[In]visible: Where Are Young Women Farmers? Investigating in a Canadian Context

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A Thesis presented to The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Sociology

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ABSTRACT

[IN]VISIBLE: WHERE ARE YOUNG WOMEN FARMERS?

INVESTIGATING IN A CANADIAN CONTEXT

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The next generation are vital to the continuation of agriculture. While women are involved in farming, they are not as visible as men, and their experiences are not often acknowledged. Young women farmers face specific challenges regarding their gender, age, and positionality within agriculture. This thesis focused on young women in rural southern Ontario, Canada and the gendered barriers to their visibility in the agricultural industry and community. Through qualitative interviews, young women farmers discussed gendered experiences within the patrilineal culture of farming, aspects of family farming, and participation in agricultural organizations. As such, young women farmers are in a relatively positive position going forward in farming into the future, though little to no policy programming exists to eliminate existing social and financial barriers for young women farmers. This thesis highlights key issues for young women farmers and provides policy suggestions for the future.
DEDICATION

To my Vovo Abel, who passed before the completion of this thesis, you are missed.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis advisors Dr. Anthony Winson and Dr. Sharada Srinivasan in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Guelph for supervising me and guiding my research study. As an undergraduate student, I was able to take two of Dr. Winson’s classes in rural sociology and food studies, and ultimately, his support led to my decision to apply for the Masters in Sociology program. While it was a last-minute life decision, I hold no regrets. I first met Dr. Srinivasan in my Masters’ Qualitative Methods class and was informed of her financial grant geared towards anyone studying young women farmers. With this in mind, I was able to narrow my research. Both Dr. Winson and Dr. Srinivasan have pushed me to be a better student and writer, and I would not have been able to do this research study without their knowledge and support. This research project was funded through a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Canada (SSHRC) INSIGHT grant via Dr. Srinivasan’s project, *Becoming a young farmer: Young people’s pathways into farming in four countries*.

I would also like to acknowledge the respondents who took part in my research study for taking time out of their busy lives in order to participate. As a fellow young woman farmer, I understand how busy we can be, and as such, I would like their dedication to be recognized.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to all the friends and family who have supported me and offered encouragement for me while in university – the past two years especially. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.
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1 Chapter 1 – Where Are Young Women Farmers?

Who do you think of when you hear the word “farmer” in Canada? Typically, to most people, this question invokes images of an elderly man with white hair tucked beneath a straw hat, wearing overalls and leaning on his pitchfork. He is often married, and his wife is not considered to be a farmer in the same way as her husband. Instead, she is seen as a homemaker and housewife, with little to no involvement in any of the farm chores. This romantic imagery of traditional farming remains prominent in Canadian culture to this day (Price 2010) even though the demography of agriculture in this country is rapidly changing as the baby boomer population ages. Agriculture is the prominent source for food production and remains vital to feeding growing populations in Canada and elsewhere. Youth involvement in agriculture allows for the continuation of production, generation after generation. However, many young people are pulled away from farming. Many fail to see it as a viable career path, seeking other off-farm occupations containing less risks, less physical labour, and less overhead expenses. Many youth are also uninterested in farming or rural futures (White 2012). In particular, manual work, like farming, has become “de-skilled” – a process in which the current education system devalues physical labour and the skills required to farm are simply not taught (White 2012, 7). Rural areas often lack basic infrastructure, which hinders living experience for youth (White 2012). Lastly, it has becoming increasingly difficult for young farmers to own land. In the Canadian context, small-scale farms are becoming less common, decreasing in number substantially compared to large-scale farms (Statistics Canada 2017c). This is especially pressing as large corporate entities take hold in the industry, creating fewer jobs and pushing out small-scale farms and available land (White 2012).
While young people are vital to the continuation of agriculture, the focus in research in general remains on the majority of farmers; in Ontario, Canada, the majority of farmers are men over the age of 55 (Statistics Canada 2011). Much like society’s romantic vision of an old man and his wife farming well into retirement, research remains focused on this majority, leaving a gap in the literature regarding young farmers. This is problematic as the next generation of farmers are vital to the continuation of agriculture. Understanding the issues and struggles of the young farmer is paramount to promoting their involvement and engagement in farming. The demographics of today’s farmers are changing. In 2016, Statistics Canada found in the Census of Agriculture that the number of farm operators in Canada has decreased substantially between 2011 and 2016 (Statistics Canada 2017c) even though farms are becoming larger in size and capacity. In this particular statistic, women account for 28.7 per cent of sole farm operators which are defined as “any person responsible for the management decisions made for an agricultural operation” (Statistics Canada 2017).¹ Despite this decrease, women farm operators have continued to increase across Canada from 25.7 per cent of all farm operators in 2011 to 28.7 per cent of all farm operators in 2016 (Statistics Canada 2016; 2017a; 2017c) which suggests that more women are becoming involved at a steadily increasing rate. Women of all ages (Statistics Canada 2017c) actively participate in agriculture, but they are rarely acknowledged in the field of agricultural research; women are considered to be “largely

¹ “Those persons responsible for the management decisions in operating an agricultural operation. Can be owners, tenants or hired managers of the agricultural operation, including those responsible for management decisions pertinent to particular aspects of the farm — planting, harvesting, raising animals, marketing and sales, and making capital purchases and other financial decisions. Not included are accountants, lawyers, veterinarians, crop advisors, herbicide consultants, etc. who make recommendations affecting the agricultural operation but are not ultimately responsible for management decisions.” – Statistics Canada 2018, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/ref/dict/pop032-eng.cfm.
invisible” (Leckie 1993, 212; Varpalotai 1997).

In Canada, the demographics of farmers have changed. In the Census, only eight per cent of the sole farm operators are self-defined young farmers under the age of 40 (Kainer 2016). In the small percentage of women as sole farm operators, only a few are under the age of 40. Little research exists on the young farmers of today, but even less so on young women farmers. Young women are often placed in one single all-encompassing category of “women” rather than divided by their respective ages. Young women farmers face specific challenges due to their gender, age, and positionality within the agricultural industry. This thesis aims to specifically investigate the challenges and barriers that young women farmers face in their respective agricultural sectors. It also focuses on factors that incentivize young women to farm, how women embody gender in their work, and how governmental policies affect them. This research will aim towards suggesting policies to help current and future generations of young women farmers in Ontario, Canada by highlighting their needs to the public and governing bodies.

1.1 Context

Young women farmers are a rising demographic in Canadian agriculture, but little research exists on them and their specific experiences. There are only a few studies on young farmers and fewer still that focus on women farmers. However, these studies do not focus on these vital intersecting facets which create unique experiences from the way age and gender interact in daily life. The background section will provide current insights about young women farmers in rural southern Ontario.

Canadian agriculture today is largely industrialized and focused towards trade policy, whose main goal is to “increase both the volume and the value of exports” (Wiebe 2017, 143).
Over time, Canadian governments and transnational agri-business corporations have met their “aggressive food-export targets” (Wiebe 2017, 143), tripling agri-food exports between 1989 and 2014 (AAFC 2010c). Corporate concentration – the process in which a few corporate entities take over the majority of production in a specific market sector (Winson 1994) – has also played a key role in this development. Few corporations own the majority of large processing companies. Large farms are therefore required to meet the supply and demand of a specific item of production. In order to compete with large-scale farms, agricultural operations require high efficiency and productivity (Wiebe 2017). Traditional mixed farms are no longer viable with farms that practice monoculture – producing a single variety of crop, plant, or species of livestock – as the cost of production is less “per pound” with greater production numbers (Wiebe 2017, 141). Smaller farms therefore cannot compete with these demands, and this forces farms to scale up, or sell out and leave the industry (Winson 1994). This pressure for competitiveness and increased market share with large-scale farms “militate[s] against small-scale, diverse, ecologically and culturally sensitive farming practices” (Wiebe 2017, 141).

Agricultural policy in Canada also seeks to increase “productivity, competitiveness, exports, and market share” (Wiebe 2017, 143). While these goals have been met with great success for Canadian export, they do not benefit Canadian farmers. The greater structural changes of agriculture exploit small- and medium-scale farms “to the advantage of intensive, large-scale production and corporate profit” (Wiebe 2017, 144). For example, large industrial farms receive tax-funded program payments in order to remain financially viable – greater production does not eliminate great costs (Wiebe 2017). As such, 64 per cent of program payments from the government went to 27 per cent of Canadian farms with revenues over
$250,000 per year (AAFC 2009, 105). If these large farms do not receive government support, they suffer large financial losses. Without this support, large farms suffer in production numbers towards products for export, which are valued greatly by the government. Agricultural policy then, benefits those who participate in large-scale industrial monoculture production.

This leaves small-scale family farms in a precarious position. They cannot afford to compete with large-scale productions, and the government does not value them enough to provide financial support (Qualman et al, 2018). As such, “hostile agriculture policies […] increase costs and fail to enhance revenues” (Wiebe 2017, 148) therefore harming the prospects of making a living on the family farm. However, supply management policy rewards farmers for limiting their production with the “assurance that their production costs are met by the prices they receive” (Wiebe 2017, 143). Though, this is only possible because of negotiated trade restrictions which prohibit the importation of cheaper products that would otherwise undercut domestic prices based on production costs and displace Canadian products (Wiebe 2017). These farms continue to grow in size, but there are only a few of them few that continue to operate as family farms, which successfully manage generational transfers, “attracting younger farmers, and garnering viable farm incomes” (Wiebe 2017, 143). Chapter 5 in this thesis will analyse current agricultural policies especially as they relate to small-scale farms more in depth.

The structural changes to Canadian farming have also impacted traditional practices found on family farms and the social and cultural dynamics of farming communities. Farmers are aging and few young people are entering farming due to financial insecurities, risks, and lack of farming knowledge. More importantly, family farming businesses – or enterprises – rely heavily on “cross-generational co-operation” (Wiebe 2017, 150) to last long-term. Inheritance and
succession planning are vital practices required to maintain small-scale family farms, and without these practices, the individual family farm disappears as a “distinct entity” (Wiebe 2017, 150). Keeping farms within families is a traditional practice, passing on specific farming knowledge and experience from generation to generation, and accumulating resources over time. As small-scale farms are pushed out of agriculture, fewer individuals are available for successful generational transfer, therefore threatening the existence of the family farm.

As such, these current issues within the context of Canadian agriculture impact young women farmers. However, it is the larger overarching structure of the agricultural industry that dictates the creation of agricultural policies. The larger macro dynamics of modern farming dominate the industry, leaving small-scale farms and individuals out of the picture. Young women farmers are the primary interest of this research study, and as such, they are a minority group who experience inequality on the account of both their age and gender in the agricultural community. As there are no existing policies directed towards young women farmers, there is a distinct disconnect from the greater macro level of the agricultural industry. Notably, the cost of operation in farming continues to rise (Qualman et al 2018; Wiebe 2017; Winson 1994), and with a lack of policy directed towards them, young women farmers therefore have limited access to resources, making it incredibly difficult for young women to succeed in the agricultural industry. This is an important issue to document as the number of young women farmers is rising, and therefore, solutions will be needed within the greater context of Canadian agriculture.

According to the Canadian Agricultural Census, the number of women as Sole Farm Operators among all female farm operators increased from 13.3 per cent to 16.8 per cent in a period of five years (Statistics Canada 2016). This increase has occurred despite a drop in the
total number of farmers and increasing farm sizes, which require fewer operators. In particular, women under the age of 35 make up approximately 8.2 per cent of all agricultural operators in Canada. As demonstrated, more women are becoming farm operators in a male dominated industry. These statistics are discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

While the Agricultural Census demonstrates that more young women farmers are taking part in agriculture today, there is limited research on young women specifically. There are studies on Canadian farming women (see: Forbes-Chilibeck 2005; Heather et al 2005; Martz 2006; and Fletcher 2013), particularly in the western Canadian context, but these studies do not focus on a specific age group of women. Similarly, there are studies that examine young farmers’ experiences in Canadian agriculture (see: Pouliot 2011; Parent 2012; Haalboom 2013; and Ngo and Brklacich 2014) but these studies do not provide a gendered focus in their analyses. While conclusions about women farmers and young farmers can be generally applied to young women farmers – and this is done throughout the literature review – they do not equal analysing the ways in gender and age intersect with one another as two parts of an identity and how they are interacted with in the social world. This research study intends to fill the gap in the literature by analyzing the ways in which gender and age interact for farmers in the Canadian context. It is important to understand the way that gender and age interact given that more young women are entering the agricultural industry; understanding their specific key issues is paramount to ensuring their survival and continuation in farming for the future, while providing opportunities for more young women to start and stay in farming.
1.2 Theoretical Framework

The foundation for this research study came from the issue of gender inequality for women in a male-dominated industry, as well as issues that arise from generational age gaps between older men and young women. This research study uses both feminist sociology – a branch of Critical Sociology – and sociology that theorizes youth and generation in order to analyse the data.

Approaching this research with a feminist framework that examines gender in farming provides women’s insights in an otherwise very traditionally male-dominated area. A feminist framework highlights the specific gendered challenges and barriers that young women face in their everyday lives, especially in their workplaces. Additionally, this framework identifies key principles to inform the research, which includes a focus on gender, the value of women’s experiences and knowledge, and an emphasis towards political change (Pini 2003, 419). In agriculture, gendered barriers are not new. Social constraints have limited women in their capacity to contribute to agricultural production (Collins 2018). Additionally, women face discrimination when accessing resources needed for farming as agricultural extension programs typically target men (Collins 2018, 24).

