on academics’ research but is simultaneously indeterminate enough to make it adaptable to a variety of situations and flexible enough to follow the twists and turns of policy and ideology that everyday politics sometimes makes necessary. (p. 91)

At this time, I am most interested in giving the field time to grow, and I am inclined to understand social innovation as a “quasi-concept.” Such an understanding may allow the field to find a balance between formulating a firm definition and remaining unhelpfully “open.”

#### 4.1.5 Little Analysis of Power

11% (3 of the 27) of respondents raised the issue of power within the field of social innovation. Hamoon Ekhtiari, through his role as founding director of Studio Y at MaRS Discovery District, discussed the need for those engaging in social innovation to have conversations about access, diversity, and privilege. From his experience in the field,

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<sup>83</sup> For a further understanding of social innovation as a “quasi-concept,” see European Commission (2013).

Ekhtiari has found that conversations about social innovation rarely include the nuances necessary to understand “who is *actually* at the table.” He has found that although social innovation, as a field, has “raised the bar” and is helping to shape a community for people who want a place and space to do their work, this is only the beginning, and there is a lot of work to do.

In agreement, Jessica Tomlin, executive director of the MATCH International Women’s Fund, shared some of her experiences within the social innovation space. Tomlin is in a unique position as the director of a women’s rights organization that is actively working to engage with the social innovation sector. She has found social innovation spaces to be exclusionary and difficult to develop rapport in.

11%, or 3 of the 27 respondents discussed the issue of power in the field of social innovation and this meshes well with my findings within the secondary research as I have found little research on social innovation that provides a nuanced analysis of power and privilege. Agnete Alsos et al. (2014) have suggested that in the field of innovation, some of the important questions to be asked include “who has power in organisations, who are listened to and whose ideas are brought forward?” (p. 247). Kovalainen and Poutanen (2013) detailed the importance of an analysis of power in the field of innovation. The parallel field of innovation demonstrates the need for an analysis of power in the field of social innovation. I suspect that an analysis of power may help to resolve some of the conflict over the meaning of social innovation, as identified by Montgomery (2016). According to Montgomery, the two schools of social innovation include the technocratic paradigm of social innovation and the democratic paradigm of social innovation. The technocratic paradigm is deeply rooted in neoliberal foundations, while the democratic paradigm is advocated for by those working to displace neoliberalism.

Simply placing the “social” qualifier before “innovation” is not enough—an analysis of power is needed within the field—and gender analysis will assist in engaging with power relations within social innovation.

#### 4.1.6 Social Innovation and Neoliberalism

The notion that social innovation advances a neoliberal agenda is something I expected to hear often throughout the interviews. This is a conversation that is beginning within the research (see discussion in chapter 2), but only one of the 27 participants touched on it. According to Beth Woroniuk, advocate, advisor, analyst, and consultant in issues related to women's rights and gender dimensions of peace building, conflict, and humanitarian assistance,

One of the biggest criticisms that I see a lot of social innovation particularly and how it's been taken up for the sake of development is that social innovation can provide a justification for public divestment from governments. It is very individualistic, putting it [the onus] on the social innovator. That's a big criticism, specifically one of the biggest criticisms that's coming up in the Canadian context too.

The comments from Woroniuk illustrate the extent of the conversation pertaining to neoliberalism and social innovation throughout the interview process. Whether this is due to the relative newness of the field of social innovation or to the current awareness and understanding of the term is not clear. As detailed in chapter 1, the Canadian government has had limited engagement with social innovation, and this may be a reason for a shortage of discussion, since approximately half the respondents live in Canada or are Canadian citizens. Throughout the interviews, I did not ask a question that explicitly addressed neoliberalism, but I did ask questions about the limitations and weaknesses of the field. Interestingly, however, a number of participants made reference to issues of women's empowerment and neoliberalism (as discussed in chapter 2).

## 4.2 Gender, Women, and Social Innovation

Why does the gap in research between social innovation and gender equality exist? What can be learned when gender analysis is brought to the field of social innovation? The data from the interviews suggest a number of reasons why the gap continues to exist as

well as suggestions to address the gap. The data support an interesting discussion about gender, “feminine values,” and social innovation as well as some understanding as to how gender analysis can help to broaden the construct of social innovation.

#### 4.2.1 Understanding “Feminine Values” and Systematic Inequality

Inherent in some of the questions that I posed to participants around gender, women, and social innovation was the assumption that there is a need for gender analysis in the field of social innovation. 89% (24 of the 27) of participants were in agreement with this assumption, although a few participants challenged this assumption. One prominent observer of social innovation who I interviewed for this research argued that there is no need for gender analysis in social innovation because some of the values present in the field of social innovation have already shown themselves to be different than those of innovation. The participant argued that social innovation embodies “feminine values”:

I think what’s happening in this field is that the social innovation field is hugely informed by women. I don’t think we need to bring a gender lens to it. I don’t need to because it embodies a gender lens, it embodies so many of the values which are important to us, the feminine values, the fact that we’re including “social” and “innovation” in the same sentence in and of itself is an embodying of the placing of importance on people.

The participant went on to describe what they mean by “feminine” values that they see in social innovation:

There’s a feminine set of values that can be embodied by men or women, which are the set of values that I believe are transforming social innovation. So I think that the values in management, in decision making, in that sense of holistic ecosystems lens, whole-systems care, family, belonging, these are actually feminine values. Feminist?

you guys can decide. My belief is that what's happening is that the increase of women in positions of power and authority in systems, in government, in corporations, and as we become more senior in the roles that we're assuming, that our feminine values are becoming increasingly, slowly but surely integrated into our policies, procedures, the study of happiness, of workplace culture, of informed decision making, public consultation, work-life balance, recognizing in a lot of the Silicon Valley companies the importance of including, having very generous benefits packages for parental leave, these are feminine values that are informing and stimulating a lot, and I would argue that while men might be moving bigger is better—scale, scale, scale—women are actually quite happily co-creating amazing micro-examples of some of the world's most incredible social innovations.<sup>84</sup>

Somewhat related to this, another prominent observer of social innovation who I interviewed for this research argued that most of our systems and structures have been designed with a male lens, not a feminine lens. This thinking is one of the underpinning inspirations for the participants work as a leader of a firm that supports women entrepreneurs and female-led ventures by bringing a holistic perspective and “feminine values” to solving the world's challenges.

I do not fully endorse the notion of “feminine values” as put forth by the two participants and I find the notion of “feminine values” to be somewhat problematic. I acknowledge

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<sup>84</sup> To provide further context, the same participant also notes, “I won't go on a women's panel anymore because I'm not interested in being pushed aside. I've never seen myself as a feminist. I never attended any gender workshops ever, and I've never taken women's studies. I have zero interest in women's issues. Zero. And I have been the founder of over a dozen social enterprises, and have been instrumental in creating at least two or three social innovations depending on how you define it. Women have, there's a feminine set of values which can be embodied by men or women, which are the set of values which I believe are transforming social innovation.”

that societal influences generate gendered differences; women may innovate differently, and there may indeed be a set of “feminine values” inherent within social innovation. However, I am interested to understand *why* this may be the case. Assuming essentialist notions (even positive ones) to women, girls, or “feminine values” without an analysis of historical and political perspectives is insufficient.

Jackson (2002) argued that essentialist assumptions about women are present in research examining the relationship between gender and corruption (p. 502). Much of the research on gender and political corruption has indicated that countries with greater numbers of women in government are less corrupt. As an example, Michailova and Melnykovska (2009) examined the correlation between women’s representation in government and corruption in transition countries, concluding, “An increase in women representation in parliament has a positive effect for a country through its negative (linear) relationship to corruption” (p. 17). More recent research on gender and corruption, however, has indicated that including greater numbers of women in government is not enough to permanently end corruption. As a report from the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (2014) indicated, greater numbers of women in government impact levels of corruption “if and only if, the country in question has reasonably robust systems to uphold democracy and to enforce anti-corruption laws” (p. 1). This finding indicates that greater numbers of women in government alone is not a solution to corruption. As Jackson (2002) has argued, “women may be as good as they appear, at least partly, because of their subordination” (p. 503), and therefore research investigating women and corruption must not rely on essentialist notions of gender; it must include a historical and political analysis about women and gender. Similarly, a discussion about how women innovate, or “feminine values” within social innovation, must be framed within a broader discussion, particularly about systematic inequality.

A conversation about the role of gender equality and social innovation must be framed within the context of systemic inequality. When asked, “Why does the gap in research between social innovation and gender equality exist?” 55% (15 of the 27) interviewees spoke to systematic inequalities as an underlying reason why there has been limited



gender analysis in the field; for example, Anne Webb, project director for gender research in African and Arab countries on ICTs for Empowerment, noted,

I keep coming back to gender inequality in society. I think that for social innovation to be an avenue where women are really going to be able to pursue their interests and act on their own behalves, I find over and over again that we're curtailed by the systemic social and economic inequalities that are our reality.

Donna Morton, managing partner at Principium, also identified recurring systemic inequalities as a major reason. Amina Doherty, former founding member and coordinator of FRIDA–The Young Feminist Fund, argued,

The systems in place—society—make it easier for some innovations to be more successful and to be better supported. The systems make it more difficult to hear the very political issues that women and girls are working on which makes it *seem* more difficult. But ultimately, how do you talk about patriarchy and talk about innovation?

Jessica Tomlin, executive director of MATCH, argued that women are often forced to *do things* differently due to the systems in place. Similarly, Joy Anderson, founder and president of Criterion Institute, felt that the social and cultural constructions of gender that shape women's position within society impact the kinds of innovations that women see as possible and effective. Anderson expressed her frustration with how we tend to confuse the ways in which women innovate as being necessarily different than the ways men innovate when, in fact, these differences are often the result of systematic inequality. Anderson cited the example of microfinance and much of the research around it, expressing her frustration with the field:

The research tells us that women are accepting microfinance loans at high rates, and we say that women

keep more money within the community, and that women repay loans faster, but we don't talk about the fact that almost all of this is due to structural inequities within society. It is likely that women did not have other avenues to acquire these loans, and it is likely that they have fewer places to spend the money. The reason so many women took these loans is because it is women who are living in poverty that need them. If you throw money at poverty, you hit women. It's not like it [microfinance] is some clever thing that we're helping women get out of poverty.

It is important to understand women's engagement with social innovation through their experiences of gender-based inequality. Jackson (2002) argued that women's experiences of gender-based inequality must be understood as both structural constraints and as an active and agentic process (p. 502). Both Saunders and Morton touched on the way that women's experiences with inequality can be insightful to their engagement with social innovation.

Saunders, founder of SheEO Inc., discussed the need for women to recognize that the systems that do not work for them, and the things that they see as being broken in the world, are in fact points of insight for solutions that women have. She has found that, too often, women take the fact that they see something in the world that does not seem right as if women are the problem, when in reality, it is through their position as "other" that women are able to see unique solutions. Similarly, Morton felt that women innovate differently due to their "otherness" or through the distance that some women have from the status quo.

Morton argued,

I like to talk about the people who are left out of the economy as being the most disruptive players because if you haven't been a part of building the economy as it is, you're not sewn in to the status quo. In this way, you have

an automatic “otherness” and therefore a lens that can both critique and spot solutions that people who are too close to the fabric of the current economy cannot see. If you’re a practitioner of the economy as it is, it’s really difficult to get that distance, but if you’ve been left out, you’re already distanced. So I would argue that women, indigenous folks, and people from the so-called emerging markets, or bottom of the pyramid are the most disruptive innovators globally because they’ve been left out. This left-outness is actually a massive advantage. Women have been underfinanced, indigenous people have been underfinanced, those within emerging markets have definitely been underfinanced, and therefore, we’re leaving their intelligence and their intellectual and actualized potential in the world, we’re leaving it all on the table, we’re leaving them as stranded assets within our current economy. There are massive opportunities to build programs and products that address that gulf. Women are half the people on the planet, yet they still remain left out of the economy. There are very few women who have been architects of the economy as it is. Though this is starting to change. It’s like being in a candy store, where all of a sudden, who we are, and what we are, and what we carry and bring is actually incredibly valuable to a world that has been incredibly limiting and limited in terms of its makeup.

It is important to acknowledge that some people, namely, women and girls, as well as non-hegemonic men and boys, act in accordance with their relative power within the world. “Feminine values” may be inherent within social innovation, and women may innovate in different ways, but we will not begin to fully understand the role of gender in social innovation if we do not engage with a range of deeply historical and political perspectives. The conflation of gender with women as well as “feminine values” or

femininity excludes men, different types of masculinities, and it ignores a range of queer perspectives. Marlow (2014) indicated that some of the current the research on gender and entrepreneurship relies on essentialist and ahistorical generalizations of women and that research on social enterprise has a number of flaws.<sup>85</sup>

The field may indeed embody “feminine values,” but such values are rooted in essentialist understandings of women and girls. If we presume essentialist notions of gender, women, or femininity, we will miss out on a number of new and insightful research directions, and such a presumption may be too simplistic. Without dismissing the possibility that women as a group may indeed innovate differently from men as a result of historical and continuing structural inequality, we must continue to ask more complicated questions. A focus on gender relations from a nuanced structural perspective may help to highlight historical perspectives, and it can help to push more engaged political perspectives forward.