As such, it is important to center women as a focal point in this research. The agricultural community can be examined at two distinct levels: the individual level and the structural level (Leckie 1993). The individual level includes assumptions of the gender division of labour, and the differentiation of roles between men and women (Leckie 1993, 215). Using the individual approach focuses on how women’s roles are a result of differences in personal and family characteristics, analysing patrilineal culture and its effects on young women in family farming.
today. Patriarchal power structures and male dominance are still prominent in farm women’s lives (Brandth 2002; Shortall 1999; Whatmore 1991) and must be critically examined. Women’s power in farming is also limited by “their position in the gendered hierarchy of agriculture” (Alston and Wilkinson 1998), as well as their access to resources associated with farming. Using the individual approach brings highlights the “gendered dimensions of [the] imbalances of power” (Collins 2018, 20) in communities and families, as well as the everyday experiences of small-scale farmers. The structural level approach assesses the very “nature and organization of agricultural production and the forces of change through agricultural restructuring” (Leckie 1993, 215), which highlights the overarching factors that affect young women’s participation in farming.

Approaching this research with a theoretical framework that examines age and generation is also pertinent to analyzing the insights of young women farmers. Young people are “key actors in most important processes of economic and social change” (Naafs and White 2012, 4). Age is used to understand some relations of power that shape everyday interactions of individuals (Huijsmans 2016). Additionally, age is also used as a key variable at the macro-level used in policies and social analysis (Huijsmans 2016, 11). Generation then, is useful for “understanding how societies are structured on the basis of age-based groupings and how this may relate to larger processes of change and continuity” (Huijsmans 2016, 11).

As mentioned, “young” is defined socially in the farming community, ranging from 18 up to 40 years old. This age bracket is rather encompassing – however, young farmers as a generational cohort endure similar experiences based on several intersecting identities that impact these experiences. “Age Class” as described by Mills (2013) is a social categorization of
young farmers, as a sub-category of traditional class divisions in which people of the same biological age range who occupy a similar socioeconomic position are grouped together (Mills 2013, 11). This concept focuses on the intersection of class and generation of young farmers. Mills argues that most studies place too much emphasis on “youthness” or they try to place young farmers in existing class categories that do not “fully encapsulate all of the factors that impact their lives” (Mills 2013, 11) such as a lack of work experience and skills, and underdeveloped professional networks (Mills 2013, 11). Income inequalities have a considerable differential impact on the barriers that young women farmers face. However, this dimension was not explored in this thesis nor did it come up during the interviews.

Gender, as demonstrated in this research study, is a facet of identity that intersects with age, and impacts young women farmers in specific ways that young men farmers do not experience. Young women farmers are categorized by both generational cohort and gender and therefore, their experiences must be linked to both. It is important to emphasize the ways that these aspects of identity intersect because it allows for the specific perspectives of women otherwise not found when only analyzing experiences of young farmers or women farmers.

“Generation” is also important to define in the context of this research study. Primarily, generation in this thesis refers to more than just the relationship between parent and child. It refers to the succession of people “moving through the age strata, [with] the younger replacing the older as all age together” (Kertzer 1983, 136). This definition is used because within the context of family farming, multiple generations of families are involved with operating the farm as well as creating inheritance and succession plans. Analyzing the interactions of multiple generations is vital to understanding the interplay between young women farmers and their
parents or grandparents, as well as their own children. For this thesis, “generation” is primarily used when discussing inheritance and succession. However, it is also applied to the identity of the respondents relative to age and experiences as a generational cohort. Generational transfer is discussed in Chapter 5.

Generation also implies the process of status and occupational transmission from parent to child (Kertzer 1983, 139). Often in farming, and as seen in this research study, farming parents expect (and hope) that their children will continue to operate the family farm. Inheritance and succession planning focuses on the transfer of property and resources, allocating them to a preferred or interested child. This allows young farmers from farming family backgrounds to have access to land, equipment, and funds, more so than new entrant farmers. Despite the lack of access to resources and familial land, young farmers still want to farm (Mills 2013). However, fears of a “lost generation” of youth in agriculture are generated from instability and financial crisis (Leavy and Smith 2010; Mills 2013). In the Canadian context, the rising costs of running agricultural operations make farming a high-risk occupation and paired with poorly compensated labour, pushes young people out of the industry (Mills 2013). For example, new, high-end machinery, new technologies, and animal health and antibiotics are manufactured externally for farmers to purchase, and they are “costly purchases” (Wiebe 2017, 144). While bringing about high yields, better production, and labour savings, they also cause financial issues for farmers – despite investing in technological advancements and inputs, farmers do not have enough “renumeration received from selling the farms’ products” (Wiebe 2017, 144). Prices for these inputs continue to rise, but the “farm-gate” price of production has remained stagnant or fallen (Wiebe 2017, 144). This is referred to as the cost-price squeeze (Wiebe 2017; Winson 1994), and
it serves to eliminate family farms in the growing agricultural industry. As such, young people who enter the industry do not usually have the financial means to purchase these investments to begin with, let alone produce enough product to pay off debt and remain competitive with large-scale farms.

Generational factors play a role in young people’s decision to farm. Young people within the same generation have “similar objectives and face comparable problems, which are generally influenced by the shared experience of growing up in the same area” (Mills 2013, 11). As such, young farmers in Canada are experiencing these burdens together. This suggests that a bond between young farmers exists on the basis of shared experiences as young people in farming. Similarly, the same can be said for young women farmers. As a generational cohort, young women farmers face similar issues and discrimination on the basis of their gender and age. Thus, these factors may also be determinant in making the decision to enter farming or continue operating a family farm. Specifically, women’s lives are affected by the intersection of their age-based position within a patriarchal system (Srinivasan 2016). The young women farmers in this study predominantly shared their experiences of gendered discrimination amid their concerns of financial burdens and operating their farms within the greater structure of the agricultural industry. Similarly, with the concept of “Age Class” (Mills 2013), age and gender intersect and create specific discrimination and challenges for young women farmers. Thus, there is an “Age Gender” sub-category for young women farmers that separates them from young men farmers based on gendered experiences in addition to the issues that young people in farming have.

This distinction is necessary in order to analyze the issues in this research study, which intends to privilege young women farmers’ perspectives and experiences (Huijsmans 2016, 1;
Naafs and White 2012) within the context of the greater macro-level dynamics found within the agricultural industry in Canada. This means that the research focuses on giving young women farmers a voice and highlighting their experiences and contributions in an area that does not acknowledge them.

Additionally, as agricultural restructuring leads to large-scale, industrial farms and new innovations in technology, “a more comprehensive and complex understanding of the everyday experiences of individuals within these systems” (Collins 2018, 20) is required. This also includes understanding the implicit hierarchy of gendered power relations at the structural level (Collins 2018). Assessing structural level perspectives also includes analysis of current agricultural organizations and governing bodies that create agricultural policies. Notably, many governance initiatives tend to “depoliticize inequalities” (Collins 2018, 19), which is why both a feminist and youth-centered framework must be used to assess agricultural policies. On that note, utilizing a content and discourse analysis of current provincial and national level governmental policies sets the context for contemporary farmers making their livelihoods in agriculture; it can emphasize areas that require improvement and change. Analysing these policies in depth can foster an understanding of how they directly impact young women farmers across their respective agricultural sectors.

1.3 Data Collection

This section outlines the methods used to gather data for this research study. As described in the introduction section, this research study seeks to address the following research question: 1) What are the key barriers to visibility in the agricultural industry that prevent acknowledgement and recognition for young women farmers in Canada? This study also seeks to
answer three sub-questions: a) What are the specific gender-related challenges that young women farmers face in their daily lives on the farm? b) What are young women farmers’ impacts on the traditional family farm? And c) How do governmental policies at the federal and provincial level affect young women farmers? In order to answer these questions, a feminist framework and age-generation framework shapes the analysis. I chose to use an online Qualtrics survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews that focused on young women farmers living in southern Ontario in the counties surrounding the University of Guelph. The survey supplemented the interview by providing basic demographic data about young women farmers and was also used as a potential recruitment tool for interview participants. The interviews contained questions focused on farming practices, experiences with gender discrimination, participation in the agricultural community, and knowledge about agricultural policies and programming. Specifically, the majority of the data used in this thesis was a result of direct interviews with 15 young women farmers. These respondents were selected after qualifying for the study’s parameters – that is, being a “sole farm operator” between the ages of 18 and 35, living in Brant, Dufferin, Halton, Oxford, Perth, Peel, Waterloo, Wellington or Wentworth county of Ontario, Canada. This study was given ethics clearance (REB# 18-05-024) prior to data collection.

1.3.1 Online Qualtrics Demographic Survey

In this research study, an online Qualtrics survey was administered to collect basic demographic data about young women farmers across Canada. This survey was hosted through Qualtrics software website\(^2\) and it was available from August 2018 until January 2019. Surveys

are a quantitative research method used to gather data from a sample of people, with the intention of generalizing the results to a larger population (Meadows 2003). Typically, the data are in form of numbers in which statistical generalizations can be made. Given that the survey was hosted online, it was easily accessible to respondents across the country, thereby eliminating one of the limitations of the one on one interviews which were restricted to locations in counties surrounding the University of Guelph. In this survey, 74 respondents who identified as young women farmers between the ages of 18 and 34 were considered Sole Farm Operators (See Appendix A). The age bracket of 18 to 34 is understood as “young” in the context of farming by Statistics Canada (2017c), though other studies alter this range (Government of Canada 2010). The concept of “young” is a social construct, and relative to individuals, and given that the average age of farming in Canada is 55, the “young” age bracket is subject to go into the mid to late 30s. In this thesis, most of the literature reviewed considered the age of 40 to be the cut off.

Respondents in the survey were asked a number of demographic questions to give an idea of “who” are young women farmers today. Young women farmers in this survey are predominantly white, as 68 out of 74 respondents, though a few respondents selected Aboriginal (2), Arab / West Asian (1), Filipino (1), and Japanese (1).3 Young women farmers in the survey were asked what their marital status was. Across the board, the categories of Single, Married, Common Law, and In a Relationship were relatively equal, with fewer respondents in Common Law partnerships than their Married or In a Relationship counterparts. However, it is important to note that among these respondents, not a single one of them was Divorced or Previously 3

3 Interestingly, a single respondent selected Other and wrote “European” while not specifying which part of Europe they were from, suggesting that they did not fit into other racial categories, while feeling that they did not fall into the category of white.
Married. Similarly, none of the 15 interviewees was divorced or previously married.

Young women farmers in the survey were asked which province or territory they currently live in. Predominantly, the respondents were from Ontario, totalling 49. Other respondents were from the west of Canada, mostly in British Columbia and Saskatchewan with seven respondents each, and Alberta with five respondents. Few respondents were in the east of Canada, with three respondents in Quebec, two in Nova Scotia, and one in New Brunswick. For the respondents that live in Ontario, they were asked which county they live in specifically. Predominantly, a majority of respondents lived in Dufferin County, totalling 15 out of the 49 Ontario residents in the survey. Wellington County followed with eight respondents, and Peterborough County with five. The remaining 21 respondents were scattered across the province in counties including Bruce, Frontenac, Grey, Huron, Lanark, Oxford, Peel, Perth, Prescott and Russell, Renfrew, and Simcoe.

In terms of farming by sectors, Statistics Canada assessed that Oilseeds and Grain are the most prominent type of agricultural operation in Canada (Statistics Canada 2017c), followed by Beef, Other Crop, Other Animal, and Dairy. In the survey for this research project, the results were similar. Out of 74 respondents, 30 were in Beef, 17 were in Oilseeds and Grain, 15 were in Horticulture, and 14 were in Dairy. These numbers are relative in proportion of farming types to the Agricultural Census. It is also important to note that the respondents were given an “Other (Please Specify)” option. Within this, the respondents listed: Mixed Farming, Apiary/Beekeeping, Fruits and Vegetables, Goats, and Agribusiness.

The survey also sought to gauge interest for participation in an interview. A majority of the respondents selected ‘Yes’ to the question asking if they would be willing to participate in an
interview. However, no emails were received from survey participants. Also, the interview respondents did not mention if they filled out the survey or not. Therefore, the use of the survey as a recruitment tool was not beneficial. Notably, this online survey has some limitations with regards to representation and generalisability. The survey had less than 100 respondents, and many of whom were from the province of Ontario, which skewed the sample in favour of Ontarians. Both of these factors make it difficult to generalize the results to represent all young women farmers in Canada. This survey was also circulated through social media accounts on Twitter and Facebook but had a limited audience and outreach based on how many “shares” and “retweets” it received. This survey is a passing glance at the population of young women farmers in Canada and could be scaled up in order to obtain a Canada-wide picture.

1.3.2 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods are used in sociological research in order to produce descriptive data – that is, data that derived from people’s own words and experiences and observable behaviour (Taylor, DeVault, and Bogdan 2016). Patterns in the data from qualitative research methods are interpreted and given meaning, based on the context in which it is collected. In the case of this research study, the given research questions are formulated around a problem within a specific context.

This research study primarily used in-depth semi-structured one on one interviews. Respondents were recruited through contacts within the agricultural industry, word of mouth, and through social media posts on Facebook and Twitter and also the survey. The interviews were conducted between August 2018 and December 2018. These interviews were typically held at the respondents’ homes, though some of the interviews were collected at the University of
Guelph. Qualitative research interviews allow the researcher to engage with their respondents face to face and, one on one in order to collect data through conversation. Interviewing has been described as something that understands informants’ “perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words” (Taylor, DeVault, and Bogdan 2016, 102). Semi-structured interviews are led with a set of established open-ended, descriptive questions that the researcher will ask the respondent, but these are simply a guide for the interview; the researcher may ask the respondent other related sub-questions that may prompt the respondent to discuss their experiences in more detail, which can provide high quality data for the research. Semi-structured interviews allowed the respondents and I to have more of a conversation than a rigid interview, which allowed the respondents to feel more comfortable in talking about their experiences. As a young woman farmer myself, my own positionality gave me an “insider” view to the respondents’ experiences. This also allowed me to connect to my respondents with having similar experiences (such as being a 4-H member) and allowed the respondents to speak more comfortably with me.

The interviews were then digitally recorded on an encrypted device and later transcribed to text documents. The recordings were then deleted permanently. Data that directly identified the respondents were anonymized, including voice, names of the respondents and any names mentioned in the interviews through the use of pseudonyms which I chose during the transcription period. For these interviews, I followed a guide of thirteen questions (Appendix B), and the respondents were often prompted to elaborate on their responses for more information about their experiences. These interviews were limited in number to 15, and the data from them may be difficult to generalize to the greater population of young women farmers. The data
collected from these interviews was transcribed verbatim, and then each document was analyzed and coded using NVivo software. Some themes were created prior to analysis based on the questions that the respondents were asked, such as difficulties and challenges found in farming. Other themes emerged from the data. For example, the experiences with agricultural sales representatives was a theme that came up through the process of interviews and analysis. As such, this analysis of interview data was used primarily to substantiate the findings in this thesis.

This thesis is outlined as follows. First, Chapter 2 provides a review of current literature on women farmers, young farmers, and makes inferences for young women farmers based on the amalgamation of information from those sources. Second, Chapters 3 through 5 provide an in-depth content analysis derived from the data gathered from the interview respondents. Chapter 3 discusses the key gendered barriers to visibility as experienced by young women farmers. Chapter 4 investigates young women farmers’ impacts on the traditional Canadian family farm and Chapter 5 provides an analysis of current agricultural policies, programming, and ag-organizations available to young women farmers. Finally, Chapter 6 completes this thesis, and contains the discussion and conclusion sections.
2 Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This literature review focuses on young women farmers in Canada and the challenges and difficulties they face in the agricultural world related specifically to their gender and age. Young women in agriculture are subject to many social issues that constrain and hinder their ability to work and make them effectively invisible among agricultural communities despite their growing contributions to farming. This review focuses primarily on Canadian studies that examine, at the micro-level, barriers to young women farmers’ visibility and participation in agriculture. This review also utilizes theoretical concepts about agriculture and gender that can be applied to young women farmers generally. This review places more emphasis on social and cultural issues than economic issues, but these issues cannot help but to overlap.

2.1 Literature Review Methodology

It is first necessary to define the term ‘farmer’ for the purposes of this review. ‘Farmer’, as defined by Statistics Canada in the 2016 Census of Agriculture is, “those persons responsible for the management decisions in operating an agricultural operation. These can be owners, tenants or hired managers” (Statistics Canada 2017b) who are responsible for the management decisions related to the farm, which includes “planting, harvesting, raising animals, marketing and sales, and making capital purchases and other financial decisions” (Statistics Canada 2017b). Based on this definition, this review will not include farm labourers or workers in related industries.

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4 This literature review is the first draft of a version that will later be used in a publication, co-authored with Dr. Sharada Srinivasan (University of Guelph) and Dr. Haroon Akram-Lodhi (Trent University) for the “Becoming a young farmer: Young people’s pathways into farming in four countries” research project. Used with permission from Dr. Srinivasan.
In Canada, there is no specific age range or parameter set that defines what a ‘young’ farmer is. As the average age of farmers now is 55 (Statistics Canada 2017c), ‘young’ is considered to be between the ages of 18 and 34 (Statistics Canada 2017a), though other studies alter this range (Government of Canada 2010). The concept of ‘young’, however, is a social construct, and therefore a relative judgement to individuals. For those over the age of 34, they may still be considered ‘young’ to their older peers. In most of the studies used in this literature review, the highest cut-off age was 40 years old.

This literature review proceeded in two steps. First, an online search was used to find existing literature on young women farmers in Canada. Primarily, the review is focused on peer-reviewed literature, although other, non-peer reviewed sources are used. This is due to the fact that there is a gap in the literature that focuses on young women farmers specifically, and each of the non-peer reviewed documents pertain to them. This included graduate school theses, government publications, research reports, and other media outlets like news reports. Some of the literature is notably dated from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. While some of the data is outdated (such as topics of government policies, the economy, and technological advancements), discussions of social interactions and gender roles are still relevant to young women farmers today. As there is a gap in this area, these sources were still used despite their date of publication.

Most of the studies included in this review used qualitative methods on small, focused groups that were restricted to specific areas in Canada. Therefore, being able to generalize on young women farmers from a single study is limited. As mentioned, the gap in the literature contributes to this lack of knowledge. However, these studies produce common and central
themes to the challenges and difficulties faced by young women farmers in Canada, and the review is supplemented by other studies that focus either on women farmers or young farmers. The review utilizes data about young farmers and women farmers separately in order to draw conclusions for young women farmers that are not yet studied as a specific category.

The second step in the literature is compiling the common themes of the sources together. First, issues surrounding gender for young women farmers discusses patrilineal culture, gender roles and the division of labour, and programs and policies for women farmers. Next, the review compiles studies on age of young farmers, which include barriers to entry in farming, and programs and policies geared towards new and young farmers. Lastly, a concluding section is a summation of the status of young women farmers today and for the future, suggesting that there is a dire need for future research as the number of young women in agriculture is increasing.

2.2 Census Data

Before delving into the key themes on young women farmers in Canada, it is pertinent to examine current census data, which provides a current view of the agricultural sector. These statistics are drawn primarily from the 2016 Census of Agriculture from Statistics Canada, focusing on the gender and age of farm operators. Overall, the number of total farm operators in Canada has decreased from a total of 293,925 operators on all farms to 271,935 from 2011 to 2016, a decline of 7.5 per cent (Statistics Canada 2016; 2017c). While the number of operators and farms have decreased, the average area per farm has increased from “779 acres in 2011 to an average of 820 acres in 2016” (Statistics Canada 2017a). This increase of farm size is indicative of increasing land use and production per farm operator; the area of total cropland in Canada increased to 93.4 million acres in 2016 (Statistics Canada 2017c).
The average age of farm operators in Canada has increased from 54 to 55 years from 2011 to 2016, with farmers aged 55 to 59 as the largest share of farm operators (Statistics Canada 2017c). This trend reflects the ageing of the general population in Canada, wherein “baby boomers” aged 55-64, make up 21 per cent of the total population (Statistics Canada 2017a). Despite the decrease in the number of total farm operators, farmers under the age of 35 increased by 3 per cent over five years, which is the first time that there “has been an increase in this age category since 1991” (Statistics Canada 2017c; 2017a).

With regards to gender, female farm operators are increasing, continuing a long-term trend since 1991, where they accounted for 25.7 per cent of farm operators; women now account for 28.7 per cent of all farm operators totalling 77,970 (Statistics Canada 2016; 2017a; 2017c). The majority of farm operator women are found in the category of all farm operators aged 35 to 54 years, totalling 30.7 per cent in that category (Statistics Canada 2017a). The under 35 age category is dominated by males, but it is important to note that the number of agricultural operations with only female operators under the age of 35 is growing faster than their male counterparts. Males under 35 increased by 24.4 per cent, whereas females under 35 increased by 113.3 per cent from 2011 to 2016 (Statistics Canada 2017c).

Providing a cross-comparison of age and gender statistics of farm operators allows a revealing glance at the make-up of Canadian farmers. This is provided in the tables below. The first table examines the total number of agricultural operations and proportion by age and sex of operators. Notably, women between the ages of 55 and 69 have the majority of female-only agricultural operations at 5,432, followed closely by women between the ages of 35 and 54, with 4,442 agricultural operations. This is consistent with the average age of Canadian farmers as
mentioned previously. Interestingly, the largest proportion of female led farms are the 70 and older age group, followed by women under 35 that hold 8.2 per cent of total agricultural operations, while the smallest portion lies in the mixed ages category, holding only 1.6 per cent of total agricultural operations.

Table 2-1: Total number of agricultural operations and proportion by age and sex of operators, Canada, 2016 (Statistics Canada 2017c)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Male only</th>
<th>Female only</th>
<th>Both male and female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of agricultural operations</td>
<td>Percent of agricultural operations in age group*</td>
<td>Number of agricultural operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All under 35</td>
<td>8,734</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>1,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All between 35 and 54</td>
<td>37,562</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>4,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All between 55 and 69</td>
<td>43,765</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>5,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 70 or older</td>
<td>17,217</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>2,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed ages</td>
<td>8,979</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Totals may not equal 100 per cent due to rounding. *

Source: Census of Agriculture (3438).

Tables 2 and 3 (see below) exhibit Farm Operators per Farm in 2011 and 2016, comparing males only, females only, and both sexes, while also presenting data on gender by farms with one
operator (sole farm operator), and farms with two or more operators. It is noted that the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut are not included in these totals, and that farm operators of two or more distinct farms are only counted once (Statistics Canada 2016). When examining the data more closely, it is noted that, while the total number of farm operators has decreased over a period of five years, the number of female farm operators has increased by 1.3 per cent in that time. Most prominently, there are more females as sole farm operators, increasing steadily from 10,740 to 13,110, or from 13.3 per cent to 16.8 per cent of all female farm operators (Statistics Canada 2016), whereas for male sole farm operators, this number has decreased in the same time frame, falling from 111,480 to 100,620, or going from 52.2 per cent to 51.8 per cent of all male farm operators (Statistics Canada 2016). This indicates that while farm operators are mostly men, more and more young women are becoming involved in agriculture, especially as sole farm operators. Unfortunately, from this data alone, it is not clear whether or not farms with two or more operators are exclusively male or female-run – only that more women are found on agricultural operations with two or more operators.

Table 2-2: Farm Operators per Farm (2011) (Statistics Canada 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Both Sexes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farms with one operator</td>
<td>111,480</td>
<td>10,740</td>
<td>122,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms with two or more operators</td>
<td>101,775</td>
<td>69,925</td>
<td>171,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of operators on all farms</td>
<td>213,265</td>
<td>80,665</td>
<td>293,925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2-3: Farm Operators per Farm (2016) (Statistics Canada 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Both Sexes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farms with one operator</td>
<td>100,620</td>
<td>13,110</td>
<td>113,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms with two or more</td>
<td>93,345</td>
<td>64,860</td>
<td>158,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of operators on all</strong></td>
<td>193,965</td>
<td>77,970</td>
<td>271,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>farms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Canadian Census of Agriculture, unfortunately, does not provide a cross-examination of gender with other factors, such as gender and farm size. Statistics of this regard would be beneficial to give a clearer picture of what kind of farms young women farmers have. That said, the data that is presented is meant to give the reader an idea of current numbers of female farm operators in Canada, but the following sections will delve into the social difficulties faced by young women farmers specifically.

2.3 Gender – Being a Woman Farmer

Gender is a primary factor that affects young women in agriculture. Yet, there are few studies that examine and promote the visibility of women in agriculture today, and even fewer studies exist for young women farmers specifically. Gender contributes to many difficulties and challenges for female farm operators. In this section, three topics will be addressed: patrilineal culture in farming, gender roles and the division of labour, and programs and policies for women.
2.3.1 Patrilineal Culture in Farming

Traditionally, farming has been a male-dominated sector and the agricultural sector today remains populated by a male majority (Statistics Canada 2016; 2017a; 2017c). The foundation of such a male-dominated industry originates from social relations in agriculture that have been constructed around a patriarchal model, which favours the “male control of socio-economic processes, resources, institutions and ideologies” (Leckie 1993, 214). Primarily, patrilineal culture in Canadian farming developed from a parochial property transfer regime, historically founded in “feudalism, aristocracy, and the British common law doctrine” (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 27), in which, the system of inheritance for a first-born son was viewed as an essential virtue in the nation. Father-to-son inheritance and succession became tradition through economic necessity, used to ensure that the family farm was passed on to subsequent generations; the well-being of agriculture and family farming in turn, became dependent on this practice (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005).

Over time, farming families developed strong ties to their land and to the personal integrity that comes with farming. The efforts to ensure the “survival and prosperity of the next generation” (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 27) became a central attitude in creating a rural lifestyle, which enforces the concept of primogeniture as a key feature in the modern farming community. When developing an intra-family succession plan, there is an assumption that a son will inherit or take over his father’s farming – there is also an assumption that farmers’ daughters will find a husband and begin a farm together, fulfilling any desire to continue farming through marriage rather than inheritance (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 28). The maintenance of a patrilineal culture requires the compliance of the family and extended kindship that comprises the farm family
(Price 2012). Thus, if any family member tries to disrupt a smooth generational transfer of land, they risk alienation from both family and community (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005).

2.3.2 Legitimacy – Who is a Farmer?

“You ask a child to draw a farmer and it’s still, you know, a man with a hat and the straw, so yeah, there’s a few issues.” – Eva Rehak (CBC News 2016).