#### 4.2.2 The Need to Rewrite History

As detailed in chapter 2, the field of innovation claims to be gender-blind or gender-neutral, which, ironically, results in the field of innovation being highly gendered and male dominated. Women-dominated or gender-balanced industries are less researched or are seen as less relevant to innovation research. Men and their contributions to innovation are viewed as invaluable, whereas women and women’s contributions are considered unimportant or are not considered at all. Unsurprisingly, women’s contributions to innovation have not been well documented.

In an overview of the history of innovation and inventions, Vare and Ptacek (2002) demonstrated that women have been, and continue to be, innovative, although inventions and innovations by women have become “victim to a strange historical amnesia” (p. 1).

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<sup>85</sup> It is important to note that while gender analysis is relevant to this section, further research warrants a deeply intersectional lens to understand how the socially innovative endeavors of women, girls, and non-hegemonic boys and men are influenced across a multitude of power and access points. As noted in the methodology chapter and throughout this thesis, for the purpose of this research, however, I have limited the scope to a gender analysis.

The authors cited examples such as the automatic dishwasher, the sewing machine, protease inhibitors, chemotherapy, the Mars rover, the hang glider, and Kevlar. The examples indicate that women and girls have made significant contributions to the field of innovation, although their contributions are not well documented or women are not attributed credit.

The first woman to be formally awarded a patent in the United States was Hannah Slater in 1793 for her cotton sewing thread (Vare & Ptacek, 2002, p. 1). Within a list of historical innovations by women, Vare and Ptacek (2002) noted that patents were often awarded to women's husbands or other male relatives. In 1715, Sybilla Masters received English Patent 401 for her corn mill, although the official paper listed her husband, Thomas Masters, on the patent (p. 5). Some women also used initials instead of given names in patent applications in an attempt to avoid gender bias.

The male-dominated and masculinist nature of the field of innovation has not appreciated the contributions of women and girls in innovation. Wikipedia is a form of crowdsourcing and an often-cited example of social innovation. Wikipedia is the largest source of free knowledge in the world, and it relies on individuals who volunteer their time to contribute to the site. However, despite Wikipedia's reach, the editors of Wikipedia are known to be predominately White and male; only 8.5%–15% of editors are women (Lam, Uduwage, & Dong, 2011). Sexism and gender bias are documented issues on Wikipedia. In an exploration of the gender imbalance in English Wikipedia's volunteer population, Lam et al. (2011) indicated that Wikipedia's culture is likely resistant to women's participation. Sue Gardner, former executive director of the Wikimedia Foundation, conducted a search within blogs and online communities to provide some insight into the systemic gender issues at Wikipedia. Her findings revealed that there are a number of reasons women do not engage in Wikipedia, including the culture, which some have said to be too aggressive, too sexual, and misogynist, as well as some of the technologically related elements of the editing process (Gardner, 2011).

The lack of diversity among Wikipedia's editors greatly impacts the site's content. Many topics and people are not documented—for example, the Women in Red project lists

women who do not have a Wikipedia presence<sup>86</sup>—and content is often flagged for being sexist and misogynist. In a study assessing the gender bias within Wikipedia, Wagner et al. (2015) detailed a number of ways that women are negatively impacted on Wikipedia:

Women on Wikipedia tend to be more linked to men than vice versa, which can put women at a disadvantage in terms of—for example—visibility or reachability on Wikipedia. In addition, we find that womens’[sic] romantic relationships and family-related issues are much more frequently discussed in their Wikipedia articles than in mens’[sic] articles. This suggests that there are gender differences [with regard to] how the Wikipedia community conceptualizes notable men/women. Because modern search and recommendation algorithms exploit both, structure and content, women may suffer from lower visibility in social networks (or article networks) where men (or articles about men) are more central and include more links to other men than to other women. To reduce such effects, the editor community needs to evaluate the gender balance of links included in articles (e.g., if an article about a woman links to the article about her husband, the husband should also link back), and to adopt a more gender-balanced vocabulary when writing articles about notable people. Further, engineers and researchers need to develop a deeper understanding of how different types of search and recommendation algorithms impact the visibility of minorities. (pp. 9–10)

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<sup>86</sup> See the Women in Red project here:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject\\_Women\\_in\\_Red](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Women_in_Red)

As the findings suggest, addressing the systemic gender issues within Wikipedia is complex.

The field of social innovation appears to be getting better at documenting the innovative endeavors of women and girls, but there is certainly room for improvement. As 18% (5 of the 27) interview participants noted, social innovation can be understood as the means by which the women's movement has always been operating, and the women's movement is a long-standing example of social innovation. Furthermore, we must seek to understand what the field of social innovation can learn from the women's rights and gender equality movements; women and girls have always been social innovators, although they have not been framed or labeled as such (by themselves or others).

A prominent theme within the interviews was the importance of storytelling (55% or 15 of the 27 participants mentioned storytelling). Servane Mouazan, founder and CEO of Ogunte, indicated that women do not receive enough representation in the media and visibility for women in social innovation must be boosted. In agreement, Vicki Saunders, founder of SheEO Inc., discussed what she refers to as "acupuncture points" that are helpful in shifting the system around women and social innovation. Saunders identified financing systems, educational components, and media and visibility (including storytelling), as critical to advancing women in social innovation. Saunders believes the three "acupuncture" points are all necessary and complementary.

The participants discussed some of the difficulties involving storytelling for women, girls, and social innovation and identified their challenges in this regard. One participant, a prominent angel investor, told the story of their experience financing a start-up in the sanitation space. They noted that before meeting with the start-up, they were hesitant to provide funding because they were unsure the company mandate would be beneficial to women and girls. However, upon asking some fundamental questions, it became apparent that the company was exceptionally well positioned to support gender-related issues, but the leadership had not framed their mandate in such a way to demonstrate it. The participant stressed the importance of asking thoughtful questions to help unearth the stories. Jess Tomlin noted that one of the reasons that social innovations from women

and girls have not been well captured or well documented is because the examples are not easily categorized within the dominant understandings of innovation. Tomlin asserted, “We could show 500 years’ worth of research in relation to how women have innovated in really complex realities, but we’ve never really called it that because it doesn’t look like that in the traditional sense.” Tomlin further noted that women and girls are doing a great deal of really interesting work that is not easy to understand—it is nuanced and complex work that is also very difficult to capture. Tomlin’s comments are representative of the challenges regarding storytelling for women, girls, and social innovation and as such, 18% (5 of the 27) participants further addressed the need for innovation in approaches to storytelling as a whole. As Tomlin noted, “our great challenge is telling those stories in a way that isn’t at the expense of complexity. That’s where people have made the mistakes in the past and I think we have a responsibility to find the right balance.” Donna Morton, managing partner at Principium, suggested it may be helpful to “twin meaningful quantitative metrics with anecdotal and qualitative analysis, such as storytelling.”

The participants offered few suggestions for ways to better capture the stories of women, girls, and social innovation although the field of digital storytelling was suggested as one avenue in learning how to better tell the stories around gender, women, and social innovation. Further, I suggest that crowdsourcing may also be helpful in capturing, unearthing, and telling these stories. For example, Wadhwa and Chideya (2014) crowd-created the book *Innovating Women: The Changing Face of Technology*.

A possible way to begin to tell these stories, and to tell them properly, can be seen through the example of Wikipedia. There is a push for more editors with diverse backgrounds. Wikipedia’s systemic bias extends to Black people as well. The Black Lives Matter Wikipedia edit-a-thon, organized by AfroCROWD and the Wikimedia Foundation, occurred in February 2016. The Art + Feminism group will soon host its third edit-a-thon<sup>87</sup> to increase the presence of women artists on Wikipedia.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> These edit-a-thons appear to be quite distinct from the sort of hack-a-thons that I critique in section 4.3.1. The edit-a-thons are a way to work against the problems that I have detailed at Wikipedia.



We must rewrite the history of social innovation and innovation<sup>89</sup> in a manner that appreciates the varied ways in which women and girls (and non-hegemonic men and boys) innovate. A retelling of history, whether on Wikipedia or through other mediums, is incredibly important, particularly in the context of an increasingly digitized and connected world. If something or someone does not exist on the World Wide Web, it is more likely to be forgotten or erased. This is an opportune moment to tell, or retell, the history of innovation without the biases.

#### 4.2.3 Understanding “Women in STEM”: Shifting the Paradigm Around What Constitutes “Innovation”

The relationship between the field of social innovation and innovation may be one of the reasons why there has been little gender analysis brought to the field of social innovation.

Although the relationship between the fields of social innovation and innovation is still being understood, social innovation can be considered a subfield, or an offspring, of innovation, and it is possible that the field of social innovation has adopted some of the same biases as the field of innovation. As one participant noted, it is through its relationship with innovation that social innovation has learned to privilege technological innovations and become male dominated.

In agreement with 55% (15 of the 27) participants, the field of social innovation appears to pay more attention to technologically oriented social innovation. It is my contention that tech-related social innovations are currently popularized and privileged by

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<sup>88</sup> See the Art + Feminism project here: <http://art.plusfeminism.org/>

The project has also created a downloadable kit for organizers to encourage more groups to edit Wikipedia: <http://art.plusfeminism.org/edit-a-thons/organize/>

<sup>89</sup> Given the overlap and slippage between the two terms, I think it is fair to argue that we need to rewrite both histories.

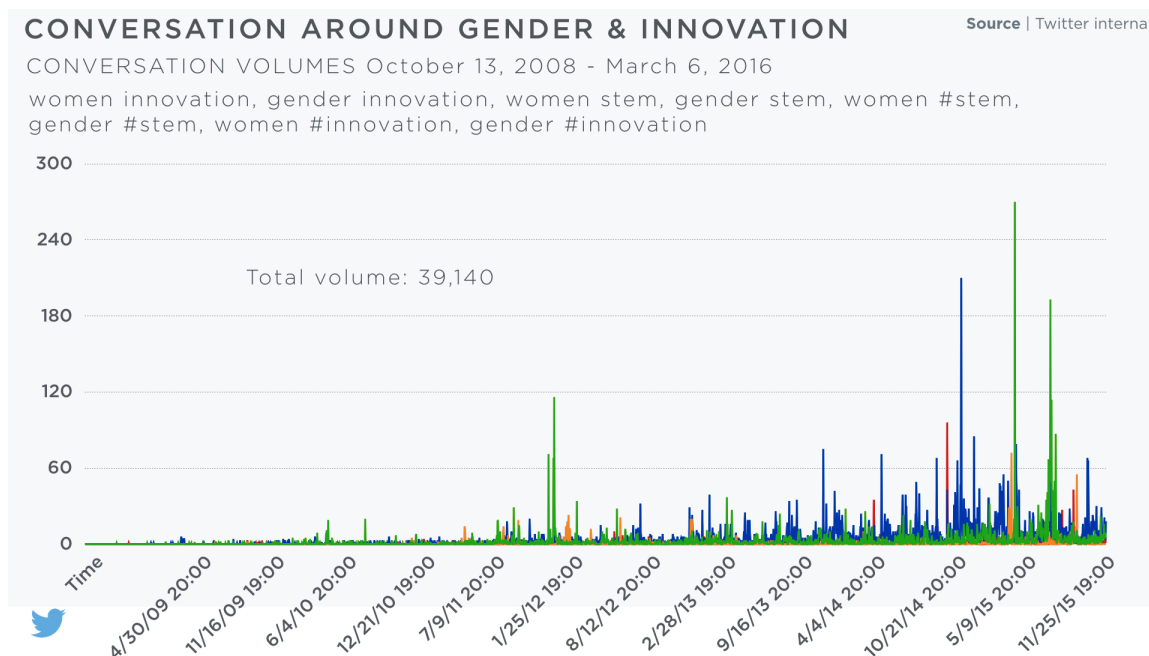
researchers and practitioners alike.<sup>90</sup> This trend is present in the field of innovation as well. Because I began this research in 2013, the most prominent shift that I have seen regarding gender and innovation is an exponential increase in attention and support being paid to women and girls within tech-related innovation, or STEM.

Initiatives such as GoldieBlox encourage girls to learn about STEM fields at a young age, and organizations like Stemettes support teenaged girls to pursue education and careers in STEM fields. There are coding initiatives for women and girls, such as Girl Develop It, Ladies Learning Code, and Women Who Code, and scholarships, grants, and loans to support woman and girls in a variety of STEM-related initiatives. Figure 4 indicates that there were approximately 39,140 tweets between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, using the search terms related to women and innovation. This chart demonstrates that the volume of conversation around women and innovation has increased steadily in the past

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<sup>90</sup> Given the tendency to privilege tech-related social innovation as well as to not include social innovations that intersect with gender, I have made a conscious effort throughout the research process and within this dissertation to include examples of social innovation beyond that go beyond tech and also include a gender dimension. The lack of engagement between the fields has been made challenging to find examples. Most often I have discovered the examples and framed them as both social and pertaining to gender using my own analysis.

few years.