Until 1991, the Canadian Agricultural Census recognized women as farmers’ wives, and they could not adopt the title of farm operator while a “male held or shared title to the farmland” (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 27). Male power in farming is located in the ownership of the farm, and thus, the access to resources within it (Heather et al 2005, 89; Shortall 1999). Central to the mechanisms of traditional gender relationships in farming is the constraints surrounding women’s access to key agricultural resources (Leckie 1993). A “heterosexual gender regime” is also required by patrilineal culture (Price 2012, 255) in order to maintain power over women. By limiting women to the role of “farmer’s wife”, women become attached to a male economic figure – primarily, her husband, but extending to her father, brother, or son – in order to survive. This makes it difficult for women to exercise her rights to become a farmer as it risks estrangement from her male family (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 27). Maintenance of established gender roles and male inheritance severely hinders the ability of women to take on the role of farm operator in the same capacity as their male counterparts. Thus, Canadian farm succession remains a gender discriminatory process, "designed by men for the benefit of men” (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 27; Leckie 1993).

Today, most agricultural operations are still family-owned agricultural operations. In 2001, the census declared that 98 per cent of farms were family operated. In 2016, while the
overall number of farm operations has decreased, farm size has increased, and 22.5 per cent of agricultural operations are reporting as family-run corporations (Statistics Canada 2017c). While the amount of female sole farm operators has increased (Statistics Canada 2016), agriculture in Canada remains a male domain, wherein farmers and farm labourers are often depicted and presumed to be male, overlooking and minimizing women and girl’s work in primary agriculture (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 27). Therefore, farmers’ daughters then must look “beyond their fathers and brothers for the approval, support, and strength to challenge the patriarchal structures” (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 31) found on the farm. While more women farm operators are on the rise (CBC News 2016), societal views on who is a farmer limits their acknowledgement and visibility in the agricultural community and beyond.

2.3.3 Gender Roles and the Division of Labour

Women’s marginalization on the farm results from traditional gender roles and the division of labour. Gender roles are a prominent feature in farming, derived from a long-standing patrilineal culture. Despite women’s involvement in agricultural production, women’s roles are greatly influenced through their social relations, based on their gender (Leckie 1993, 213). Primarily, “classic” or traditional gender roles and responsibilities create limited experiences for women in farming (Hall and Mogyorody 2007). Heather et al (2005) found in their study of Albertan farm women that gender roles tend to be more strictly prescribed in rural areas and these roles are viewed as natural and unchangeable (Heather et al 2005, 88). Women who are designated as “farm wives” are defined in relation to their husbands, rather than their relationship to their children as a farm mother, or to the farm as a farmer (Sumner 2005). Because of this strict division of labour based on gender, it can be difficult to discern between the types and
amount of women’s labour that is directly involved, especially on family farms (Smith 1986).

In family farms, women’s roles may remain unclear in the division of total labour; women also tend to underreport their labour involvement, leaving lines blurred (Smith 1986). While women may self-identify as farm operators, evidence also shows that they define their roles and influence with reference to the household, rather than the business of farming (Hall and Mogyorody 2007, 290; Whatmore 1991, 87). Whatmore (1991, 90) found that farm women view domestic household labour as something that just needs to be done, like an “ongoing chore.” In Martz and Brueckner (2003), previous studies have shown that farm men were more likely to engage in commercial production activities whereas women were more likely to take care of farm accounts, care for small animals, and general household duties that support the farm family. Current research demonstrates that this traditional division of labour continues, although the experiences of younger men and women farmers show that changes are happening to the lines of traditional labour (Martz and Brueckner 2003, 41).

2.3.4 Three-way Labour

“It’s the only way we can, because the farm certainly isn’t paying.... You just have to find ways you can stay.” – Marilyn Muller (Vorst 2002, 104).

With the increase of industrialized, large-scale, capital-intensive and highly mechanized farming, a specific set of problems have arisen, relative to a falling farm economy. Rural women experience this crisis in agriculture in particularly gendered ways (Sumner 2005, 78). They often report a “triple day” (Heather et al 2005, 91; Krug 2003) where they are divided in their work between household labour, farm labour, and oftentimes, off-farm work – part-time or full-time – to provide supplementary income to the family. Financial pressures and off-farm career
orientations are seen as a key aspect of the marginalization of farm women (Hall and Mogyorody 2007, 290). In more “traditional” farm families, Fletcher (2013) found that some farm women may feel like they are unable to live to the ideal of “farm wife” due to the increased financial pressure to work off the farm. Often, when family farms are struggling financially “to survive, it is the women who are most likely to look for off-farm income.” (Heather et al. 2005, 87; Sumner 2005; Vorst 2002). Women’s farm-based businesses often provide vital income for the family farm (Vorst 2002). This puts farm women in a precarious position with their labour. When women are able to provide the extra income needed to keep the farm functioning, the farm may become reliant on that source in difficult economic times. Thus, notions of “the farm comes first” and “you come last” are placed on farm women. These relationships with the farm, family, and even the community are a struggle because they are valued more than women’s own well-being (Heather et al, 2005; Fletcher 2013).

2.3.5 Restructuring of Traditional Agriculture

Patrilineal culture has created strong notions of traditional gender roles for women, and its lingering effects are still observed today. Over time, however, women have adapted to changing roles out of necessity and desire to do more beyond the traditional role (Martz 2006). While it is difficult to evaluate the influence of the feminist movement on farm women (Teather 1996), some rural women’s organizations and networks have been openly sympathetic to feminist goals. Women today are acting to change their roles and establish a new identity on the family farm, but it is not an easy task when social roles are embedded so deeply in the agricultural industry. A particular issue that women face in farming is the lack of older, female role models to learn from. Often, many women are learning on their own or from male role
models, but do not have older women who look like them, taking on the role of farmer, rather than farmer’s wife (CBC News 2016). However, with a change in direction of “traditional” farming, there are opportunities that create space for rural women, bearing a social-justice agenda and embodying an “environmental consciousness” (Sumner 2005, 78) that helps to modify the very meaning of “farmer” – the contemporary challenge to conventional farming and its respective social roles is the rise of alternative agriculture, in which labour-processes and ideological orientations of farmers are becoming vastly different than that of their forbearers (Hall and Mogyorody 2007).

Alternative agriculture may offer a chance of greater equity in gender divisions of labour and decision-making (Krug 2003; Hall and Mogyorody 2007). Alternative agriculture allows for the creation of a more inclusive meaning to the term “farmer”, allowing it to “encompass the roles of women (and of children) on the farm” (Sumner 2005, 78). In Sumner’s (2005) study on organic farming, it is reported that, as of 2001, one-third of “all self-declared organic farm operators in Canada are women” (Sumner 2005, 78). This follows the greater trend found in the Canadian Agricultural Census in which women farm operators are on the rise (Statistics Canada 2016). However, in Hall and Mogyorody (2007), labour on organic farms is reported to still follow some lines of traditional labour – in which men tend to do most of the field work, maintenance, and machine operation work and women are more prominent in harvesting, bookkeeping, and taking care of livestock – but in the same study, women were more likely to report sharing major farm decision-making evenly (Hall and Mogyorody 2007, 297). While alternative agriculture makes up only a small portion of Canadian farming, these trends
demonstrate a change in equity for women farmers – future research is needed to determine if the trends will continue.

2.3.6 Programs and Policies for Women

Community plays a vital role for women in farming. Through the latter half of the 20th century, farm women’s movements – often influenced by the feminist movement – acted as a collective group to help women lobby their interests to the community and government as a way to have their voices heard and to influence policy (Shortall 1999; Tanner 1999). Farm-women’s groups are defined by two criteria: womanhood and farming (Shortall 1999). For example, the Canadian Farm Women’s Network was organized as farm women found that they “had no other forum where they could express their concerns and tackle the issues they wanted addressed” (Shortall 1999, 105). Women’s organizations were a result of the farm crisis – a time in which financial difficulties became prominent, rural social services were cut, and other problems occurred on the farm (Shortall 1999, 106). These groups allowed women to enact personal and social change; through discussion and lobbying, women’s organizations have influenced government agricultural policy (Teather 1996; Shortall 1999). Agriculture policy is on the macro-level scale and can often be attributed as an untouchable issue beyond farmers’ control. The everyday effects of policy change on farmers can be difficult to trace, and even more difficult to “understand the gendered dimensions of these changes” (Fletcher 2013, 1). Farm women’s groups in the past were not necessarily trying to lobby their own agenda, but often aligned themselves with feminism – to which the Canadian government ensured “all departments set up structures to implement new policies” (Teather 1996, 7). While women’s groups have sought to save the family farm and the farming industry, their actions have arguably contributed
to the source of their own inequality in maintaining traditional agriculture (Shortall 1999, 111).

In the 21st century, Canadian public policy now “promotes high-input industrial agriculture that specializes in exports” (Sumner 2005, 82), and has a long-term commitment to move farmers in order to accommodate the expansion of large, corporate farms. Government policies and funding programs remain devoted to farmers who are committed to industrial agriculture (Sumner 2005). Thus, this leaves women in a contentious position – a choice between maintaining the “traditional” family farm as it becomes industrialized or advancing themselves in alternative forms of agriculture that allow for gender equity in its practices. Farm women’s organizations then, arguably need to re-evaluate their position in a contemporary and modern setting if they seek to advance women in agriculture.

2.4 Age – Being a Young Farmer

Age is the other key factor that affects young women farmers in Canada. As discussed in the previous section, patrilineal culture promotes inheritance and succession from fathers to sons, therefore making it difficult for young women to become farm operators on their own in the same way as their male counterparts. In the same vein, it is difficult for young people to get involved in agriculture as there are significant financial barriers related to “start-up and success” (Haalboom 2013, 5). In this section, the following topics will be discussed: entry to farming and programs and policies for new and young farmers.

2.4.1 Barriers to Entry

“If I was to start out from scratch, I think it would be impossible, at this land price for sure.” – Matt Enns, (CBC The National 2017).
Agricultural entrepreneurship is the largest source of self-employment in rural and small-town Canada (Epps 2017) and entering the farming business is “not different than entering in any other sectors of the economy” (Pouliot 2011, 3). Yet, new and young farmers face many difficulties when entering the agricultural industry. With the industrialization of farming, farms require higher amounts of capital to operate at an efficient scale (Pouliot 2011). Young people seldom have the economic means to purchase farms and aging farmers simply cannot afford to sell their farms below cost (Haalboom 2013, 5). In a modern world, farming is a tumultuous industry. Land costs are high, and new farmers lack the experience, access to capital, and important social connections needed for their success in the industry (CBC The National 2017; Agree 2010; Epps 2017; Ngo and Brklacich 2014).

Farming has high capital requirements. This is a formidable barrier for young and new farmers who are willing to accept a lower income to enter agriculture (Pouliot 2011). Farming at an efficient, productive scale requires large investments in land, livestock, machinery, and production rights “in supply managed industries” (Pouliot 2011, 3). Young farmers typically do not have access to enough start-up capital without assistance, be it from family or financial aid. Young and new farmers also struggle to gather enough financial resources to qualify for loans from banks as they require collateral (Pouliot 2011). Even more capital may be required if young farmers desire to operate their farms in an economically efficient way (Pouliot 2011) in order to compete with corporate-owned farms. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada found that young people who enter agricultural industries with supply-management, like the dairy industry, may not be able to enter without depending on their parents’ quota (Agriculture and Agri-Food 2010, 8). Other new entrants may not be able to access the same programs as existing farmers because
“they do not meet the minimum farm income test required to access this assistance” (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2010, 8). This leaves new and young farmers in a precarious position with their finances as they are not able to afford what they need to run a successful agricultural operation on their own. Young farmers are left with concerns of incurring severe debts, and for some, they fear earning more debt on top of their student debts (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010, 9).

Acquiring the skills and experience in agriculture can be difficult to come by. For those from farming families, many parents develop their children as young farmers who are skilled in business management as well as crop and animal care (Errington 1998). For those new to agriculture, they do not have the same opportunities and they are at a disadvantage in comparison. New farmers do not have the same skillset as those who have lived on farms their entire lives, “learning to do by doing” (4-H Canada, 2018) throughout their childhoods. The Junior Farmers of Ontario (2013) found in their new farmer survey of 250 respondents that 80 per cent of respondents have “Ag Experience.” In the same survey, “Education and Training” was the 4th most difficult challenge for new farmers (Junior Farmers 2013). Lastly, the key source of information that 87.28 per cent of respondents listed was “Someone with farming experience” (Junior Farmers 2013). A survey was conducted by the FarmON Alliance in 2012, which was aimed towards farmers interested in developing sustainable and locally oriented farm businesses. Of 430 respondents, 73 per cent reported having no background in agriculture before exploring farming, taking training, or choosing farming as a career (Knibbs 2012). While both surveys demonstrate an incline of new farmers, there is quite the division between those in “traditional” agriculture having a farming background and those seeking alternative agriculture
without a background in agriculture.

It is difficult for job seekers to choose agriculture as a career. It requires a long-term investment and commitment, and it is often viewed as something that holds a lot of “uncertainty and unpredictability” (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2010, 6). Choosing and staying in agriculture is a social and professional choice that is put to the test (Parent 2012). Young farmers are required to fill the gap of an aging and dying farm population, facing unknown futures of the availability of farmland and monetary gains, along with the very viable threat of social isolation (Parent 2012). As there are fewer young farmers today, the size and quality of their social networks can vary; reciprocity is a key element in social cohesion, and failure to achieve this leads to feelings of loneliness and depression, therefore leading to social isolation and eventually, social exclusion (Parent 2012, 3). Parent (2012) found in Quebec that young women and men are socially isolated to the same proportions, but women manage to surround themselves with more people than their male counterparts – 75 per cent of women have a large network of social support compared to 66 per cent of men. While agriculture has its difficulties, Haalboom (2013) found that young farmers in Nova Scotia see themselves as young entrepreneurs, but the desire to earn a sustainable income is not their key motivation; rather, it was the desire for a rural farming lifestyle valued as something meaningful and fulfilling. Along with the lifestyle, Haalboom also found that farming was a means of achieving independence for young people (2013, 35).

The barriers to entering agriculture provide challenges and difficulties for new and young farmers. Finding an “in” to farming requires financial needs to be met, paired with a strong dedication to pursue a potentially difficult and unpredictable career path. Arguably, the financial
requirements are one of the most difficult barriers for new and young farmers to break. Learning adequate skills to successfully farm is another barrier that hinders new farmers as many have not had the life-long lessons that sons and daughters of family farms have had. Agriculture is a difficult career choice, and social isolation is prevalent among young people. On the contrary, despite these barriers, young farmers persevere and actively continue to enter farming. For new farmers, entering agriculture with no experience or additional aid can be a daunting task, but for young farmers who grew up on family farms, some are fortunate enough to be part of a succession plan, giving them a much easier way in.

2.4.2 Inheritance and Succession

Farming is a way of life for many families across Canada. It is a lifestyle more than it is a business (Pouliot 2011, 2). As mentioned in the previous section on gender, farms became dependent on the inheritance of the family farm as a way to ensure that it would continue successfully. Succession – the transfer of managerial control of farm assets (Errington 1998) – became a primary feature in planning for the future. Today, however, with advancements in modern agriculture, farm succession practices have changed significantly and “multi-generation farms are becoming less common” (Pouliot 2011, 2). In a traditional model where the farm is passed on to a family member, succession via family member is a very difficult process today (Pouliot 2011, 3).

The average age of Canadian farmers has quickly reached 55 as of 2016 (Statistics Canada 2017c; CBC The National 2017). Many people are worried that there will be a shortage of farmers to fill the gap when the majority of farmers retire (Agree 2010). Young farmers are also in a decline, influenced by the fact that many aspiring young farmers are attending post-
secondary school at the same rate as the general population, thereby “delaying their planned entry into farming” (Ahearn 2016, 1). Most young farmers already “have ties” to the family farm (CBC The National 2017) through inheritance and farm succession, which makes entering the industry easier. Many young farmers who were raised on family farms have a sense of belonging and commitment to the farming lifestyle, along with a valuable source of knowledge from their parents (Haalboom 2013). As mentioned previously, some new young farmers do not come from farm families and are at a disadvantage in comparison to other young farmers (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010, 12).

Additionally, the agricultural sector has been taken over by multinational corporations, with an intense drive for profit, pushing out traditional, small-scale family farms (Haalboom 2013; Mills 2013). In order to keep up financially, farmers must scale-up and specialize production or risk losing their business (Haalboom 2013). The shift to corporate, industrialized farms has also created difficulty for young farmers. They are complex, multigenerational family businesses with “significant land and machinery assets” (Agree 2010, 1) which pose capital, legal, and management barriers that make inheritance difficult and complicated. Low returns on agricultural production combined with high capital start up investments and limited land availability contribute to primary barriers for entry into farming (Robinson 2008).

The stability and success of the agricultural industry in Canada is dependent on new and young entrants to farming (Epps 2017). Policy must be established to create early succession plans and innovative farming partnerships that helps with access to land and capital. With assistance, new and young farmers will have viable opportunities to establish a stable farm enterprise (Epps 2017).
2.4.3 Programs and Policies for New and Young Farmers

Policies must be reformed to include investments in communities to support farmers, and effective programs are needed to attract young people into farming (Agree 2010). One aspect is to consider sustainable alternatives to large-scale industrial production for young farmers, including rental of land and equipment to lower start-up costs (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010, 14). Small-scale, organic, or even urban farming are all cost-friendly alternatives to industrial farming that can be profitable for new young farmers. However, it is noted that Canadian agricultural policy favours the industrial model disproportionately to other models (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010, 14-15; Ikerd 2016, 10; Mills 2013).

It is argued that the government could provide insurance for agricultural profitability by securing markets for producers’ products, helping farmers adjust to changing markets, and investing in innovation (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2010, 7). New Entrant Programs exist in Ontario in order to help those who may not have the “financial means or opportunity to get started in the industry” (Dairy Farmers of Ontario 2017; see also Chicken Farmers of Ontario 2017). Other young farmers argue that the Canadian Agricultural Loans Act (CALA) program “should be available to purchase quota” (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010, 9). Mills (2013, 28) notes that in the ‘Growing Forward’ programs, young farmers must have a certain level of education and work experience in order to qualify for loans and grants, which hinders those who have not grown up on farms with hands-on education, or those that come from low-income families and cannot attend post-secondary school. While presenting at the Bring Food Home Conference, Epps (2017) said that policies should be put in place to ensure the significance of farmland in providing food security. It is noted, however, that Pouliot (2011)
finds that government support for new entrants into agriculture would have an insignificant
effect on the number of farms and the entry of new farms in Canada. Rather, the number of farms
is reflective of market forces, which has required the industrialization of farming in order to
remain profitable in today’s economy. Pouliot argues that entry into agriculture will continue so
long as farming remains profitable (2011, 13). However, Wiebe (2017) argues that large,
industrial farms are receiving tax-funded farm program payments in order to “remain solvent”
(2017, 146), in which 64 per cent of program payments went to 27 per cent of Canadian farms
with revenue over $250,000 per year (AAFC 2009, 105). Thus, if large farms do not have
government support, they suffer large financial losses. With the government continually
supporting large farms, family farms are subject to further financial alienation. Returning to
contrast Pouliot’s (2011) point then, entry into agriculture may be compromised if farming is not
longer profitable for the small-scale farm.

2.5 Young Women Farmers Today

“The reality is that numbers are still very low when looking at women who are sole
operators of farms.” (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 28).

Bringing together the intersecting dimensions of age and gender, the literature has
discussed the issues related to each topic. Discussion of the future for young women farmers in
Canada concludes this literature review.

As the Canadian Agricultural Census would suggest, over a period of five years, more
women are entering agriculture, and many of them as sole farm operators (2016; 2017a; 2017c).
If this trend continues, women’s participation in farming as sole farm operators will increase,
slowly but surely. Gendered social roles are still prevalent in rural communities in Canada,
which continue to enforce a relatively traditional division of labour. Family farms often reinforce gender roles, and farm women, much like other women, are responsible for multiple forms of labour – off-farm careers, on-farm work, and household labour. Women themselves may be subject to reinforcing these ideologies, particularly in heterosexual relationships and partnerships with men on the farm. However, for women that work in equal partnerships or as sole farm operators, they are changing these social roles and establishing new identities on the farm – moving from “farmer’s wife” to “farmer.” Traditional and industrial farming may not offer the same opportunities for equity as alternative agriculture, but future research is needed to determine if this is true.

Young farmers experience difficulties entering agriculture. Start-up costs to create an efficient production operation are often far beyond young adults’ financial capabilities, but so few young farmers have enough collateral to apply for loans. Some new entrant programs exist to assist new and young farmers, but often many of them do not meet the requirements. Young farmers who do not come from family farms are likely to incur debts – and for some, it only adds more to student debts. Acquiring skills and experience in agriculture for new farmers is a difficult task as resources are limited. Farming skills are taught from older role models or others with experience and learned in a hands-on manner. Seeking agriculture as a career is seeped in uncertainty and unpredictability, pushing young people to be successful while maintaining their own mental well-being. Despite these barriers, young people are still entering the industry.

While young women are entering the agricultural industry as sole farm operators, there are still so few in comparison to young men. In an era wherein many factors affect entry, inheritance, and succession to farming, young women struggle to earn a foothold in the
agricultural sector in Canada. While finances, experience, and social connections are barriers that apply to all young farmers, Leckie (1993) found that women did not enter farming for the same reasons as men. Generally, for many women, entering farming in the past has been relatively traumatic as there are few support mechanisms available to ease the transition. There are few government policies available for young farmers, and fewer still for farming women. Most of these policies are geared towards the growing multi-generational and industrial, corporate owned farms that maintain traditional agriculture, but on a grand upscale from their forebearers. As policies are not geared towards young women, it is an additional challenge for them to enter and stay in the industry, and yet, young women farmers are still on the rise.

For the future of young women farmers, those who are changing the way they farm and the social roles within rural communities are paving the way for the next generation. This also offers future generations of farm women to see older women as role models, giving them additional avenues for agricultural advice (CBC News 2016). More research will be needed in the future to understand these hopeful changes to the farming industry and community.
3 Chapter 3 – Gendered Barriers to Visibility

3.1 Introduction

Gender is a key factor that affects young women farmers’ visibility in the agricultural industry. While women are legally equal to men and considered also as “Sole Farm Operators” by the Canadian Agricultural Census (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 27), many social barriers still exist and prevent their advancement to equality. These social barriers subject women to many difficulties in their everyday lives; some of these barriers are overt while others are more subtle and subconscious. These barriers act like preventative measures to society acknowledging women’s general presence in agriculture, as well as their contributions to farming. While more women are taking an active role in farm operations in Canada, they are not recognized socially for that role; ‘farmers’ are still seen strictly as men, while women are considered ‘farmer’s wives” (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005; Price 2012). This lack of recognition extends into the agricultural community itself, which is where young women farmers experience gendered barriers most prominently. It is important to recognize young women as farmers in order to challenge gendered assumptions within a male-dominated industry.

This chapter is dedicated to examining the gendered barriers that young women farmers experience and how these barriers hinder their visibility in the agricultural community. Primarily, this chapter highlights the key issues that prevent the acknowledgement of young women’s contributions to agriculture. The first section will discuss the effects of and experiences with patrilineal culture in farming that young women farmers have today. The second section will discuss young women farmers’ gendered experiences in their everyday lives. This includes discussions on agri-business and ag-retail, as well as gender identity and presentation, along with
discussions on gender roles and the gendered division of labour on the farm. The conclusion will provide a summation of these gendered issues and provide suggestions to solve them.

3.2 The Effect of Patrilineal Culture in Canadian Farming

Historically, patrilineal culture has been a central tenant in family farming in Canada. Traditionally, farming was and continues to be a male-dominated sector. Social relations in farming have been constructed around this patriarchal model, which enables men to have control over agricultural resources such as land, socio-economic processes, and “institutions and ideologies” (Leckie 1993, 214). Patrilineal culture develops around social interactions and understandings within this system of inheritance via male lineage. As it is derived from patriarchy, it therefore centers on men and male identity. There is a strong focus on the relationships between male farmers and their sons, which provides the foundation for inheritance and succession planning. Planning succession from a father to his son is done with the intent that the farm and its land will continue into the future, while simultaneously ignoring mothers and daughters’ involvement in this arrangement. This practice enables women’s oppression, effectively erasing acknowledgement of women’s relation to farming and their contributions on the farm.

Patrilineal culture is still prominent in Canadian farming today. Power in farming is located in the ownership of the farm and the access to the resources within it and access to other resources (for example, finance) that it facilitates (Heather et al 2005, 89; Shortall 1999). Farming remains dominated by the male majority (Statistics Canada 2016; 2017a; 2017c), therefore, enabling men to have the decision-making power in the industry. For women, this makes entry into farming and acting as sole operator of a farm difficult. Women are a minority in
this role, and therefore, entering a male-dominated industry comes with its own specific challenges. In this study, a few respondents mentioned issues with male family members, which led to discussion surrounding the impacts of fathers and brothers on young women farmers.

Patrilineal culture is responsible for creating division within farming families. Inheritance and succession now depends more on the children’s interest than their gender, but societal expectations remain the same: sons are expected to take their father’s place on a farm more so than their daughters, even if a son has little to no desire to do so. This leaves interested daughters in a predicament. If they are interested, they may or may not receive adequate lessons or training needed to run the farm, which can lead to many difficulties in the future when they become a farm operator. This is based on gender discrimination and the expectation that as a girl, a woman does not inherently have interest in running the farm, and therefore, is not taught the same things as her brothers or male relatives. A study respondent, Doreen discussed her lack of certain skills on the farm, suggesting to future farming parents to “train your 12-year-old daughters how to grease tractors and do equipment maintenance, because they’ll be really well rounded! Those aren’t tasks girls are typically taught at a young age.” Doreen suggests, teaching girls a multitude of tasks and skills at a young age will make them “well-rounded” in the future if they choose to continue in agriculture as adults. This disparity in skill-learning for boys and girls is inherently gendered; the tasks themselves are even gendered. Many of the respondents noted that they did not possess any mechanical skills at all, or if they did, their skills were not on par with that of their male partners or male family members. Another respondent, Allie, described a gendered experience when working for another farm:
 [...] the person wasn’t saying they were assigning (tasks) based on gender but it was very clear that the heavy lifting jobs were going to males and the other tasks were going to females and things like that. And so I think that even though they wanted to be very progressive, there are underlying like biases came out in these quick decisions that they were making.