**Figure 4: Time series visualization of tweets pertaining to “gender,” “women,” and “innovation.” This chart provides a visual representation of the volume of unique tweets (approximately 39,140) between October 13, 2008, and March 6, 2016, using a select group of search terms that relate to women and innovation. From Twitter internal data.**

It is exciting to see such an increase in support for women in STEM-related fields, but it is not clear if this will help to close the gender and innovation gap. A report by Hewlett, Sherbin, Dieudonné, Fagnoli, and Fredman (2014) that looks at the landscape of science, engineering, and technology (SET) in Brazil, China, India, and the United States indicated that women are 47% more likely than men to leave the industry within the first year. That study indicated that women are “no longer subjected to overt bias, [although] women continue to face powerful ‘antigens’ in SET corporate environments” (p. 2). While not “overt,” the authors indicated that women continue to be marginalized by the workplace cultures that are exclusionary and biased. In this way, it is not enough to encourage women and girls into STEM if we do not also address the culture within these

industries. As Baruah (2015a) emphasized while talking about women's marginalization in the traditional and clean energy industry, "simply creating opportunities for training and employment in new fields and suggesting that women are not unwelcome in them is not enough" (p. 20).

Gender bias has become an important part of the conversation around women and STEM, and as those working to address bias understand, the first step in addressing gender bias is to understand that the bias exists. However, a recent study by the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* (Handley, Brown, Moss-Racusin, & Smith, 2015) has revealed that many men do not believe that gender bias is happening. The study<sup>91</sup> revealed that when shown empirical evidence of gender bias against women within the STEM fields, men are much less likely than women to find the studies convincing or important. The study's authors astutely ask, "How can we successfully broaden the participation of women in STEM when the very research underscoring the need for this initiative is less valued by the majority group who dominate and maintain the culture of STEM?" (p. 4).

If men do not believe that gender bias is happening in STEM fields, it will be more difficult to address. A recent survey titled "Elephant in the Valley,"<sup>92</sup> which is based on responses by more than 200 women working in tech-related fields in the Silicon Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area, demonstrated that overt sexism is still happening in these spaces. The survey indicated that 60% of women in the industry have been the subject of unwanted sexual advances, and approximately 50% of the advances came from their bosses. Furthermore, 90% of women indicated that they have witnessed sexism in the workplace (Elephant in the Valley, content on web).

It is not enough to support women and girls within STEM if we do not address the gender bias and overt sexism within the culture of STEM. Furthermore, I suggest that we must

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<sup>91</sup> To review the full results, see <http://www.pnas.org/content/112/43/13201.full.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> The survey was inspired by the *Ellen Pao v. Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers* trial and conducted by Trae Vassallo, a former Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers partner who was subpoenaed in the *Ellen Pao* trial, and Michele Madansky, a market research consultant

better understand the rationale for the support of women and girls in STEM. In a keynote address at the Report of the Gender and Productivity Summit, Lord Myners stated, “The stock market would not allow the waste of capital in the way we tolerate the waste of female talent and ability.” A report detailing the role of women in Canada’s innovation policy indicated that women “offer untapped new opportunities to augment and sustain innovation in this country, which must be leveraged if Canada intends on becoming an innovation nation” (Pouragheli & Beckton, 2013, p. 5). This report raised a number of critical and smart questions around gender and innovation, although the above quotation combined with the remarks from Lord Myners makes me wonder: Are we supporting women in STEM for the sake of their own personal and professional development, or are we supporting women and girls for their ability to contribute instrumentally to the innovation economy? Governments and policy leaders increasingly indicate that countries that invest in innovation will get ahead, and as Carlsson (2006) argued, innovation policy is largely the result of the quest to improve economic competitiveness.<sup>93</sup> At first glance, the recent surge in support for women in STEM-related initiatives feels similar to the “business case” for women and girls, or “smart economics.” I wonder if *some* of the support for women and STEM can be understood as the latest iteration of the “business case.” It is likely that Pouragheli and Beckton (2013) are employing the “business case” in a strategic manner as means to help further the conversation around women and innovation in the Canadian context,<sup>94</sup> but it is still important to question whether countries are supporting women and STEM to keep pace with innovation norms on a national scale, or because they care about equity for its own sake. It is important to continue to ask questions about the reasons for the support for women and STEM. It is further important to recognize that support for women in STEM does not mean that innovations will be thoughtful and employ an intersectional analysis

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<sup>93</sup> I am not concerned with the validity of this rhetoric as much as I am interested in understanding the underlying reasons for the support for women and girls and STEM.

<sup>94</sup> As noted in an earlier discussion about my experience with my start-up, Feminuity, I have learned that oftentimes, presenting the “business case” to those in the corporate realm is most helpful.

or that this support will result in innovation that addresses gender equality. It is essentialist and misleading to assume that innovations developed by women and girls will be thoughtful and/or address gender inequality.

There are a number of great initiatives to support women in STEM, and there is a significant body of research emerging that seeks to understand women in STEM, but the support and research alone will not address the gender and innovation gap in a substantive way. The gender bias and sexism that women encounter in STEM indicate that the field of innovation continues to be male dominated and that technological innovations continue to be privileged, particularly in relation to *social* innovations. As noted earlier, Figure 4 demonstrates that the volume of conversation around women and innovation (STEM) has increased steadily in the past few years, and by comparison, Figure 3 demonstrates that searches related to gender equality and social innovation have revealed only 840 tweets in the same time frame.

The male-dominated and masculine nature of innovation combined with the continued focus on technological innovations impacts the field of social innovation. As Andersson et al. (2012) detailed, the strong focus on technological innovation has resulted in a lack of knowledge of and support for social innovation. The paternalistic relationship between innovation and social innovation has hindered the development of the field as well as adoption of the concept. I am concerned that social innovation may need to separate itself from innovation or at least better define itself in relation to innovation. I do not have a clear answer, but I encourage these questions to be explored in further research. I do, however, suggest that we rethink the notion of what constitutes “innovation” overall.

It may be useful to expand the notion of what constitutes “innovation.” The strong focus on tech-related innovation is particularly limiting because of the association of technology with masculinity. This association has painted women as incapable of innovation, and it has meant that innovation in women-dominated or gender-balanced industries is understudied. As Anne Webb, project director for gender research in Africa and Arab Countries into ICT’s for Empowerment, astutely noted,

I see some trends there that are very discouraging in a lot of ways because I see a lot of innovation in terms of the technologies becoming much broader in scope in terms of what you can do with them and how you can use them. They're responding to all sorts of convenience, needs, or creating needs, maybe? I don't see that there's much attention to any sort of change in social innovations. Social relations are changing as a result of technologies, but I don't see that there's any real attention being paid to trying to use those technologies to improve equality.

A continuous focus on tech-related innovation fails to fully capture who is innovating and where this innovation is happening. Furthermore, a focus on tech-related innovation (whether through the lens of women and STEM or otherwise) fails to recognize the significance of innovation happening across other sectors. A bias toward tech-related innovation makes it difficult to recognize innovation in other areas, and opportunities for innovation will be missed. Some people have started to use the acronym "STEAM," which builds on STEM to also include a focus on art and design in STEM education.<sup>95</sup> I strongly urge researchers and practitioners to continuously question the assumed connections between innovation and technology and to expand their understanding.

It is not enough to give women and girls a seat at the table; in agreement with Pouragheli and Beckton (2013), a more inclusive notion of innovation "would capture and reflect the diversity of knowledge, skills, and talents that women and all members of Canadian society bring to enrich innovation processes and outcomes across the board (STEM and beyond)" (p. 11). Such a notion would support women and girls, boys and men. The European Union's latest innovation policy (2014) calls for a broadening of the innovation concept as well as an increase in participation from a diverse group of actors. In

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<sup>95</sup> Georgette Yakman may be the originator of the term. The Rhode Island School of Design has a STEM to STEAM program, and they update an interactive map to showcase STEAM-related initiatives available here: <http://map.stemtosteam.org/>

agreement, it is important to develop an understanding of innovation that reflects all people, regardless of field or sector. This begins with identifying the limitations of our current understanding of innovation and social innovation.

#### 4.2.4 The Double Blind Spot

Much of this research has demonstrated that the field of social innovation has yet to include a gender analysis as well as the subsequent need for a gender analysis in the field. Mark Goldenberg noted that while conducting research for the report “Social Innovation in Canada: An Update,” gender did not come up:

The people I talked to, the literature I read, and conferences that I went to in social innovation made little to no mention of gender issues, or women’s issues . . . although it was interesting that there were a lot of women who were part of it all.

However, the results of the interviews indicate that the limited engagement between social innovation and gender equality is not one-sided; neither has shown much interest in the other.

18% (5 of the 27) participants discussed the intentional lack of engagement of those working toward women’s rights and gender equality with fields such as social innovation. Joy Anderson noted that the attitudes of some feminisms (for largely political reasons) have been highly critical of anything to do with capitalism (unsurprisingly, and often rightly so). Furthermore, Anderson argued that those working toward gender equality and women’s rights have often been blind to the potential of fields such as social innovation, social enterprise, and social entrepreneurship.

As founder and director of the Criterion Institute, Anderson is at the forefront of the field of gender lens investing. Speaking from her wealth of experience, Anderson discussed the challenges that she has faced in trying to bring gender analysis to the financial realm. On one hand, some feminist perspectives have equated patriarchy with capitalism to the extent that it is difficult to create space for conversations about how a gender analysis can



be useful within the field of finance. The idea that the master's house cannot be dismantled with the master's tools (a phrase initially used by feminist scholar and activist Audre Lord) is so deeply entrenched in feminist theory and practice that gender equality scholars and practitioners often refuse even to consider that it may actually be possible to at least shake up the master's house, if not dismantle it, using the master's tools. On the other hand, the financial industry has for the most part taken little interest in gender equality and women's rights, and it has yet to understand the importance of a gender analysis. The Criterion Institute released a toolkit recently in the hope of better bridging the two fields. The toolkit was designed to help those working toward gender equality who want to better understand finance as a tool for social change and for people in the financial industry who want to incorporate a gender analysis into their approach to investing.

I suggest that, in some ways, the feminist movements have disengaged from capitalist systems uncritically. Aside from radical anarchist perspectives, most political perspectives understand that certain institutions are here to stay, and in this way, I see great value in the role of the social intrapreneur and systems entrepreneur: those who work with and within systems and institutions to change them slowly but incrementally. I understand the value in theorizing and critiquing institutions and systems while also offering practical solutions to create change. As Jackson (2002) explains,

contradictions in the concepts and methods of different disciplines, it seems to me, are the source of valuable critical tension which should be celebrated rather than avoided, and they do not necessarily impede interdisciplinary research, as some surprising examples demonstrate. For example, some might consider the term feminist economics to be rather contradictory and oxymoronic. After all, since feminism challenges foundational ideas of mainstream economics, a term I use as shorthand for the dominant positivist neoclassical form of economics, by an explicit social justice standpoint, how

can they combine meaningfully? That they do is itself of interest, and supports the notion that research with explicit values produces stronger analyses (Harding, 1987, 1992).  
(p. 498)

The growing field of social finance and the field of gender lens investing provide an interesting example of how feminist values and movements can engage with more just capitalist systems. It would be unfortunate not to explore these intersections; making the perfect the enemy of the good does not make the world more just.

To address this double blind spot, we need to find ways to engage social innovation, whether through practitioners, researchers, intermediaries, or funders, while at the same time engaging those working to advance gender equality, whether practitioners, researchers, intermediaries, or funders. In their report, Johnson Ross and Goddard (2015) indicated that the language differences across sectors, disciplines, and movements have a tendency to mask goals and approaches common to both social innovation and gender equality. This can be seen through an example provided by Amina Doherty. Doherty discussed her experience as a consultant with MATCH during the initial granting process. She recalled that many of the women's organizations interested in a grant did not use the language of social innovation and were unsure of whether their work met the criteria for the grants. Many of the potential grantees did not identify themselves as "innovative," and the language of "social innovation" included throughout the call for application, and within the application itself, was a barrier for some organizations in the application process. Similarly, Anderson identified a similar issue regarding her work within the social finance sector, finding that it has been difficult for her to bridge the communication gap between those in the financial realm and those working toward gender equality, in whatever capacity.

As detailed in chapter 2, I completed a fellowship at MaRS Discovery District, and I have also worked with the MATCH International Women's Fund, as this research was designed in collaboration with MATCH. In this way, I have been an academic researcher in the practitioner fields of both social innovation (MaRS) and gender equality

(MATCH). It was challenging to be an academic in a practitioner space such as MaRS: I had to learn to communicate the purpose of my research in nonacademic terms. It was further challenging to be one of the few people within the space broaching conversations about gender equality and women's rights. At times, I felt that my research and work was considered important but also viewed as tokenistic. I was provided with a number of opportunities to share my work publically within the space (speaking opportunities and featured blog posts), but I did not get the sense that the research or work was being taken seriously enough for MaRS to consider making meaningful changes to the organization. It has also been challenging to be an academic in a practitioner space such as MATCH, and it has been difficult to demonstrate the utility of some of the learning from the field of social innovation to MATCH. MATCH is an incredibly thoughtful and innovative organization, and MATCH also has a long history within the development and nonprofit sector. MATCH often uses women's rights and development language and at times, I suspect that we were saying the same things but speaking different languages. I have needed to do a lot of sector-specific language translation to work with MATCH.

From the perspective of a researcher conducting research that bridges social innovation and gender equality, I contend that the double blindness between the fields is a lose-lose for both fields. Social innovation that does not use gender analysis will not achieve its full potential. Similarly, there is value for those working toward gender equality to learn from the field of social innovation.

### 4.3 Gendering Scale

Much of the literature in the field of social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and social enterprise uses the term *scaling out* to refer to the effort to replicate and disseminate their programs, products, and ideas in large numbers (Mulgan, et al., 2007). The dominant understanding of scale, "scaling out" focuses on diffusion; it is often concerned with a bigger-is-better, quick-win mind-set, or as one participant noted, a traditional understanding of scale can be likened to social innovations' equivalent of men comparing their penis size.

Some of the field of social innovation has adopted a similar bigger-is-better conceptualization of scale as understood within the field of innovation—a field understood as male dominated and highly masculinist. Therefore, as social innovation becomes an established field, I am interested to see what can be learned when bringing gender analysis to the concept of scale in social innovation. As Joy Anderson, founder and president of Criterion Institute, noted,

scale is about norms, and the world is normed male. The male experience is still how we analyze the norm, so it follows that scale is implicitly male. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, in and of itself, but it's certainly problematic when it masks particularities that might matter.

In this way, bringing a gender analysis to the concept of scale may help us to better understand or re-conceptualize the concept as it pertains to the field of social innovation.

#### 4.3.1 Is Small the New Big?

Moore, Riddell, and Vocisano (2015) demonstrated that much of the research, whether from the field of social innovation, social entrepreneurship, or social enterprise, focuses on diffusion. The same is also true in practice. Sources of funding—from venture capital and angel investment to accelerator and incubator programs to crowdfunding initiatives, grants, and scholarships—are most often concerned with diffusion, and funders continuously ask, “But can it scale?” Initiatives that are not easily and obviously scalable are often considered uninteresting to funders. As an example, Ashoka, the world’s largest association of social entrepreneurs, declined to support an application for an initiative called Women on Wheels (WOW) because it was considered to be too costly and time intensive (Baruah, 2016, p. 19). WOW is an initiative that trains and employs poor urban women as chauffeurs and taxi drivers in New Delhi. It takes 8–10 months and costs approximately US\$850 to train each woman (pp. 3–5). The cost and duration of the training are often considered to be impediments to scale, despite the fact that the program is dedicated to quality replication of the initiative. As Baruah (2016) argued, “by considering only numbers and not depth of impact in its conceptualization of ‘scale,’

potential funders ironically prevent WOW from ‘replicating and scaling up’ its work” (p. 19). Moore et al. (2015) argued,

Scaling social innovations to effect large-scale change will necessarily involve a more complex and diverse process than simply “diffusing” a product or model. Therefore, we contend that empirical investigations of deliberate strategies that social innovators use when attempting to create systemic change are also needed—in particular ones that go beyond a focus on geographic and numeric dissemination of a product or service, to impact social systems or institutions. (p. 71)

It is not always reasonable to assume that an initiative is less substantive or sustainable because it does not quickly or obviously produce the traditional economies of scale. 52% (14 of the 27) respondents referenced the importance of appreciating or better understanding the power of “small” in terms of scale. The study by Moore et al. (2015) helped to broaden the construct of scale. The authors argued that scaling social innovations with the intention to achieve systemic impact involves three different types of scaling—scaling out, scaling up, and scaling deep. *Scaling out* refers to creating impact in larger numbers, *scaling up* refers to creating impact at the law and policy level, and *scaling deep* refers to creating impact with people, relationships, communities, and cultures. The study revealed that working for deep social impact, and systems change, will involve a combination of the three approaches to scale, and it is likely that the three types of scale interact in powerful ways to advance systemic change goals. As Vicki Saunders, founder of SheEO Inc., noted,

all we keep seeing when we look at the forest are the big trees, but there’s all of this undergrowth that is rejuvenating and creating new things; there’s this incredible undergrowth of enterprising activity that uses new models

in new ways, but we keep thinking that the “big” is the way to go, and it’s really not.

As Saunders indicated, when thinking about scale, we must remain more open. We must see the forest, the trees, and the undergrowth. Scaling up, scaling out, and scaling deep are all important approaches, and the concept of scaling deep is of particular interest given its focus on people, relationships, communities, and cultures. Banerjee and Duflo (2011) argued that social change is often not the result of “big” moves or “big” thinking; rather, social change is often the result of smaller interventions, more often. The authors described the common assumption that big changes make for big results, despite the fact that there is little evidence to validate this assumption. Jessica Tomlin, executive director of MATCH, argued that to achieve social change, we must move away from one-stop solutions and quick wins. Hack-a-thons are notorious for perpetuating the notion of simple, fast solutions. Hack-a-thons started as events for computer programmers and related specialists to collaborate on software projects in a limited and consecutive amount of time (usually 24 hours), although the practice has evolved from hacking software to hack social problems ranging from city transit issues to global poverty. Hack-a-thons perpetuate the notion that changing entire systems can happen overnight with the right combination of skills, knowledge, and caffeine. Social change is the result of smaller wins, over and over, and while hack-a-thons have produced some interesting results, the limitations of hack-a-thons must be understood carefully, particularly when applied to addressing social problems.

Smaller, more frequent interventions may help to achieve depth of scale. As Tonya Surman, executive director of the CSI, argued, the “small” warrants our attention and care; Surman suggested that the next major trend in social innovation is the concept of anti-scale. Surman thought that the anti-scale movement will become increasingly more popular, and she was interested in understanding more about the anti-scale models of the future that achieve impact.

I am not advocating against scaling out, in the traditional sense; there are many things that should scale, for example, the Internet and birth control. Women's funds<sup>96</sup> are a great example of a successful "scaling out." The women's funding movement traces its roots to the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, when women saw that few of the mainstream philanthropic dollars were being designated to gender equality. There are now hundreds of women's funds around the world. As Allyson Hewitt, senior fellow of social innovation at MaRS Discovery District, noted, too much emphasis on remaining small, or local, can limit us to pockets of excellence, pockets of wonder, and not allow the essence of the innovation to be shared. I am advocating, however, to broaden the construct of scale. If we understand that social change is often incremental, then we can begin to see the value of the small. Sometimes bigger may be better, but small is also important.

A conversation about networks provides an interesting perspective on the collective power of connecting many small parts. Servane Mouazan, founder and CEO of Ogunte, stressed the importance of networks for social innovators. Mouazan noted that those working toward social innovation must expand their networks and build them out horizontally, as opposed to vertically, to achieve a different version of scale. Similarly, Chris Grumm, former president and CEO of the Women's Funding Network, described the work that women and girls do around the world, whether in the household or otherwise. Grumm noted that the household is most often the space that capitalist systems rely on yet consider unimportant. Grumm argued that "scaling" for the social innovations of women and girls is likely happening in multiple places, but it must be connected. In this way, she also stressed the importance of networks in taking social innovation to scale. The comments made by Mouazan and Grumm are similar to Wheatley and Frieze's (n.d.) theory of emergence. The authors argued that social

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<sup>96</sup> The Women's Funding Network (WFN) is an alliance of women's funds with a global membership of over 145 funds that provides member funds. The MATCH International Women's Fund is a member of the WFN. Women's funds have their own specific priority and regional focus, and women and girls are a shared priority for all women's funds.

innovation can be taken to scale through an emergence that relies on networks. Wheatley and Frieze described their theory of emergence:

When separate, local efforts connect with each other as networks, then strengthen as communities of practice, suddenly and surprisingly a new system emerges at a greater level of scale. This system of influence possesses qualities and capacities that were unknown in the individuals. It isn't that they were hidden; they simply don't exist until the system emerges. They are properties of the system, not the individual, but once there, individuals possess them. And the system that emerges always possesses greater power and influence than is possible through planned, incremental change. Emergence is how life creates radical change and takes things to scale. (p. 1)

These examples demonstrate the need to broaden the construct of scale to understand not only that bigger can be better but also the importance of the slow and the small. Scaling can include scaling up, out, and deep.

#### 4.3.2 Context and Scale

A common theme (30%, or 8 of the 27) that appeared throughout the discussion about scale in social innovation within the interviews I conducted was the idea and importance of context. Those working to advance women's rights and gender equality stressed the importance of understanding context, for a number of reasons, when thinking about how to scale social innovation.

A deep understanding of context in relation to social innovation is particularly important because of the intricate nature of gender equality and the complex realities in which women and girls live around the world. What might be innovative in advancing gender equality in one context might be unhelpful in another, given the intricate nature of women's rights. Abigail Burgesson, special programs manager at the AWDF, reinforced



that what may be considered innovative to her within her work in Ghana may not be considered innovative to me within Canada. Social innovation will look and feel different in different contexts.<sup>97</sup> What might be considered an outdated technology in North America might be innovative in other developing contexts, or vice versa. Similarly, in a discussion about the need for a greater understanding of context in research pertaining to gender and entrepreneurship, Marlow (2014) argued that

context is not a construct which only applies to those economies and situations which differ from the presumed norm of Western developed nations; adopting this stance is both discriminatory and blinkered in that it suggests a dominant model to which others should aspire. (p. 109)

Social innovation will take on a different form in rural Uganda than it will in urban parts of Canada, as the social needs and the contexts are much different. Unsurprisingly, the effectiveness of an innovation in terms of advancing women's rights and gender equality will vary across contexts and cultures. Too often, funders look for "scalable" projects; they look for solutions that they can apply across different contexts, although problems (and their causes and effects) vary widely across communities and cultures. As Baruah (2015b) argued, shifts in international development have resulted in issues such as poverty and gender inequality being treated as "technical-rational topics that can be addressed through a bureaucratic approach to development management and practice" rather than as complex, systematic problems (para. 6). Attempting to scale without a proper understanding of the context can push people to try to do things that they are not ready to do, it can increase risk, and it can create superficial efforts and outcomes. As Jessica Tomlin, executive director of MATCH, noted, it is shortsighted to oversimplify the solutions for advancing women's rights and gender equality as something that can be

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<sup>97</sup> For an analysis of innovation and geography, please refer to Blake & Hanson (2005). The authors indicate that context is important to innovation for both social and geographical reasons.

easily scaled, because this does not account for the complexity of changing systems and transforming society:

True transformation is happening, (a) over hundreds of years and (b) it's happening at the artistry of women's movements that are moving forward an agenda really, really slowly. Not only that, but they're working within very restricted contexts. I'd like someone within the context of social innovation to explain to me how you challenge rape culture within a specific slum in South Africa that has one tribe versus another. It can't be done because the tribes differ. It can't be done because there are different entry points. It can't be done because the chiefs are different people. It can't be done because you have different types of women leaders within the community. It can't be done because you have a whole different set of customary law from one tribe to the next. So when you try and tackle something like that, you need to go in with your eyes wide open and you need to deal with the complex reality that a situation presents and you need to be there for the long term and you need things to be led by the people who live in that community, who speak the language, understand the community, who will continue to transform in that community for the years to come. The big challenge about scale, which I think is hugely shortsighted, is that it doesn't take these microcultures into context. We talk about going from one to the next, but that just won't work because everything that I just listed is a whole new reality next door. But not only that, but the leadership is different. So you just can't take one leadership from one community and put it into another and say this is what we call scale.

For it to last, and for it to pervade, and for it to stick, it has to come from within.

Despite awareness about the importance of context, funders often prefer solutions that have already demonstrated proof of concept and sometimes the ideas do not make sense for the local context. Furthermore, a number of participants stressed that women and girls have the best understanding of their own contexts and needs and are often better able to articulate insight into possible solutions. Recent research has indicated that organizations led by women are often the most successful in creating lasting social change. In a study examining national policies on violence against women in 70 countries over the course of four decades, Htun and Weldon (2012) sought to understand how policies have been influenced by the presence of local women's rights movements. The studies' findings indicate that feminist mobilization in civil society is extremely influential with regard to policies relating to issues of violence against women, and initiatives led by women are often the first to identify, articulate, and push for action pertaining to women's issues. This is not to say that women are inherently better at work pertaining to issues of gender; rather, it is an acknowledgment that "the experiences of women often shape their approach to their work in distinctive ways which leads to distinctive understandings of development priorities and ways of working with others" (Jackson, 2002, p. 505).