Allie goes on to suggest that the person assigning tasks would say that they felt men and women on the farm did all the same things but continued to assign them to do the same things because they “have this unconscious bias [they’re] not tapping into.” The assignments for tasks were based on the assumption of gender and body size rather than actual skill and capability. The decision to assign tasks based on these assumptions is a direct result of the long-standing effects of patrilineal culture in farming in which women are assumed to be less capable of physically demanding tasks.

Daughters on family farms may have difficulties with male family members. Susan, a twenty-four year-old dairy farmer, details a difficult relationship with her father when it comes to running the farm. Her father has started to cut back on his responsibilities, enabling the respondent to take the lead on the farm. She states that while some things have improved, “there’s still a lot of times where we really don’t get along. It’s – I dunno, probably our relationship hasn’t improved a lot.” In this situation, the respondent feels that her father has taken on less despite being “only 52” while she has taken on a majority of the tasks on the farm, including: “the books, I do the cows, the tractor, and stuff all the time. Dad will do about fifteen minutes of chores and I’ll do about three hours usually.” Despite the heavy load of work, Susan appreciates having space between them as it gives them an opportunity to work separately, rather than giving them opportunity to argue over leadership decisions. She says that they have vastly different personalities, and while their herd of dairy cattle are improving, genetics-wise, their
relationship is not. What is most interesting in this arrangement, however, is that the respondent often believes that if she were a boy, her and her father’s relationship would be less tenuous because they would share similar interests and mindsets. That said, fathers and sons also clash, which is indicative of age differences coming into play. Susan details her and her father’s relationship as follows:

Even with Dad, I think if I was a boy, it’d be different because we have very different interests and my sister was older than me, so she was the first one to drive tractors and do all those things. So, I’m not as mechanically inclined because Dad just didn’t teach me those things. So, he gets very upset when I don’t know how to do things sometimes, and I’m like, ‘you never taught me, so how am I supposed to know how to do this?’ These things just don’t come naturally to me where they do to him.

Susan was notably frustrated with the hypocrisy of her father’s misplaced anger. Had she been taught these skills as a girl, she would be able to perform the task at hand without difficulty.

Susan did not provide a reason as to why her older sister was taught and she was not. The sister was previously in a similar position to Susan before going away to nursing school and is currently married to a dairy farmer, helping out with her husband’s operation. Furthermore, in this interview, Susan goes on to talk about how her own new ideas are not respected by her father, despite being the current lead operator on the family farm. She says:

He doesn’t want ideas to come from me. Big ideas – if I have ideas that I really want to be enforced, or things I’m going to do, often I have our vet or nutritionist come and talk to Dad about them, and then we can have a talk together. And then all of a sudden, when the idea is not necessarily coming from me, even though it came from me – that’s been a big thing I guess, learning how to work with my Dad.

The respondent demonstrates that in order to have her father take her seriously for bringing in new and “big ideas”, she needs the word of another person to give her father the idea and
implement it himself, even if it was her idea originally. This suggests that even in a family, a father may not take his own daughter seriously enough to run a farm. In order to cope with her father, Susan says it is a matter of “learning how to work with” him as opposed to asserting her position as the lead operator on the farm and enabling her own agency in decision making. Once again, the respondent notes that if she was a boy, “things would be different” in that her father would be more willing to take suggestions and implement her ideas without question or influence from an outsider. This type of relationship provides further evidence for the ways that patrilineal culture still exists in farming and agriculture in Canada. While it is not necessarily an overt display of sexism or misogyny given that the respondent does a majority of the farming tasks and makes most decisions, her father is still determined to maintain his ways, treating his daughter differently due to a clash of interests and ideas, mainly based on her gender. However, as Susan did not provide any other context about her father, gender may not be the only contributing factor to their difficult relationship.

If daughters are given the same opportunities that sons have, they can learn skills and perform tasks with equal measure. This enables them to start farming at the same levels as their male peers, rather than being left behind. While this seems like a rather obvious suggestion, it is evident from the results of this study that many girls are not given these opportunities. In this study, most respondents noted that they did not have mechanical skills, despite growing up on farms as children. Had they encountered the opportunity to learn, they would be able to utilize that set of skills as adults. Notably, when discussing the difference between herself and her brothers, Vera, a twenty-eight year-old beef farmer, stated that:
I don’t want anyone to say I can’t, that I don’t have the same opportunities as my brothers, I don’t feel like I do but I know that I didn’t. I like to think that when it came to it, I didn’t have to try harder, but I know that I did. I know that I did. But I don’t want to think that. I think that’s still because agriculture is still such a… American Dream. If you work hard enough and you’re smart enough, you’ll make it. Right?

This exemplifies the notion that if a woman simply works hard enough, she will “make it” in a male-dominated industry. She felt as though she had to work harder and likening a career in agriculture to the “American Dream” insinuates that working hard enough automatically results in great success without thinking of how gender oppression affects women and women’s ability to become successful the same way that men do. Unable to have the same opportunities as male family members leaves young women farmers struggling, feeling as though they need to work twice as hard. This struggle also hinders women mentally. It affects what they feel they are capable of doing. Vera also tells the story about showing a bull at a local fair when she was younger, and a man approached her, telling her that, “women shouldn’t show bulls. You should get your Dad to show that bull.” In that situation, Vera was not upset about what the man had said, but more about what she decided to do in that situation. She explains that she automatically went to get her father, who in turn, told her to go show the bull. In the interview, she later said that “I was never not allowed to show that bull, I just held myself back.” This is an example of how self-doubt can be brought on by a single gendered comment. In this case, the respondent was lucky to have an encouraging father to counteract the gender discrimination. However, this is not always the case and many opportunities for young women farmers may be missed due to the attitudes of others in the agricultural community.

Patrilineal culture creates societal expectations for farming women. A large part of these expectations includes fulfilling specific gender roles on the farm. A number of respondents
discussed these gender roles; some were a conscious decision while others were not so overt.

One specific societal expectation of patrilineal culture is that women will become “wives and mothers” only, rather than becoming “farmers.” Not only is this a highly gendered societal expectation, but a heteronormative one as well; girls are expected to grow up and find a male partner that they eventually marry, and produce offspring with that partner, forgoing any potential for non-heterosexual identities and or women who choose not to or cannot have children. The effect of this societal attitude is quite aptly described by Debbie who is a vegetable farmer and small business owner, single by choice:

I’m single and I choose to be, especially with my job because I’m so frickin’ busy 24/7 that I do not have time to date. The free time that I have, I’m like, okay I’m gonna go wash my truck because that needs to be done or I’m gonna go and get a haircut because I haven’t in a year! My time is precious and I laugh when I go to parties and things, or whatever, or I go to a wedding and people – you get a plus-one and I don’t have one – and people are like ‘You’re such a nice girl! Why aren’t you married by now?’ And it’s like, you know what? Marriage is at the very bottom of my list. Like, it’s underneath a rock, six feet down, headed to China. I’m not concerned about that right now and I find it so frustrating that being a working woman in the ag-industry, you… have to fit a mould that people expect you to fit into. You have to fit into a mould that is a pre-conception in people’s minds. When I say to people that I have no desire to get married, I have no desire to have children, I wish to you know, live my life the way I want to and work because I love my job, it’s like, ‘oh my gosh! You have a disease! Something’s wrong with you! You know, a woman’s job is to get married and have kids!’ If you want that, I give you my blessing. I’m happy for you, if that’s what you want. I really congratulate women who do that because that’s a hard job in of itself. But at the end of the day, why can’t people do that? I totally believe in the saying “You do you.” And if it works for you, then stick with it. This works for me and my life, so don’t expect me to conform to what society thinks I should be doing. The fact that I don’t wear a wedding band or the fact that I’m not dating someone, doesn’t mean that there’s something ‘wrong’ with me; it just means that I have much bigger and higher priorities than what the world expects of me.
Debbie makes a powerful point; society expects certain outcomes for young women. When those outcomes are not fulfilled by a certain age, women are questioned. When young women voice that they do not wish to date or get married and bear children, people assume there is something wrong, that they “have a disease” because they are not fulfilling the gendered status quo. They are also challenging social expectations around age. Young women are expected to be married and have children in a certain time frame before it is “too late” to do so. Debbie is twenty-five years old, and other people expect her to have children already, even though many women are choosing to have children later in life. Often, society does not expect a young woman to be too preoccupied with her work and interests to seek romantic endeavours, whereas many young men are able to pursue careers first and families later or not at all. Debbie expresses her frustration with these negative assumptions quite plainly in the last sentence: “… it just means that I have much bigger and higher priorities than what the world expects of me.” This is a poignant statement that speaks to the current social environment for young women in general, but especially for young women farmers living in a patrilineal culture where their own goals and priorities are ignored in favour of society’s gendered expectations for women.

Societal expectations greatly impact young women farmers’ experiences. Often, they are not taken seriously as society expects a farmer to be an old man rather than a young woman. Debbie states that many farmers are living in a “black and white 1950s zone” when it comes to the acceptance of women and acknowledgement of their contributions to the agricultural industry. This statement suggests that farmers – particularly, farmers of the “baby boomer”

generation are still holding on to their values and understandings of the world around them; men are in charge of farming duties, while women maintain domestic chores and take care of children. Notably, some respondents felt that young men were in similar situations regarding age and being taken seriously by older men. Debbie, once more expressed that she felt that “bright, young people under 40” were “getting it” – meaning that they were more open to young women taking an active role in farming, whereas people “in their sixties” still held gendered beliefs regarding women’s involvement in the industry. Karen, a thirty-one year-old dairy farmer, noted that, because the majority of farmers in her area were “aging men”, that she dealt with a lot of “belittling experiences” when it came to seeking advice as a young farmer. Bridget, a thirty-five year-old poultry farmer, discussed her experiences with the poultry associations. She felt that she had to make the older members of the board understand that she was “not just some young idiot.”

Societal expectations of both gender and age influence the ways in which young women are perceived in the agricultural community. Therefore, this is a difficult transitioning phase for young women farmers when older male farmers maintain these views, despite an ever-changing world.

Patrilineal culture is no longer as overt as it used to be, but the experiences of the respondents in this study suggest that it is still very much present in everyday life. It is responsible for continuing the cycle of male-only inheritance and succession, enforcing gender roles and creating long-standing gendered assumptions for women in agriculture, in which their interest in farming is not acknowledged. Furthermore, because it is assumed that girls are not interested in farming, they are not taught the skills that are required to run the farm like their male peers. This leads to a large discrepancy in learning between boys and girls on family farms;
young women therefore lack certain skill sets, especially in areas like mechanics. Patrilineal culture is also responsible for the creation and maintenance of gendered societal expectations, which may hinder young women farmers who choose to deviate from them. Overall, patrilineal culture remains as a firm, underlying barrier to young women farmers’ visibility in the agricultural community.

3.3 Gendered Experiences

Young women in this study talked about several gendered experiences that they dealt with in their time as farmers. These experiences are particularly prominent with the younger members of the study. However, these experiences are the key contributing factor to the hinderance of young women farmers’ visibility in the agricultural industry. Firstly, the most common gendered issue that young women farmers face is working and interacting with agricultural businesses and sales representatives coming to the farm. Secondly, young women farmers detail the ways in which they identify themselves in order to perform their work without hinderance. Lastly, this section will detail the ways in which gender roles are still implemented on the farm, and how those roles affect young women farmers.

3.3.1 Agribusiness and Sales Representatives

Agricultural businesses are a prominent feature in farming. Farms rely on manufacturers for tractors and other machinery, feed suppliers, and seeds and fertilizer suppliers. Agribusinesses rely on their sales representatives in order to promote their products and reach out to potential farmers in their respective areas. These sales representatives are key players in creating the relationships between businesses and farmers, and without them, those connections may never be made. That said, however, sales representatives, according to the experiences of the
young women farmers in this study, are disproportionately male – only a few respondents noted that there were women working in the offices who answered phones and put in orders – but beyond that secretarial role, women were not the ones going out to farms to seek sales.

Young women farmers noted that they were not taken seriously as the acting sole farm operator when working with sales representatives. These representatives were males of various ages and in different sectors, but the commonality between them was clear: they come to farms seeking business, seeking the “man of the house”, as in a male partner or spouse, or a male family member. Several respondents noted that if they answer the phone when sale representatives call them, they say that they will call back later rather than speak with them, based on the assumption that they are women, and therefore, not farm operators. This enforces the notion that men run farms and that when women are encountered, they are expected to have a male partner. This is both a gendered and heteronormative assumption. Sales representatives’ assumptions extend to their visits to farms as well. Susan details an experience with a new sales representative who came to the farm to make a “social call”, but “had no interest” in speaking with her. She states, “…if you come in here and don’t have any interest in talking to me, like I write the cheques and I make all the financial decisions so if you’re not willing to deal with me, I’m not willing to deal with you.” Susan makes it a point to state that if the sales representative has a lack of interest, then she has no intention of working together. Susan, among others, make it a point to reference financial decision-making as a part of their responsibility to emphasise their role as key operator. Finances are valued as a key aspect as a sole leading farm operator and are thereby respected by sales representatives. Susan also says that she “[…] feel(s) bad for them, almost due to the fact that they haven’t realized how important we are to the overall
picture.” This speaks to the issue of social and cultural expectations; once again, women are not expected or encouraged to be in the role of sole farm operator. Women’s contributions in farming are not acknowledged in the same way that men’s contributions are.