#### 4.3.3 Timing, Disaster, and Crisis

Sources of funding are often focused on initiatives that are "ready to scale" rather than early-stage ones that require trial and error to succeed. When it comes to advancing women's rights and gender equality, however, both context and timing are important. Amina Doherty, former founding member and coordinator of FRIDA–The Young Feminist Fund, noted there are many social innovations put forth by women and girls that are in response to a particular moment, such as how women responded to violence in Tahrir Square during the political demonstrations that led to the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the subsequent resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. As Doherty noted, some innovations can and should be temporal—they do not always intend to become a long-standing organization—while others leverage timing to their advantage to build

something long term. For example, in our interview, Cynthia Coredo (program manager of Boxgirls Kenya) and Sarah Ndisi (founder and boxing coach at Boxgirls Kenya) indicated that Boxgirls gained significant momentum during the chaos of the elections in Nairobi in 2008. Boxgirls Kenya uses boxing as an innovative tool to help empower young girls. The girls receive leadership and skills training, sexual health education, and entrepreneurship training. Boxgirls was founded in 2007, but it was during the postelection violence in Nairobi in 2008 that Boxgirls was able to gain support as an organization. During the elections, there was a significant increase in violence in slums, and many women and girls were raped. The increase in sexual violence combined with a lack of a platform for girls to speak about their experiences led to the establishment of Boxgirls. The organization currently supports 648 girls aged between 8 and 23 years from communities in Nairobi.

HarassMap provides another interesting example. As Rebecca Chiao (cofounder of HarassMap) and Reem Wael (director of HarassMap) explained, HarassMap was developed in response to the persistent problem of sexual harassment on the streets of Egypt. In 2005, one of the now cofounders circulated a survey to better understand the issue of sexual harassment and quickly learned that it was a pervasive issue. In 2008, the issue of sexual harassment in Egypt began to receive a great deal of attention, and one of the cofounders was introduced to Frontline SMS and Ushahidi (free software that can be linked together to make an anonymous reporting and mapping system for harassment). In 2010, at a time when a majority of women and girls in Egypt owned a mobile phone, HarassMap was launched. HarassMap documents incidents of sexual harassment through SMS, its Web site, or its various social media outlets, which are then placed onto an online map of Egypt. Since HarassMap began, activists from 25 countries have asked to have similar initiatives set up in their own countries.

Owing to the sometimes outdated and traditional understanding of scale, women's solutions for their own context-specific and timely problems are not on the radar of those looking to fund women's rights or development. As Seidman and Chahine (2015) stated, "rather than spreading impact by introducing innovations from the outside-in, it's time

we think of scale as seeding solutions inside a community, and then expanding from the inside-out.”

Beth Woroniuk, advocate, advisor, analyst, and consultant in issues related to women’s rights and gender dimensions of peace building, conflict, and humanitarian assistance, identified an interesting area for further research. Woroniuk noted that looking at research in the fields of post-disaster, post-conflict, and social innovation could provide useful ideas for further research. A current theme within the literature on post-conflict is a debate around whether women’s rights and gender equality can be permanently advanced. Some argue that in times of armed conflict and crisis, there are openings to advance women’s rights and gender equality, such as land titling. For example, once housing is reestablished, titles can be granted to women or granted jointly between spouses, giving women access to landownership, often for the first time. Others argue that any progress made during conflict is only temporary, because once the conflict is over, there is usually a strong reassertion of traditional gender roles. There is consensus, however, that peace is inextricably linked with gender equality and women’s leadership. The global study “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace” explored the relationship between conflict and women’s rights. The report demonstrated that women’s participation and inclusion in humanitarian assistance make it more effective in a number of ways. For example, it strengthens the protection efforts of peacekeeping, it contributes to the success of peace talks and the achievement of sustainable peace, it accelerates economic recovery, and it helps to counter violent extremism. The report demonstrated that peace is inextricably linked with gender equality and women’s leadership (UN Women, 2014).

Woroniuk noted, “Perhaps, given this moment of transition with disasters and conflict, there are also opportunities to combine advancements for gender equality, women’s rights, and social innovation that may not be possible in times of normality.” To what extent can those working toward gender equality and women’s rights capitalize on these periods of transition? Are there elements of social innovation that can further this progress? One recommendation for further research is at the intersection of post-conflict, post-crisis, post-disaster situations, and social innovation studies.

#### 4.3.4 The Anti-Hero

Currently men (typically privileged White men) are framed as the lone, heroic innovators who work endlessly to “crack the code.” This archetype is a permanent staple in conceptualizations of innovation and entrepreneurship, and as Marlow (2015) argued, the archetype is increasingly becoming entrenched within the field of social entrepreneurship as well. The male social entrepreneur is understood by his “unwillingness to accept the status quo and a potential to bend the rules or engage in unethical activity for the sake of a higher cause: in other words, a ‘Robin Hood’” (p. 110). Furthermore, Marlow (2014) argued,

This construction saves the male social entrepreneur from being considered as lacking in comparison to the hegemonic male of commercial entrepreneurship. So, rather than being affiliated with the more feminized “social” qualities or aspects of social entrepreneurship, he remains reflective of Schumpeter’s hegemonic male subject exercising creative destruction of societal inequalities whilst fulfilling protector and provider roles. (p. 110)

Social innovation is (at least in theory) collaborative; it should help to move us away from the focus on a single heroic figure, and the collaborative nature of social innovation is very much in line with the women’s movement and its approach to social change. Vicki Saunders, founder of SheEO Inc. discussed the reason she started SheEO: “I was watching a lot of women go through incubator programs and accelerators, and there is currently only one model. People work 24/7, they don’t sleep, they are brutally competitive, and they knock down the people around them; I don’t believe this model is best for women.” According to Moore, Griffiths, Richardson, and Adam (2008), gender is a powerful organizational aspect. The women’s movement has been driving and engaging with social innovations since its inception and is an example of effective organizing and innovation coming together. The women’s movement is also an example of innovation that is collaborative, which may provide directives to help shift away from

the notion of the heroic lone male innovator, particularly as the field of social innovation continues to grow.

A number of interviewees (18% or 5 of the 27) addressed the lack of incentive for collaboration in dominant understandings of scale. Current systems are not set up to reward and acknowledge those who actively collaborate; in fact, as a number of participants noted, current systems actively push against collaboration in terms of incentive. We need to think about how we might reward teams as well as the active collaborator. One participant, who is a prominent impact investor with a keen eye for gender analysis, noted that awards go to people who take all the credit—winner takes all. In this way, not only do awards go to those who take the credit but we also only tell the stories of those who take the credit.

Too often we fail to account for the systems, networks, and relationships that support and give rise to innovation when we focus on individuals as innovative heroes.<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, when we stop focusing on the hero, we also open up space to value those working within the system more. As Hamoon Ekhtiari, through his role as founding director of Studio Y at MaRS Discovery District, noted, “we need people who are in the systems themselves changing and not having everyone running outside doing their own thing.” Ekhtiari’s comments speak to the importance of the social intrapreneur and systems entrepreneur: those who work with, and within, systems and institutions. As one participant noted, in some cases, the things that people are doing within larger institutions are just as brave, if not braver, and just as social. We often romanticize innovation as a revelatory or eureka moment (a search of the word “innovation” on Google Images yields a flood of lightbulbs), but those working to advance long-term social change—changing systems—are more often working to build their plan slowly and steadily, day to day. In fact, when we stop idealizing innovation as an ah-ha moment, it allows us to recognize the role of the “maintainers”—“the people who keep things going” and who allow people

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<sup>98</sup> For a discussion about the importance of the process in innovation, see Seelos & Mair (2012).

to innovate in the first place. A recent conference at Stevens Institute for Technology brought together people from a range of sectors and disciplines to discuss those who, unlike the “innovators,” are not celebrated, acknowledged, or, sometimes, paid (Bliss, 2016).

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The findings and discussion in this chapter leave me with many questions. Regarding the concept or field of social innovation, none of the participants made reference to a gender dimension when initially asked about their definition or understanding of social innovation, although all of the participants had a distinct understanding and definition of social innovation. Their concepts of the term varied; some chose not to define social innovation, while others were more interested in understanding the history of the term and its implications for social change. The vagueness around the term *social innovation* is understood as useful—allowing social innovation to span across sectors, disciplines, and audiences—but it is also understood as limiting, particularly in the context of governments and bureaucratic institutions, which often require more definitive, fixed definitions. The interviews revealed that there is often slippage between the terms *social innovation*, *social entrepreneurship*, and *social enterprise*, and there is a need for those engaging in social innovation to have conversations about access, diversity, and privilege. The field of social innovation may need time to evolve and grow, and it may be useful to understand social innovation as “quasi-concept” (Jenson, 2015) in the interim. To date, the field has had little engagement with an analysis of power, and there is a need to consider how social innovation may further a neoliberal agenda. Additional discussion about the combined effect of social innovation and gender equality in the context of neoliberalism is also needed.

It is important to understand women’s engagement with social innovation through their experiences of gender-based inequality. “Feminine values” may be inherent within social innovation, and women may innovate in different ways, but we will not begin to fully understand the role of gender in social innovation if we do not engage with a range of historical and political perspectives. The conflation of gender with women as well as “feminine values” or femininity excludes men, different types of masculinities, and it



ignores a range of queer perspectives. If we presume essentialist notions of gender, women, or femininity, we will miss out on a number of new and insightful research directions, and such a presumption is too simplistic. Without dismissing the possibility that women as a group may indeed innovate differently from men as a result of historical and continuing structural inequality, we must continue to ask more complicated questions. A focus on gender relations from a nuanced structural perspective may help to highlight historical and continuing biases in innovation and it can help to push more engaged political perspectives forward.

The results of the interviews indicate that the limited engagement between social innovation and gender equality is not one-sided; neither has shown much interest in the other. The double blindness between the fields is a lose–lose for both fields; there is a need for mutual learning, because an understanding of social innovation that does not appreciate gender analysis will not realize its optimal potential and those working to advance gender equality may find social innovation helpful to mobilize progressive social change.

The results also emphasize the need to rewrite the history of social innovation and innovation and to elevate historical and current examples in a manner that appreciates the varied and nuanced ways in which women and girls (and non-hegemonic men and boys) contribute to innovation. A retelling of history, whether on Wikipedia or through other mediums, is important, particularly in the context of an increasingly digitized and connected world.

A gender analysis provides a viewfinder for opportunity around the concept of scale. Many things should be scaled, and in the most traditional sense; bigger can be better. At the same time, many social innovations do not lend themselves well to traditional economies of scale, and some are never meant to scale. We must broaden the construct of scale to value the slow and the small—scaling can include scaling up, out, and deep. In an analysis of case studies on local social innovations, Cels et al. (2012) indicated that social innovations are not quick or easy solutions, and instead, achieving their full potential requires nothing less than a combination of “the deep strategies of chess masters

with the quick tactics of acrobats” (p. 11). It is my hope that these findings provide the foundations or building blocks for thought leadership and further areas of research around the idea of scale.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Conclusion

If social innovation is a field, a practice, a process, or a tool by which *new* ideas, *new* intersections, and *new* things hope to create or optimize practical value in the world, then it follows that asking *new* questions is critical to the advancement of the field. Asking how gender analysis can expand thinking around social innovation has left me with more questions than I started with. As such, rather than offering a traditional conclusion, I would like to emphasize that this research has only just begun; there are interesting and unexplored questions to be asked. Based on my knowledge of the research at this time, I suggest some questions for practitioners and academics to consider when working in the field of social innovation and gender equality. I provide some suggestions that may advance this research.

#### 5.1 New Questions for Social Innovation Research

The field of social innovation is increasingly understood as critical to social and economic progress, and it is often taken up as “good” policy by countries around the world despite the lack of definitive research to support such claims. I feel that we should not continue to place social innovation on a pedestal and position it as a panacea that is capable of addressing the world’s challenges until we know more. I feel it is particularly important to stop viewing and framing social innovation as a panacea given the tendency of governments to divest in programs and structures. I suggest this not because I doubt the *potential* of the field, but because I feel that it is important to manage expectations; it is not reasonable to place such high expectations on the field, especially when the field itself is under-researched and under-evaluated. It will be even more troublesome if the field is not able to meet our expectations and governments have placed the onus for social problems on the field of social innovation.

As the interview results suggest, concepts of the term varied widely as 100% of the interviewees had distinct understandings and definitions of social innovation. The vagueness around the term *social innovation* is understood as both useful—allowing

social innovation to span across sectors, disciplines, and audiences—and limiting, particularly in the context of governments and bureaucratic institutions. I feel there is a need for research that is able to evaluate social innovation and understand the impact that it has had and may have in the future. I am also interested to understand how social innovation can be defined and shaped in such a way that it does not invite divestiture in government programs and structures. Part of this process may involve asking questions such as: *How does social innovation fit within the bigger process of social change? What might the relationship between research and action look like in social innovation? How should we understand the relationship between social innovation and innovation? How should we understand the relationship between social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and social enterprise? What can we learn when we rethink the concept of scale?*

If we cannot assess the potential and benefits of social innovation, how can we argue for its effects? I feel that the high expectations of social innovation combined with the relative newness of the field warrant a number of important questions.

***How does social innovation fit within the bigger process of social change?***

According to Mulgan (2015), there is a gap in research in the field of innovation regarding value creation. Mulgan argued,

History shows that most innovations create value for some people and destroy it for others. The car was good for drivers, but not much good for pedestrians who did not own a car. . . . Most of the analytic tools for understanding innovation have no way of distinguishing one from another. Book after book and journal after journal on innovation studies explore the strategies of innovation agencies but do not even hint that it matters to know whether value is being destroyed or created. Even the fashionable analyses of disruptive innovation are wholly silent on these issues—assuming that disruption is basically a good thing—even

though a moment's reflection shows that many innovations are disruptive in bad ways, destroying more than they create. (pp. xvi–xvii)

The field of gender and innovation has provided examples of how well-intending innovation can have unintended consequences. As discussed in chapter 2, Google's language-processing device, Google Translator, currently creates gender-biased translations, and women's symptoms of heart disease, stress, and depression have historically been misunderstood. Cels et al. (2012) argued that an innovation that contributes to society will also be destructive. The authors referred to the term *creative destruction*, coined by Joseph Schumpeter:

While he [Schumpeter] referred mainly to industrial innovation and its effect on the economy, there is a strong analogy with social innovation; radical innovation creates value, but it also destroys established organizations and jobs that thrived under the old order. The same goes for social innovations. They can, and often do, threaten to obliterate incumbent interests, interrupt traditional funding pathways, and reassign bureaucratic turf. (p. 8)

Seemingly innocuous social innovations such as fair trade and kindergartens may contribute positively to some, but they may also put others out of work. The World Wide Web has allowed for increased connectivity and learning, and it has also resulted in new forms of gendered violence, such as virtual sexual harassment and online "slut shaming." Three-dimensional printers enable us to create useful tools and to customize important prescription pills, and they also enable people to print weapons. Smart phones and geolocating technologies provide people with directions on demand, and they have resulted in breaches of privacy and instances of stalking and violence. There are unintended consequences for any "good" change in the world.

Social innovation must better understand value creation. Social innovations may change society, but they will not necessarily change society in a way that benefits everyone.

Values and assumptions deeply influence how we define positive change, how the change should happen, and what sorts of change should happen, and values and assumptions are reflective of the time and cultural attitudes. Residential schools may be understood as a reflection of the “cultural” (racist, colonialist, Eurocentric) attitudes in Canada at the time. Residential schools were intended to “civilize,” “assimilate,” and prepare aboriginal children for a “modern” Canada but instead had devastating outcomes.

Social innovations with the best intentions may still have unintended and negative consequences. I feel that the field must better understand its relationship with social change and become clear on what is meant by “social.” Social innovation must address the issue of value creation more rigorously to ensure that social innovation can benefit as many as possible. How might an analysis of power help to determine whether social innovation is positive? How might it help us to determine whether a social innovation is net beneficial?

***What might the relationship between research and action look like in social innovation?***

Looking forward in the social innovation field, I suggest that we need to think about how social innovation should be researched. Given that social innovation is largely a practitioner’s field, how should we understand the relationship between research and action? Mulgan (2015) argued that social innovation practice has happened ahead of the research. Social innovation may be a practitioner field, but as the interview results suggest, social innovation is also a field in need of more academic conceptual engagement and research. Academics and practitioners must find mutually supportive ways to work together. I suspect that the field of social innovation as a whole will benefit from better methods of collaboration between academics and practitioners.

***How should we understand the relationship between social innovation and innovation?***

Given the flaws and biases inherent within the field of innovation, I feel that the relationship between social innovation and innovation must be better understood. It is not clear how the study of social innovation fits within the broader picture of research on

innovation. Is social innovation a subfield of innovation? Is social innovation an offspring of innovation? Will social innovation be a fleeting trend, or will it become a durable and long-standing field? Do we need the qualifier of “social” before innovation? Should all innovation not be considered inherently social? Or does the qualifier of “social” help us to re-center the construct of innovation? More pessimistically, does adding “social” to “innovation” effectively feminize the field and assign it secondary status compared to technological innovation?

***How should we understand the relationship between social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and social enterprise?***

55% (15/27) of interviewees defined the term *social innovation* in relation to the concepts of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. As the interview results suggest, there is a need for those working in social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and social enterprise to get clear on the differences and similarities between the terms. There is a lot of slippage between the three terms, which may or may not be productive. Given the common focus on social change, and the newness of each field, I feel that there are some synergies across the fields, and perhaps there are some unexplored areas of common interest.

***What can we learn when we rethink the concept of scale?***

The dominant understanding of scale has not always been productive, and bringing some new perspectives to the thinking may prove fruitful, whether through a gender lens or otherwise. As discussed in chapter 4, the research from Moore et al. (2015) may help to broaden the construct of scale. Scaling out, scaling up, and scaling deep may interact in powerful ways to advance systemic change. 52% (14/27) of respondents referenced the importance of appreciating or better understanding the power of “small” in terms of scale. Further, a common theme (30%, or 8 out of 27) that appeared throughout the discussion about scale in social innovation within the interviews I conducted was the idea and importance of context, which also expanded into some interesting points about the need to consider timing, disaster, and crisis within an analysis of scale.

I feel that there is a need to rethink, or expand the thinking relating to, the concept of scale in social innovation and in innovation as well. I feel that doing so will help us to shift away from the current emphasis on the heroic innovator, and it will help us to better appreciate collaborative work (18% of interviewees addressed the lack of incentive for collaboration in dominant understandings of scale).

If we can begin to shift away from the notion of the heroic innovator, I feel that it may help us to stop romanticizing innovation as a revelatory or eureka moment, and recognize the hard work of others. I suggest more attention be paid to the “maintainers” (the people who keep systems going), as well as social intrapreneurs and systems entrepreneurs (those who work with, and within systems and institutions).

***The field needs further research that explores intersections with race, class, and sexuality.***

Gender is the analytical construct that I have chosen for this contribution, and I hope this research provides a directive for researchers to pursue further research into women and girls, men, and boys in the field of social innovation. In agreement with Crenshaw (1991), there is a need for further analytical and critical perspectives to be brought to the field of social innovation. Further perspectives that acknowledge other power-laden categorizations such as race, class, and sexuality, as well as the way in which they intersect with gender, are needed. I hope this research provides a directive for researchers to pursue more intersectional future.

This research has highlighted that the field of innovation is masculinist and male dominated, but a small body of research is developing to highlight women and girls in innovation. This research is important and must continue, and there is also a need for research that considers how others may be as invisible to conventional notions of innovation as women and girls are. For example, there is a need for research that better understands how men and boys from non-dominant racial, ethnic, and economic groups relate to innovation. Critical disability studies may also offer new perspectives on social innovation.



Furthermore, there is a broader need to address the issue of power within the field. Many of the dominant approaches to innovation and social change do not account for power. While social justice movements focus on power as a crucial element to their work, there has been little conversation about power within social innovation. How might the definition of social innovation evolve if we include an analysis of power as part of the definition? As social innovation better understands its relationship with social change, this will be an important conversation.

### 5.1.1 Innovation (of Any Kind) Is Never a “Gender-Neutral” Endeavor

None of the interviewees explicitly referenced a gender dimension when initially asked about their definition or understanding of social innovation, yet 89% (24 out of 27) of participants were in agreement that there is a need for a gender analysis in the field of social innovation. Social innovation should not repeat the same mistakes as the field of innovation. I feel that neither field—social innovation nor innovation—will achieve its full potential if it does not understand how to respond to existing gender hierarchies all over the world. Innovation is about bringing together different perspectives; when we leave an analysis of gender out, we miss out on a lot. Further, gender analysis is not as simple as including more women in innovation; it is also about how innovation is interpreted and understood. Social innovation and innovation are not, nor have they ever been, gender-neutral or gender-blind activities.

I feel that it will be insufficient for the field of social innovation to develop a subfield such as the field of gender and innovation in innovation studies. When asked, “Why does the gap in research between social innovation and gender equality exist?” 55% (15 out of 27) interviewees spoke to systematic inequalities as an underlying reason why there has been limited gender analysis in the field. Therefore, I feel that a gender analysis must be embedded into everything related to social innovation, at all times. The timely inclusion of gender analysis is particularly salient, as much of the latest research in the field of social innovation is concerned with producing examples of social innovation, or developing case studies, or creating databases. This emerging research must include gender analysis, and it must also strive to capture a range of examples (not just tech-

innovations). In a study about the gender gap in patents and its effects on technology, Kalher (2011) demonstrated that women have been systematically excluded from “inventing, patenting, and other science and engineering-related endeavors, for a variety of legal, social, and economic reasons” (p. 5). It is therefore important for upcoming research in social innovation to include a gender analysis and to capture both tech and non-tech-related social innovations. 18% (5 of the 27) interview participants noted that social innovation can be understood as the means by which the women’s movement has always been operating, and the women’s movement is a long-standing example of social innovation. Without such an approach, historical examples of social innovation, such as the victories of the early women’s suffrage movement and the thousands of social innovations that have grown and continue to grow from it may not be captured, and researchers may miss out on ideas, innovations, inventions, perspectives, and proposed solutions. The field is under-researched and quickly evolving, and this is an ideal moment to adopt gender analysis across the field.

It is my hope that what is currently very much the boutique subfield of gender and innovation will be taken seriously within the dominant innovation research and that a gender analysis will be embraced as a crosscutting perspective for all innovation research.

### 5.1.2 Innovation (of Any Kind) Is About Much More Than Technology

In agreement with 55% (15 out of 27) of participants, the field of social innovation appears to pay more attention to technologically oriented social innovation. I feel that a continuous focus on tech-related innovation, in social innovation, or innovation, fails to capture fully who is innovating and where this innovation is happening. Furthermore, a focus on tech-related innovation (whether through the lens of women and STEM or otherwise) fails to recognize innovation in other sectors and by different people. It does not allow us to capture the contributions that women and girls, boys and men, bring to innovation. As cofounder of Apple, Steve Jobs astutely noted at the unveiling of the iPad 2, “Technology alone is not enough—it’s technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the result that makes our heart sing” (Jobs, 2011). As

his comment suggests, innovation is much more complex than technology. I strongly urge researchers and practitioners to question the assumed equivalence between innovation and technology.

### 5.1.3 We Need to Continue to Bridge the Fields of Social Innovation and Gender Equality

When we bridge the fields of social innovation and gender equality, it is clear that innovation is never a gender-neutral activity, and the word *innovation* cannot be equated to mean technology. However, the results of the interviews indicate that the limited engagement between social innovation and gender equality is not one-sided; neither has shown much interest in the other (18% of participants discussed the lack of engagement of those working toward women's rights and gender equality have with fields such as social innovation). Therefore, the social innovation (and innovation) community needs to recognize more consistently the innovation that takes place within the gender equality sector; gender equality, women's rights, and feminist movements are innovations that have made tremendous contributions to the world. At the same time, those working to advance gender equality must be more open to fields such a social innovation or social finance. The double blindness between the fields is a lose–lose for both fields; there is a need for mutual learning because an understanding of social innovation that does not appreciate gender analysis will be incomplete, and those working to advance gender equality may find ways to enhance their work with social innovation. *I am interested in understanding how the concepts and practices in the field of social innovation can help to advance gender equality, and I am also interested in understanding how those working toward gender equality can help to advance the field of social innovation.*

As an example, it is exciting to see such an increase in support for women in STEM-related fields, although it is not clear if this will help to close the gender and innovation gap because of the gender bias and overt sexism within the culture of STEM. A better relationship between the fields of social innovation and gender equality may help to better understand the rationale for the support of women and girls in STEM. The gender bias and sexism that women encounter in STEM indicates that the field of innovation continues to be male dominated, and it also indicates that technological innovations

continue to be privileged. The support for women in STEM appears to be more about women fitting into innovation and advancing innovation as is. A more nuanced analysis of the two fields may help to assess whether women and girls are being used as instruments to further economic progress through innovation. Even if this is true, it may be possible to better understand whether there are strategic ways to leverage this increase in support of broader structural gains in gender equality.