Young women farmers have to emphasize that they are, in fact, in charge of their operations. In most cases, this reinforcement and assertion of ownership worked with no further difficulties. However, there were a few incidents in which respondents were not as successful as others; these women had to have male family members or male partners tell the representative that they were in charge, therefore relying on a man’s influence with another man. A few of the respondents also noted that their age played a role. They noted that they were not taken seriously because they were young, on top of being a woman. Until young women farmers assert themselves, be it in person or through a male partner or relative, they are not respected by male sales representatives, which leads to many issues in purchasing products or equipment for the farm.

Respondent Karen describes how she wishes she was more assertive with sales representatives and custom operators from their initial introduction. She is open to hearing from experienced members of the agricultural industry, but in doing so, felt that, “I open the door a little bit too much to be walked on, and it’s hard to take that ground back once you’ve given it away.” In this, the respondent states that because she did not assert herself immediately, she lost the opportunity to earn respect from these men, and it is incredibly difficult to earn it back. Incidences like this are part of the reason several young women farmers feel they have had to “adjust” their personality traits in order to just “deal with it” rather than being themselves as they are.
3.3.2 **Identity and Presentation**

Societal expectations of gender identity affect young women farmers. In this study, the respondents noted several aspects of their gender identity that they felt affects their work in the agricultural industry. Social pressure pushes women to conform to certain gendered expectations. This includes performing a specific gender identity; women are to be feminine in both their appearance and demeanour. However, these feminine traits are not often respected by men in agriculture. Respondent Joan recalls a time when she had blonde hair, and how the men she worked with would tease her: “they used to call me ‘Barbie.’ And they’d be like, ‘look at Barbie on her tractor’ and ‘look at Barbie doing this’ and everything.” Referring to Joan as ‘Barbie’ simply due to hair colour denies her role as a farmer, and instead, sees her as a hyperfeminized image of a woman – like a Barbie doll – and therefore, ignores Joan’s skills, like the ability to drive a tractor. This provides a challenge for the female farmer. Young women farmers feel that they need to present themselves differently when working with men in order to avoid sexualization.

In this study, the respondents were asked if they changed their appearance or demeanour when working around men. While around half of the respondents stated that they did not change anything, the other half of the respondents discussed the ways in which they did change themselves in that situation. When it comes to appearance, young women farmers feel that they have to “de-sex” themselves in the ways that they dress. Some respondents noted that they used to “doll up” and put on make up and more feminine clothing when going to board meetings. Others, however, stated that they went as is, without make up and sometimes, without changing out of barn clothes. “You get what you get” and “this is me” attitudes were shared by a number
of the respondents.

Vera notes that there is a contradiction when it comes to her appearance when showing her livestock. Industry wants their farmers to be professional, but they “also want someone who is pretty and personable.” She also mentions how she ‘masculinizes’ herself in her demeanour: “you stop the giggling, you button up your shirt, right, you try and be professional, and you try to equate on a one-on-one level.” Certain behaviours are also included in personal demeanour. “Giggling” is associated with girls and women and not boys and men. By mentioning that she buttons up her shirt, she insinuates that showing any cleavage of breasts is not acceptable at a professional level. By doing these things, the respondent is making herself equal to a man by removing her feminized traits. Adopting a “masculine” demeanor was noted by several respondents, which included certain traits, like confidence and assertiveness, along with “professionalism.” These traits were associated with being male and being successful in the industry, and therefore, in order for young women farmers to succeed, they too needed to adopt these traits. No mention of being both “professional” and “feminine” was provided by the respondents. However, they did not define themselves as necessarily male, but definitely not overly feminine or “girly.” Many respondents noted that they grew up around boys and men or had mostly male friends, adapting to be like them was necessary to fit in and be respected.

When it comes to young women farmer’s demeanor around men, some respondents noted that they acted a specific way in order to be taken more seriously by male peers. This included speaking in an assertive, commanding manner, and as Allie puts it, “puffing my chest out.” This change in demeanor is something subconscious; young women farmers do so without realizing that they are doing it until after the fact. This suggests that it has become inherent for young
women farmers to dress and act a certain way in order to be successful and taken seriously in the agricultural community. This “requirement” does not allow young women farmers to be themselves, but rather, a projection of themselves and a rejection of their feminine aspects. Doreen noted that she tried not to be overly sensitive to it – that it was a matter of adjustment “to the way things simply were.” This suggests that due to the way agriculture is a male-dominated industry, those specific “masculine” traits are a requirement. Feminine traits are not respected, and therefore, not professional. Young women farmers must adapt their appearance and demeanour to fit in, or suffer the social consequences such as teasing, judgement, or disrespect. The ‘de-sexing’ of feminine traits hinders women’s visibility in the agricultural community, while also enforcing traits such as confidence and assertiveness as inherently male, which they are not. Many of the respondents described themselves as having a “strong” or “bold” personality that allowed them to establish themselves as farmers and therefore, earn respect from men, which insinuates, again, that having “feminine” traits are not enough to be respected. Having a “masculine” personality should not be a necessity for young women to succeed – and, as Allie stated, “…there are people who don’t necessarily have those qualities and then can’t pursue the career they want because they’re not able to assert themselves.” For those women without a “bold” personality, they are not able to earn respect from men in the same way, and therefore, are not as successful.

Some respondents felt that they do not necessarily ‘see’ their gender; they see themselves as just ‘farmers.’ Susan succinctly stated that “we are all […] farmers.” Some of those respondents do not necessarily “see” gender divisions, but rather, that they are “all farmers” together, aiming towards a common goal. They believe that gender is irrelevant or unimportant.
Interestingly, these respondents were in the 31-35 age bracket, whereas those between the ages of 18 and 30 were more aware of the way their gender plays a part in their daily lives. Some of these young women farmers felt that the push towards “equality” for men and women and suggesting that women are “different” than men was contradictory. The “push” for equality suggests that there is sameness between men and women at an equal level, but the contradiction, according to these respondents, is when women strive to be acknowledged that they are, in fact, different than men in terms of physical and mental capabilities and should be recognized as such. Susan also said that she does not “think about it a lot, like ‘oh, I’m a woman farming’”, suggesting that she does not “see” her gender as something relevant to her career as a farmer. This attitude could likely be derived from two reasons: one, that young women farmers in the 31-35 age category have been farming longer than their younger counterparts, and are more “successful” at farming, and therefore do not consider gender to affect them in the same ways that younger women farmers do; and two, that some women may not subscribe to feminism and feminist beliefs – they may view women as equal to men as a whole, which includes themselves on an individual level. That said, however, these are only estimates as to why the older young women in this study, like Susan, do not acknowledge their gender in the same way as the others.

As argued previously, though, gender still plays a role in the agricultural industry, even if it is just on a subconscious level, because it is “embedded within the social landscape of agriculture” (Leckie 1993, 213).

3.3.3 Gender Roles and the Division of Labour

Gender roles and the division of labour are still prominent features for young women farmers today. They are a direct product of a patrilineal culture that is still in effect. These
practices are still active, though not quite as “traditional” as they once were as more young women are owning, running, and operating their own farms, and therefore, performing traditionally male-only tasks. However, remnants of gender roles on the farm are still present in agriculture today, as evident in their statements.

In the study, young women farmers who did not have a male partner or did not specify their relationship status, and did not run a family farm, worked full-time on their operations, doing all farm labour themselves. Young women farmers who grew up on family farms and opted to continue running those farming operations typically performed most of the labour tasks themselves, and often helped other family members when needed to ensure that those tasks are completed. Family obligations guided young women farmers to continue running their farms successfully, which eventually led young women farmers to inherit or buy out their parents’ farm. However, it is important to note that a majority of the respondents had male partners. Those respondents then had divided all farm-related labour between themselves and their spouses/partners. As per the requirements of this study, the young women farmers acted as the sole operators; they made the key management and financial decisions for their farming operations. However, labour in these households was divided based on individual skill and interest. For example, women who had farms with livestock were typically in charge of managing their herds, feeding the animals, and working with them on a daily basis (e.g. milking dairy cattle, mucking stalls, and collecting eggs). These women were also responsible for making breeding decisions, as well as communicating with outside farm services, such as veterinarians and nutritionists. Young women farmers who grew crops contributed greatly during the growth period, especially during harvest time to ensure that all work was completed successfully on
time.

The male partners of the young women farmers in this study would typically take part in any work that was related to tractors or machinery and their maintenance. This kind of work was valued as a specific kind of expertise that men had more so than their female partners and spouses. This coincides with findings for organic farmers in Hall and Mogyorody (2007) in which cohabitating heterosexual couples divided decision making; women were involved in making final decisions in their areas of responsibility (such as managing livestock) whereas men retained power in their areas of concentration (such as mechanical tasks). As Debbie described earlier, she was never taught how to do tractor maintenance. Another respondent, Meg, states that she knows how to operate tractors and perform maintenance tasks but says that she is not “as perfect” as her partner is, and often leaves the job for him to complete so that it is “done right.” Mechanical tasks are seen as something that men do, and while women have the opportunity to do these tasks, they are not as “perfect” as men are. While this is not necessarily an issue for the young women farmers who have male partners doing these tasks, it is difficult for those on their own who do not possess the same skill needed to perform these specific tasks. If parents are not teaching their daughters “how to grease tractors”, young women farmers are missing out on something that is automatically taught to boys, therefore falling behind when it comes to knowing all skills required to run a farm.

For young women who are new farmers, this differential in skill increases further; three of the respondents in this study were new to farming. Two of these respondents, Meg and Rita, began farming when they entered relationships with men. Meg is twenty-one year-old beef farmer living with her boyfriend, running a beef and crop growing operation with him. However,
Meg learned a lot of her knowledge of beef cattle through recently participating in a 4-H Club, in which she was taught basic skills for management and feeding cattle, as well as showing cattle. She also explained that she can “do everything” on the farm, but if there are tasks that need to be done “perfectly”, Meg preferred that her partner do it. Notably, Meg also said that “sometimes I just give up and let him do it” which suggests that, while she feels that she can do certain tasks, she feels she is not good enough to complete them entirely herself. Arguably, if Meg had access to different 4-H Clubs or other resources, she may feel more confident in her abilities. On the contrary, Rita, who is thirty-five years old, detailed that she had primarily learned to run her dairy farm in a hands-on manner. She also said that both her husband and his uncle are a “walking books of knowledge” and “full of resources” when it comes to dairy farming as both lived on the family farm. Therefore, Rita is able to glean knowledge and ask questions from her family members as needed. Rita did not mention any other resources when asked about her farming knowledge, which may be indicative of a lack of promotion or advertising for programs that could assist new farmers, or, these programs for adults (unlike 4-H) do not exist. This also contributes to the ways that young women farmers are behind in acquiring certain skill sets when compared to men.

Some young women farmers felt that it was inherently harder or tougher to perform certain tasks. Primarily, it was harder for some respondents to perform physically demanding tasks on the farm. Notably, Maxine says, “as a woman, I’m not as strong and I’m not as big as a man”, to which she later added that “a lot of things are designed with a six-foot man in mind. Even the tractor seat, like, okay how do I move this thing up for my five-foot-five?” Maxine also notes that her father and husband can get into tractors “without even thinking about it” because
they are made with men like them in mind, rather than trying to accommodate for women, or anyone, who may be smaller in stature. Another respondent, Bea, notes that one of her biggest challenges in farming is keeping up physically. She says she is “not as strong” as her male co-workers or even some of her female co-workers. She says, “I struggle with that a little bit, feeling inadequate not being able to do anything about it.” Women are subject to feelings of inadequacy, even though many tasks and machines are not accommodating to people of smaller stature or physical strength. Allie notes that when tasks on a volunteer farming operation were given out, heavy lifting tasks were given to men decided simply on quick, unconscious assumptions of gender and size of the volunteers. This is an assumption on both sides, in which men are expected to be able to perform certain tasks or operate equipment, and that women are not expected to do so. That said, however, Maxine mentions how she has to use a “bar” to help reach pedals in the tractor, and Bea states that in her own beekeeping practices, she creates “work-arounds”, like using smaller hive boxes or mechanical equipment to help her lift the boxes. While women are innovative in the ways they create their own “work-arounds”, the obvious solution is to create equipment that accommodates women to begin with, or to provide solutions for women to carry out the same physical tasks that men do. The respondents also noted that some tasks are harder to complete because they find themselves overly scrutinized for doing something their way, more so than their male peers, which speaks to the greater problem of making these tasks accessible for women, and therefore, eliminating the gendered aspect of physical labour.

Transitioning away from physical farm labour, household and domestic labour varied among young women farmers. Some respondents actively performed most of the domestic and or
child-related labour tasks while their male partner worked on or off the farm. Some respondents noted that they would “switch off” between doing farm labour and domestic/child-related labour after a certain amount of time. Maxine recalls during harvest time:

You’re a mom, and you’re a farmer. Your kid needs her dinner and she needs her bath and she needs her bed. So when it was time for her bedtime, my husband would come out and take over in the grain cart or whatever, and I’d go home to feed her, bathe her, and put her to bed, and then stay with her for the rest of the night. So there’s a gendered thing right there. He’s quite capable! He could easily do that. But he came out to relieve me, so I could do it. […] I love spending time with her but it was kind of like ‘oh so I’m being kicked off the tractor to go deal with her’, our daughter, who he also could’ve dealt with. It’s tough. It’s a big balance of who does what and when, and whose time is best spend doing something. I guess he figured I’d been in the tractor all day so he can get out or wanted to drive the tractor. I don’t know, but it’s hard.