A better relationship between the two fields is already resulting in some interesting developments. The Sexual Health Innovations (SHI) initiative draws on technology to address sexual health and well-being in the United States. SHI is currently piloting an online reporting system, Callisto, to help colleges and students reduce incidences of sexual assault on their campuses. Based in research that demonstrates that a majority of sexual assaults are by repeat assailants, the platform provides survivors with a confidential means to log their experience into a database. Survivors can opt to submit the report to their school, and they can also choose a “matching escrow” feature which will allow a report to be made only if another individual reports the same assailant. Callisto is intended to empower survivors with choice as well as to provide data to schools to help address sexual assault on campus more effectively.<sup>99</sup> Innovations of this nature tend to invite the criticism that the quest to design, produce, promote, and deliver the most efficient technical panaceas can replace the need to understand and respond more meaningfully complex structural problems (see, for example, Abdelnour and Saeed, 2014). These criticisms are justifiable but the repeated failure of the apparatuses of the criminal justice system to deliver justice to sexual assault survivors (the Jian Ghomeshi case is a recent high-profile example) often compels us to innovate “outside the box” to find ways to respond to, or at least document, the epidemic of sexual violence against women and girls.

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<sup>99</sup> For more information about SHI and their initiatives, see <https://www.sexualhealthinnovations.org/index> and for an overview of Callisto, see a recent TED talk by founder and CEO Jessica Ladd: [https://www.ted.com/talks/jessica\\_ladd\\_the\\_reporting\\_system\\_that\\_sexual\\_assault\\_survivors\\_want](https://www.ted.com/talks/jessica_ladd_the_reporting_system_that_sexual_assault_survivors_want)

As further examples of how the two fields can come together, the growing field of gender lens investing draws on the principles of social finance and gender equality, and women have adopted the concept of hack-a-thons to address gender bias on Wikipedia, and initiatives such as Catapult combine the mechanisms of crowd funding with gender equality. The field of social innovation may be useful for documenting contributions made by those advancing women's rights and gender equality in a way that not only interesting but also captures the nuances of gender relations and women's rights and gender equality work (55% of interviewees referenced the importance of storytelling in elevating women's role in social innovation).

More mutual learning and engagement between the two fields may increase the number of people working to advance both fields (collective action is known to be larger than the sum of its parts), and it may also help to increase resources for the fields. Funders of social innovation and gender equality appear to be discrete, but when taken together the fields, may be able to open up new sources of funding and acquire increased resources

I challenge those involved in the fields of social innovation, innovation, and gender equality, whether researchers, practitioners, journalists, reporters, authors, venture capitalist, developers, and so on, to be more aware of their biases and to make an effort not to reproduce the biases that persist within innovation. It is helpful to showcase examples of innovation beyond tech-related innovations; including a range of examples of innovation or social innovation can help to broaden our understanding. It is also important to be conscious about how women and girls, boys and men, are written about, particularly in relation to innovation. Men and boys (typically White men and boys) are framed as lone, heroic innovators or entrepreneurs, and they are highlighted for their achievements with little recognition of the larger systems and people that supported their success. Alternatively, women and girls are featured less often or their accomplishments are diminished. For example, biographies written about women scientists often feature their marital status and comments about their appearance. Freelance journalist Christie Aschwanden (2013) has developed a seven-part test for journalists to use when reporting on women scientists to "avoid gratuitous gender profiles of female scientists." Stories cannot mention the following:

the fact that the scientist is a woman, her husband's profession, her child-care arrangements, how she cares for her children, how she approached the competitiveness of the field, the fact that she's a good role model for other women, and that she is the "first woman to . . ." (para. 4–5)

## 5.2 Innovation in Canada

This thesis is an introductory effort; it is an initial and exploratory academic contribution to the conversation around gender and social innovation, and it is my hope that this research can do more than be taken as a criticism of social innovation. I hope this thesis provides the foundations or building blocks for further research at the intersection of social innovation and gender equality, by academics and practitioners.

I also hope that this contribution can influence Canadian innovation policy. While it was difficult to assess the full scope of the newly proposed federal budget (March 2016) in Canada, there may be some cause for concern. As both Crowden (2003) and Pouragheli and Beckton (2013) demonstrated, Canada's current innovation policy does not have a gender analysis, and women and girls are largely absent from the policy. In light of Canada's track record of innovation, I believe it is fair to question whether the latest "Innovation Agenda" will include a gender-based analysis. The federal budget indicates the goal of "Building a More Innovative Country" as a primary means to accelerate growth for the middle class in Canada, while also making a cleaner, more sustainable, and more inclusive economy (Department of Finance Canada, 2016). I understand that the budgetary guide is not a comprehensive outline of the plan, but there is some indication that the approach to innovation assumes that innovation is a gender-neutral pursuit.

The word *gender* appears only twice within the budget. However, the budget indicates greater support for women's heart health, a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and a plan to increase the capacity of the Status of Women Canada, with a proposed investment of CAN\$23.3 million over 5 years, starting in 2016–2017. An "Innovation Agenda" that does not fully appreciate the diversity of sex and

gender will not meet its full potential.<sup>100</sup> Forthcoming research<sup>101</sup> by Andrea Rowe, a doctoral candidate in political science at McMaster University, focuses on the systemic factors that contribute to gender inequality within national innovation systems. Through a comparative case study of Canada and Sweden, Rowe has found that policy, performance measurement, and resource allocation in innovation systems must be reexamined from the perspective of gender equality to create systems that are capable of supporting innovation. Drawing on interviews with 44 leaders in the public sector, private sector, and academia as well as policy leaders at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Rowe found that gender consciousness is an effective analytical lens to challenge the underlying inequality in national innovation systems. Rowe found that Sweden is a leader in the development of gender-conscious innovation policy at the national level, and without a national innovation policy, Canada does not effectively connect gender equality to the innovation discourse in the same way as Sweden does.

The “Innovation Agenda” must include gender analysis, and I am concerned that it may privilege tech-related innovation because there is a lot of emphasis and spending allocated for tech-relation initiatives, and the budget does not refer to social innovation. How can we consider investing millions of dollar in fostering “innovation” in Canada without embracing social innovation?

Howaldt, Kopp, and Schwarz (2015) argued that “a new model for innovation policy is required that directs its focus from technologies onto social innovations and systemic solutions and onto a corresponding empowerment of actors, thus transforming it into a comprehensive social policy” (p. 46). If my concerns are valid, the federal budget and the

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<sup>100</sup>A few days after submitting this dissertation to the examining committee, a few colleagues and I asked the Canadian Minister of Innovation, Science, and Economic Development, Hon. Navdeep Bains about the importance of gender within Canadian innovation policy via Twitter. He has since held some live-tweeting events where he appears to be soliciting feedback from Canadians about future innovation policies. See the conversation at #CDNinnovation, #innovateCDN, and #AskBains.

<sup>101</sup> Andrew Rowe’s dissertation is titled “Designing Equality of Opportunity for Women in Innovation: Moving Towards Gender Conscious Policy, Performance Measurement and Resource Allocation,” and I received permission from Andrea to refer to her forthcoming research in this thesis.

subsequent policies and initiatives that will come from it will be inadequate or misdirected. Canada will be repeating its mistakes and will continue to fall behind other OECD countries and emerging economies in innovation.

Prime Minister Trudeau often refers to himself as a feminist, and it is my hope that this identification will translate into a more nuanced engagement with gender equality. A comprehensive “Innovation Agenda” will include gender-based analysis, and social innovation will be integrated as a crosscutting theme.<sup>102</sup>

### 5.3 Future Research and Professional Trajectory

The academic research being conducted across universities by feminist graduate students and professors is a valuable, and often underutilized, resource. Not only is such research more likely to be gender-aware (unlike many other forms of research) but it also provides the foundational knowledge and evidence base for practitioners such as change makers, innovators, and entrepreneurs. Too often, important academic research is not put into practice, whether due in part to the skill set, interest, or priorities of researchers. Critical research does not reach those who need it or have the ability to bring it to life in a tangible and practical way. There is a need to connect academic research with those who are able to apply it as well as to help academics to broaden their skill sets.

As mentioned earlier, a recent article in the *Globe and Mail* details the growing trend of PhDs who are opting out of the traditional academic route in favor of entrepreneurial endeavors. Based on an interview with Rob Annan, chief research officer at Mitacs, in 2014 through 2015, Mitacs funded approximately 3,300 collaborations involving PhD students, and 14% (or 462 PhD students) have started their own businesses (Bouw, 2016). Feminuity co-founder, Andrea, and I are counted within this number; we launched our start-up in early 2015.

A recent report from the Conference Board of Canada indicates that less

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<sup>102</sup> Based on the recent comments and conversations with Hon. Navdeep Bains on Twitter, I am hopeful that the Innovation Agenda will become more reflective of my recommendations. See the conversation using the following hashtags: #CDNinnovation, #innovateCDN, and #AskBains



than 20% of PhD graduates are employed as full-time university professors and

PhDs are highly educated researchers with subject matter expertise as well as advanced analytical and problem-solving skills. They are well-situated to fuel innovation and economic competitiveness, improve organizational performance, address health and social issues, and make valuable contributions to arts and culture (Edge & Munro, 2015, p. 2).<sup>103</sup>

Despite this recent push, universities remain hesitant to embrace the work of entrepreneurial academics. I have been fortunate to have a forward thinking and supportive PhD supervisor, but others are not as lucky. Another article in the *Globe and Mail* titled “Academics Plant Seeds of Revolution in the Ivory Tower” detailed my experience as a graduate student and entrepreneur and contained an interview with Alejandro Adem, CEO of Mitacs. Adem explained the discomfort that academic institutions continue to have with unconventional approaches to academia, indicating that institutions do not currently appreciate the value that unconventional approaches can bring to scholarship. Furthermore, Adem noted that the persistent pressure to teach and produce research leaves academics with little time to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors (Chiose, 2015).

STEM-related research is most often translated into start-ups and companies—even Mitacs has overwhelmingly funded STEM-related collaborations until recently—but I hope to demonstrate that academics in social sciences and humanities can also find ways to translate their research into entrepreneurial endeavors. Social innovation is inherently oriented toward action. Social change and innovation are both messy, experimental processes, as is the work of advancing women’s rights and gender equality. Combined, social innovation and gender equality are well suited to both academic rigor and

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<sup>103</sup> For an overview of the employment trajectory of PhDs in Canada, please see the report by Edge & Munro (2015).

practitioner application. Social innovation and gender equality are conceptual tools that need to be translated. I view my work with Feminuity as a way to translate the important and foundational ideologies and values of this research in a way that supports start-ups, organizations, companies, and institutions to do their work differently and to build better incentive structures. This research does not fit neatly into one discipline or sector, nor should it. As the research engaging social innovation and gender equality evolves, I hope that it will span across an even broader range of disciplines, fields, and sectors, drawing upon the work of academics and practitioners alike.

I enjoy doing research, and I am particularly interested in the fields of social innovation, gender studies, women's studies, and men and masculinity studies, but I am not particularly interested in an academic career. I suspected this when I began my doctorate, and it was quickly confirmed within my first year. I have since taken an entrepreneurial approach to graduate school. For me, a PhD is a passport; it provides me with a skill set that can be translated across fields and sectors, and it allows me to build a meaningful career. There is a growing appetite for this approach to graduate school; I continue to receive requests to speak on panels about how academics can build careers outside of academia or about how to take an entrepreneurial approach to graduate school.

Upon completing this dissertation, I will continue to work with my cofounder, Andrea, to build our company. We receive interest on a daily basis, and I was recognized in 2015 as one of Canada's most powerful women by the Women's Executive Network for this endeavor. I will find more ways to make research relevant for practice. This research has been, and will be, shared with the MATCH International Women's Fund. As an objective of our collaboration, we hope to disseminate two white papers that distil major findings for MATCH's donors. I also will share this research with MaRS Discovery District, the Young Foundation, and the team working on the Gender Futures initiative.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Interview Questions

#### In-Depth and Semi-structured Interview Questions

While social innovation and gender equality are each processes that influence social and economic progress, very little is known about social innovation's ability to advance gender equality. This research seeks to apply a gender lens to the field of social innovation.

The overarching question that I seek to understand is, How can social innovation advance gender equality?

#### Social Innovation

1. How do you define, or understand, social innovation?
2. What are some of the major trends in the field of social innovation, either in Canada or internationally?
3. What are some examples of social innovation that you are particularly fond of?
4. How important are timing and social, economic, and political conditions for the success of a social innovation?
5. What are the limitations of social innovation?
6. How do we capture failure in social innovation?

#### Women and Social Innovation

7. The broader field of innovation (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) has considered itself to be "gender-blind," and women have been noticeably absent from the field. Why do women continue to be largely absent from the emerging field of social innovation as well?
8. Do women innovate differently than men, and if so, how? Why?<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> I understand that research on women can produce, or reproduce, essentialized notions of womanhood. These notions may overemphasize commonalities between women, and they can function to homogenize women's experiences. I understand that all women are not the same and that all women do not hold equal or equitable positions within society.

Please note that this question was initially poorly phrased, and it was intended to understand if women and girls innovate differently in light of systemic inequalities. This question was adapted quickly throughout the interview process. I understand that research relating gender, women, and social innovation must be framed within a conversation about systemic inequality, and the discussion in chapter 4 reflects this.

- If we understand women to innovate differently than men, how do we support women innovators?
9. Can social innovations create a long-term, positive shift in gender relations?
    - What are some defining characteristics of social innovations that are successful at creating a lasting social impact for women?
  10. Scaling is an important principle in social innovation, although the concept of scale is rarely questioned from a gendered perspective. Women may be more likely to innovate in a way that is tangible to them, that produces a deep and sustainable impact, and may not produce the economies of scale. If, according to the literature, social innovation must be scaled to have a broad and durable impact, how should we understand some of the ways in which women might innovate?

### **Evaluation/Accountability**

11. Is there a system of evaluation or accountability that can be used to measure the impact of social innovation?
  - Does this help us to quantify the deep and sustainable impact that women's social innovations might produce?
12. What are the challenges and/or opportunities for social innovation now, and in the foreseeable future, particularly in relation to women?
13. Given your breadth of experience, do you have any lessons learned that you'd like to share?
14. Do you have any further comments regarding the field of social innovation or this research?

## Appendix B: Ethics Approval



Research Ethics

Use of Human Participants - Initial Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Bipasha Banuh  
 File Number: 104403  
 Review Level: Delegated  
 Protocol Title: Can Social Innovation Advance Gender Equality?  
 Department & Institution: Arts and Humanities/Women's Studies and Feminist Research/Western University  
 Sponsor:  
 Ethics Approval Date: October 18, 2013 Expiry Date: January 31, 2014

**Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Other	References	
Western University Protocol		2013/09/23
Instruments	Saska Interview Guide - This is the guide to the semi-structured and in-depth interviews for this research.	2013/10/05
Revised Letter of Information & Consent	Saska CLEAN Letter of Information and Consent - This is the clean (unmarked) version of this document and it reflects all changes.	2013/10/05
Response to Board Recommendations	Saska Board Requirements Response - This is an outline of all of the changes made to this application	2013/10/05
Recruitment Items	Saska CLEAN Email Script for Recruitment - This is the clean (unmarked) version of this document and reflects all changes made.	2013/10/05

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number E05 00002641.





Research Ethics

## Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Bipasha Banerjee  
 File Number: 104409  
 Review Level: Delegated  
 Protocol Title: Can Social Innovation Advance Gender Equality?  
 Department & Institution: Arts and Humanities/Women's Studies and Feminist Research, Western University  
 Sponsor:  
 Ethics Approval Date: January 15, 2014 Expiry Date: May 31, 2014

## Documents Reviewed &amp; Approved &amp; Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Revised Study End Date		

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above referenced revision(s) or amendment(s) on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Rory Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 02000941.

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## Appendix C: E-mail Script for Recruitment

**Subject Line:** Invitation to participate in research

You are being invited to participate in a research study on social innovation and gender equality. Social innovation and gender equality are each processes that influence social and economic progress, although little is known about social innovation's ability to advance gender equality. This research seeks to apply a gender lens to the field of social innovation.

The study is led by Dr. Bipasha Baruah (Principal Investigator) and involves your participation in a personal interview with Sarah Saska (Co-investigator). The interview should take approximately 45–60 minutes, will be audio-recorded and then transcribed, and will take place at a time and location, or through a medium (such as Skype), that is convenient for you.

If you would like more information on this study or would like to receive a letter of information about this study, please contact me (preferably by e-mail) at the contact information given below.

Thank you,

[signatures and contact information removed]

## **Appendix D: Letter of Information**

**Draft Project Title:** Can Social Innovation Advance Gender Equality?

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Bipasha Baruah

### **Letter of Information**

You are being invited to participate in a research study on social innovation and gender equality because of your professional experience and knowledge. While social innovation and gender equality are each processes that influence social and economic progress, very little is known about social innovation's ability to advance gender equality. This research seeks to apply a gender lens to the field of social innovation.

To date, there are no specialists in the field relating social innovation and gender equality. I will interview 10 key informants in the related fields of gender, women's rights, and development as well as those engaged directly in social innovation and the closely related field of social entrepreneurship in academic, private, and nonprofit sectors. I will be interviewing high-level professionals who are 18+ and proficient in English about their areas of professional specialization. Individuals who are under the age of 18, who do not speak English, and who are not high-level professionals in the aforementioned fields are not eligible to participate in this study. I am contacting you because you are an expert in a field that is closely related to this research, and your input is requested to ensure that the field of social innovation includes a gender lens as it advances.

The purpose of this study is to apply a gender lens to the field of social innovation and advance research on women's contributions to the field of social innovation. It will also make a modest contribution toward social innovation research in Canada through collaborative research with MATCH International. This letter is meant to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

If you agree to participate with this research, which is led by Dr. Bipasha Baruah as the Principal Investigator, you will be asked to engage in a personal interview with Sarah

Saska, the Co-investigator. The interview should take approximately 45–60 minutes, and it will be audio-taped and later transcribed. Audio recording is mandatory for participation in this research. Those who do not wish to be audio-recorded will not be able to participate in this research. The interview will take place at a time that is suitable to you, and at a location (or through a technological medium, such as Skype) that is convenient for you.

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study, and you will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the interview at any time without any question. Participation affords those involved an opportunity to help shape the emerging field of women's social innovation and to support organizations working in the field to better support innovative women leaders.

If it is your preference, I will not use your name or other identifying information in compilation of the research or publication of its findings. You can choose to review your interview transcript, a one-page summary of the results, and/or a copy of the research and request that information be removed or edited to further protect your anonymity. You may contact me, Sarah Saska, at any time during the process if you have questions or concerns.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact the Office of Research Ethics [contact information removed].

You may retain this page for your records. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form and return it to me via e-mail. If you have any questions at all concerning this research project (including how the data will be handled) or wish to add, remove, or otherwise revise your answers before compilation of the data begins, please contact me, preferably by e-mail.

[signatures and contact information removed]

**Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Can Social Innovation Advance Gender Equality?

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Bipasha Baruah, **Co-Investigator:** Sarah Saska

I have read the Letter of Information and I have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to the use of my full name and job title in the compilation of this research as well as the use of direct quotations in the publication of its findings. Please indicate your preference by checking the box next to your response.  **Yes**     **No**

Would you like to be sent a copy of your interview transcript, a one-page summary of the research, and/or a draft copy of the research? Please indicate your preference by checking the box next to all those that apply. If applicable, please refer to the final page of this document to provide your contact information.  Yes, I would like to be sent a copy of my interview transcript.  Yes, I would like to be sent a one-page summary of the research.  Yes, I would like to be sent a draft copy of the research.

Participant's Name (print):

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Participant's Signature:

---

Date:

---

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (print):

---

Signature:

---

Date:

---

If you checked the box indicating that you would like to receive a copy of your interview transcript and/or the research before publication, I will e-mail this to you, unless you prefer to have a hard copy mailed to you. If so, please provide a mailing address below:

## **Appendix E: List of Interview Participants**

Some participants gave consent for me to include their name, position, and direct quotations from them in this thesis.

Some participants gave consent for me to include their name and position within this thesis, but they have asked that I not include direct quotations from them and that I not make explicit reference to their interview in this thesis.

Some participants have asked that I not include their name or position within this thesis and that I not make reference to their interview or use direct quotations from them in this thesis.

Some participants

1. Abigail Burgesson
2. Amina Doherty
3. Allyson Hewitt
4. Anne Webb
5. Beth Woroniuk
6. Chris Grumm
7. Craig Heintzman
8. Cynthia Coredo
9. Donna Morton
10. Geraldine Bedell
11. Hamoon Ekhtiari
12. Jessica Tomlin
13. Joy Anderson
14. Linda Scott
15. Mark Goldenberg
16. Maz Kessler
17. Rebecca Chiao
18. Reem Wael
19. Ryan Lock
20. Sarah Ndisi
21. Servane Mouazan
22. Susan Bazilli
23. Tonya Surman
24. Vicki Saunders
25. Respondent A (will not be identified by name or position, and direct quotations from this participant will not be included)
26. Respondent B (will not be identified by name or position, and direct quotations from this participant will not be included)
27. Respondent C (will not be identified by name or position, and direct quotations from this participant will not be included)



## **Appendix F: Interview Participant Profiles**

These brief profiles do not reflect the breadth of knowledge and experience of the interview participants, nor do they reflect the most recent or up-to-date positions of the interview participants. The participants are a group of dynamic and talented people, and their collective biographies are likely longer than this dissertation. I have chosen to briefly highlight aspects of each person's professional experience as I see it pertaining to this research. I have done my best to reflect the most recent and up-to-date positions of the interview participants, but it is likely that some may have changed careers and/or positions since the time of the interview, and in the time since this thesis was written and submitted.

Abigail Burgesson is the special programs manager at the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) based in Accra, Ghana.

Allyson Hewitt is a senior fellow of social innovation at MaRS Discovery District, the director of social entrepreneurship at SiG, and lecturer in residence at the Conrad Centre at the University of Waterloo. Allyson is based in Toronto, Ontario.

Amina Doherty is the former founding member and coordinator of FRIDA–The Young Feminist Fund. Amina is a consultant and artist currently working with the Association of Women's Rights in Development. Amina is based in Kingston, Jamaica.

Anne Webb is the former project director for gender research in Africa and Arab Countries on ICT's for Empowerment. Anne is currently based in Ottawa, Ontario.

Beth Woroniuk is an advocate, advisor, analyst, and consultant in issues related to women's rights, particularly issues related to gender dimensions of peace building, conflict, and humanitarian assistance, and is based in Ottawa, Ontario.

Chris Grumm is the former president and CEO of the Women's Funding Network and is based in San Francisco, California.

Craig Heintzman is the founder and CEO of Arifu, an online educational platform, based in Nairobi, Kenya.



Cynthia Coredo is the program manager of Boxgirls Kenya and is based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Donna Morton is a managing partner at Principium LLC, an investment advisory firm that provides investment management inline with clients' values and principles, based in Boulder, Colorado.

Geraldine Bedell is the cofounder of Family Innovation Zone and is also the author of a book titled *Mothers of Innovation*. Geraldine is based in London, England.

Hamoon Ekhtiari is the former founding director of Studio Y at MaRS Discovery District and the current director of strategy and PMO in the Office of the Executive Vice President at TELUS. Hamoon is based in Toronto, Ontario.

Jessica Tomlin is the executive director of the MATCH International Women's Fund and is based in Ottawa, Ontario.

Joy Anderson is the founding principal of Good Capital and is the president and founder of Criterion Ventures. Joy is based in Hartford, Connecticut.

Linda Scott is the DP world chair for entrepreneurship and innovation at Said Business School at the University of Oxford. Linda is based in Oxford, England.

Mark Goldenberg is a policy researcher and consultant and an adjunct professor at University of Ottawa. Mark is also the author of a number of pieces of research on social innovating in Canada, including "Social Innovation in Canada: An Update." Mark is based in Ottawa, Ontario.

Maz Kessler is the former creative director of Women Deliver and the founder of Catapult. Maz is based in New York, New York.

Rebecca Chiao is the cofounder of HarassMap and is based in Cairo, Egypt.

Reem Wael is the current director of HarassMap, based in Cairo, Egypt.

Ryan Lock is the former director of social enterprise for the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation. Ryan is based in Toronto, Ontario.

Sarah Ndisi is a founder and boxing coach at Boxgirls Kenya, based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Servane Mouazan is the founder and CEO of Ogunte CIC, a consulting firm that supports women entrepreneurs located in London, England.

Susan Bazilli is an international human rights lawyer and director of the International Women's Rights Project. Susan is based in Vancouver, Canada.

Tonya Surman is the CEO of Centre for Social Innovation and is based in Toronto, Ontario.

Vicki Saunders is the founder of SheEO Inc., a firm that supports women entrepreneurs and female-led ventures, and is based in Toronto, Ontario.

Respondent A works in the financial industry in the United States.

Respondent B is the founder of an impact-investing firm in the United Kingdom.

Respondent C is a North American based academic with a research focus in both gender and finance.

## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Sarah Saska

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** Queen's University  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
2003–2007 Honours B.A.

University of Ottawa/Université d'Ottawa  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
2008–2010 M.A.

Western University  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2010–2016 Ph.D.

**Honours and Awards:** Mitacs  
Mitacs Accelerate  
2013, 2014, 2015–2016

Women's Executive Network  
Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100 Award  
2015

Society of Graduate Students  
125th Anniversary Scholarship  
2015

Western University  
Lynne-Lionel Scott Scholarship  
2015

MaRS Discovery District  
Studio Y Fellowship  
2014–2015

Queen's University  
Alfred Bader Fellowship in Memory of Jean Royce  
2014

Western University  
Global Opportunities Award  
2014

Western University  
Alumni Graduate Award  
2014

PSAC 610  
Community Involvement Scholarship  
2014

Western University  
Graduate Research Scholarship  
2013

Western University  
Western Graduate Research Scholarship  
2010–2014

**Related Work  
Experience:**

Feminuity  
Co-Founder and Partner  
2015 to present

Researcher  
The MATCH International Women's Fund  
2013 to present

Teaching Assistant  
Western University  
2010–2014

Program Facilitator  
Sexual Assault Resistance Education Program  
2011–2014