For young women farmers, there is a specific way that gender roles affect their daily lives. They are farmers, but they are also mothers and partners. These roles are what feed into the “triple day” of labour that women farmers often report (Heather et al 2005, 91). Women feel obligated to fall into gendered roles. Maxine’s husband felt that he had to ‘relieve’ her from her duties in the tractor, if only to take care of their daughter, which he is “capable” of doing himself. While it can be insinuated Maxine’s husband wanted her to take a break, he is also taking her away from labour that is valued higher and “harder” than child-care labour. While Maxine could have refused the relief, she felt obligated to take care of her child, but notes that it is definitely a “gendered thing.” In the domestic sphere of labour, young women farmers felt that they had to “sacrifice” one aspect of their labour in order to complete more important tasks. This meant that they had to choose between farm chores, domestic chores, childcare, and sometimes an off-farm career. Most respondents stated that their main “sacrifice” came at the cost of keeping a “clean house.” A few respondents opted to pay for outside services to help complete domestic tasks,
such as hiring a house cleaner, ordering groceries online, and hiring an accountant. These respondents felt that it was more important for them to commit their time and labour elsewhere as domestic chores were not as important to them as farm labour or child care was. Young women farmers also actively took part in the administrative tasks for the farm. This included accounting or bookkeeping, along with making phone calls to farm suppliers. Many respondents cited that they had a “natural” inclination towards administrative tasks, that their male partners or even men in general, did not have. Some respondents noted that farming operations or agricultural organization would not exist without women’s contributions in terms of organization and secretarial roles.

Young women are moving away from the traditional notion that domestic chores are of the utmost importance to complete and shifting that focus to running the farm operation on a daily basis. This is a particularly powerful gendered barrier that women are starting to overcome. However, traditional gender roles are still maintained when it comes to child care and secretarial roles, wherein women feel a certain obligation to perform those tasks more so than their male partners, despite the fact that men are “capable” of doing them as well. As Allie suggests, the agricultural community needs to “challenge norms” of gender in farming in order to advance gender equity.

3.4 Conclusion

In the Canadian agricultural world, patrilineal culture remains as the prevalent social structure that maintains gendered societal expectations for young women farmers. These views are maintained by men, and as farming is still a male-dominated industry, women are the minority. However, it is noted that women themselves also maintain the continuation of
patrilineal culture in farming. Farming women are often “defensive and protective of cultures and traditions riddled with patriarchal gender relations that oppress them both” (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 30). Women can often be persistent in maintaining certain gendered roles on the farm (Hall and Mogyorody 2007) despite contributing to decision-making and farm production in greater capacity than the traditional “farmer’s wife” would. Thus, certain views of gender roles, (heterosexual) relationships, marriages, and childbearing are perpetuated by farming women themselves, which in turn continues to oppress them through their own collusion with misogynistic men. That said, however, as more women enter agriculture, they are liable to change these traditional views through their participation and “breaking the mould” of what it means to be a farmer. Some of the respondents’ experiences suggest that patrilineal culture also dictates societal expectations for young women revolving around both their age and gender. These views are often enforced by older men, who make up the majority of farming operators in Canada; these views often hinder young women farmers’ progression in their agricultural careers and personal lives.

Young women farmers in this study experience the most gender discrimination when working with sales representatives from agricultural businesses, and sometimes they are not taken seriously because of their age. Gender discrimination also occurs when young women farmers feel the need to have “bold” personalities in order to succeed in a male-dominated industry. Traits that are considered explicitly “feminine” are therefore left behind, ultimately altering farming women’s personalities. Lastly, young women farmers maintain some aspects of “traditional” gender roles on the farm, often relegating themselves to domestic labour and childcare, despite having capable male partners. Overall, young women farmers experience
various forms of gender discrimination, which in turn prevents their visibility in the agricultural community.

Moving forward, it is important to understand the connection between the gendered barriers that young women farmers experience and family farming. Despite the rise in number of female sole farm operators (Statistics Canada 2017c), this does not change social values, nor does it eliminate discrimination. Patrilineal culture creates the social structure within farming, and therefore, the notion of the traditional family farm in Canada is directly structured from a patriarchal foundation and its corresponding beliefs that center on men and maintains a heteronormative view of families. It is imperative then to investigate the ways in which young women farmers are creating changes to this patrilineal social structure in order to understand the remaining underlying difficulties and challenges in the context of the family farm for the future.
4 Chapter 4 – Young Women Farmers’ Impacts on Family Farming

4.1 Introduction

Young women farmers are a part of the next generation of farming in Canada. In 2001, the Canadian Agricultural Census declared that 98 per cent of farms were family operated and as of 2016, 22.5 per cent of agricultural operations are reporting as family-run corporations (Statistics Canada 2017c). Family-run farming operations greatly contribute to agricultural production across the country. As mentioned earlier, a majority of the respondents in this study came from farming backgrounds (see Appendix C). Some of them inherited farming operations, while others bought the farm outright from their parents upon retirement. A few of the respondents living on these farms were third or fourth generation farmers, many already with young children of their own. As the number of young women as sole farm operators is increasing in Canada from 13.3 per cent to 16.8 per cent from 2011 to 2016 (Statistics Canada 2016), their contributions are a prominent feature in the agricultural industry. Their unique perspectives and experiences have a great impact in changing what the “traditional” Canadian family farm looks like today, and in the future. This chapter first examines young women’s views and values on traditional farming which then leads into young women farmers’ use of new innovations and technologies. The second section will then discuss young women farmers’ experiences with inheritance and succession, while also providing discussions on their relationships and children, and a summary will be provided in the conclusion.
4.2 Traditional Farming

Farming in Canada has traditionally been family-run. It is often viewed more as a “lifestyle” than it is a business (Pouliot 2011, 2), and more of a “vessel for family traditions and responsibilities” (Price 2010, 356). Traditional practices remain a prominent feature in family farming. During the interviews, the respondents of this study were asked what a “traditional” farm was, and what it meant to them. The definition of “traditional” farming varied among respondents. Some respondents said that “traditional” meant farming in the way that their “grandparents did it”, which suggests that “traditional” farming is defined by how someone runs their farm. Susan describes a traditional farm as one that is “family-run as opposed to company-run”, suggesting that it is not necessarily the size of the farm that matters, but the way that it is operated. Further, respondent Vera felt that the beef sector was “behind” in the times because she was feeding her beef cattle the same way that her grandfather did in the 1980s, while her partner has a nutritionist who created a feed plan for his dairy cattle. This perception of “traditional” farming as something that is done in the past reflects the romantic vision of family farming held by Canadian culture (Price 2010); farms are run and operated by a multi-generational family that is inherited from fathers to sons, farming in the same ways that the grandparents did when they first established the farm and continuing to do so into the future, providing for both the family and society. However, this definition of “traditional” is changing.

The respondents in this study discussed some issues around the notion of “traditional” in agriculture today. Young women farmers expressed concerns about some farming practices that have not changed across their respective sectors. Vera felt that the beef industry was behind because her cattle were still being fed the exact same way as they were 40 years ago, while the
dairy industry uses nutritionists to create better and more efficient feed plans for cattle. Respondent Maxine described that farmers of her father’s generation were not using “their best management practices.” For example, older farmers continued to over-till their crop fields because it was just “what they were used to doing”, rather than being open to change like farmers of Maxine’s generation, who have since discovered better methods for growing crops, such as no-tilling their fields, which has set a new standard in the industry. Other respondents have noted that some practices were rather archaic. Vera felt that there was no longer a need to brand cattle’s hides with hot irons when plastic ear tags and ear tattoos would suffice. While there are new rules surrounding livestock care and handling, older farmers are reluctant to change their “tried and true” practices.

Older and established farmers are “essential for teaching the next generation” (Haalboom 2013, 17) and on-farm learning is pertinent for the young farmers’ participation in agriculture and future succession of the farm (Haalboom 2013, 17; Scott and Colman 2008). Maintaining traditions and sharing information are key aspects of passing on the value of farming to future generations (Scott and Colman 2008, 90). Notably, older farmers desire to pass on technical abilities and husbandry knowledge earlier than financial matters to their children (Errington 1998). However, the respondents felt that older generations were particularly resistant to allowing new changes to their farming practices, which creates conflicts. Specifically, intergenerational differences are often a stressor for farming families (Zimmerman and Fetsch, 2013).

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1994). In particular, the young women farmers in this study felt that older farmers in general continued working in the same ways they always have because they felt what worked did so for “a good reason” and therefore, should not change, even if newer practices were more efficient, ideal, practical, or safe for use on their farms. Additionally, gender also impacts these generational differences between young women farmers and older farmers. As mentioned in Chapter 3, respondent Susan’s experience with her father demonstrated that because of her gender, she was not taught certain tasks, and also, because she was young, he did not take her ideas seriously until they were brought up by someone older and more established. Arguably, young women are taken less seriously than young men, which hinders the potential for young women farmers to make changes to outdated “traditional” practices. As such, gendered views further impact interactions between young women and older (male) farmers, thereby adding yet another barrier to intergenerational differences found in farming.

This view created a contradiction for the respondents in the study. Some respondents continued using traditional practices because they were raised on a family farm, and that was the way they were taught as children – which this exposure from an early age paired with many years of experience often makes young farmers “better-equipped” to continue farming (Haalboom 2013, 5). Vera contradicts her earlier statement on archaic practices for beef cattle, in that she feels the dairy industry with all its advancements has “gone cold” because of the focus on numbers for nutrition, milk quotas, and breeding, whereas the beef industry is still “warm” because they are still more “hands on” and private – or rather, not regulated by a quota system. Likewise, Maxine contradicts a different notion of “traditional” in that her farm still maintains traditions on the farm, despite changing the methods used to do so. For example, once the
harvest is completed, Maxine and her family go out for dinner. Maxine grew up in this tradition, but unlike her grandfather, uses newer methods to harvest her crops. Young women farmers claim “traditional” farming as something that their “grandparents did” but contradict themselves as they often maintain some aspects of “traditional” farming in their own practices. This demonstrates a slight change in the status quo from past notions of “traditional”, while maintaining some aspects of tradition in modern farming. However, it is not unusual for farmers to engage in both traditional and newer practices.

Other views on “traditional” farming from young women farmers are that being successful at farming meant running the operation as the sole source of income for the family. Traditional farming families do not have to rely on other sources of income, like an off-farm job, in order to survive. Respondent Sonia noted that a successful “traditional” farm is one that “pays for itself” by selling what it produces as the only income for the household. She considered her operation a successful one by that definition. This then suggests that “traditional” farming is viewed as successful when it produces enough to sell in order to have financial gains rather than breaking even or suffering losses. However, in the current economic environment, earning enough income from farm production alone is difficult. Approximately 44.4 per cent of Canadian farm operators also do off-farm work to supplement their total income. (Statistics Canada 2017a), which suggests that this definition of “traditional” farming is unattainable for nearly half of the farming population.

A few of the young women farmers who did not come from farming backgrounds struggled to answer the question. For example, new dairy farmer Rita felt that because she was so new to farming, she did not have a proper “visual” for what “traditional” farming meant to
Young women who enter the industry without family farming backgrounds do not have enough information or lived experiences to adequately describe traditional aspects of farming. New young farmers are also disadvantaged in this regard because they lack the same sense of belonging and commitment to the farming lifestyle as young farmers who were raised on family farms have (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2010, 12; Haalboom 2013). However, rural areas are open to change, reflecting the “values, imaginaries, and mobilities of a shifting demographic” (Ngo and Brklacich 2014, 63). Thus, if more young women without farming backgrounds enter the industry, it is possible then, while they are a noticeable minority group in the community, that they could change agricultural traditions as they become more involved over time, therefore altering the meaning of “traditional” farming from their own non-farming perspectives. As discussed in the literature review, new young women farmers can also introduce various forms of alternative agriculture into the “tradition” of farming in Canada (Krug 2003; Sumner 2005; Hall and Mogyorody 2007).

It is important to note that while some forms of “traditional” farming are still practised by young women farmers today, many technological advancements in society have changed how farms are operated. Notably, a great majority of the respondents in this study use some form of modern innovation, technology, or communications in their farming practices. It is an important facet of discussion as these factors greatly impact the ways that family farms are operated now and likely in the future.

### 4.2.1 Innovation, Technology, and Communication

Young farmers today are more likely to use new innovations, technologies, and communications available in their farming operations (McKillop, Heanue, and Kinsella 2018,
These modern methods of farming provide assistance to farmers by lessening labour requirements or easing the difficulty of existing physical demand on the farm. Communications in this chapter refers to the massive influence of the Internet and social media on agricultural operations, including activism, advertising, and communication with others all over the world. While many of these opportunities are available to farmers to use, they are still difficult to access or, as some respondents stated, difficult to outright “afford” to bring them in. In this study, however, many of the young women farmers that were interviewed made mention of some form of innovation, technology, or modern communication that they used in their farming operation, further changing the definition of “traditional” farming.

Innovation among young women farmers is varied. Innovation also includes “best management practices” that Doreen mentioned, as it requires farmers to evolve their current practices to something more modern and efficient. In certain sectors, however, tasks require more “hands-on” approaches than others, such as manually harvesting a small plot of vegetables versus using a combine to harvest acres of wheat or corn. However, each respondent noted that they had ways of reducing the hard labour required for their farming tasks through innovation and creativity. Some young women farmers created new innovations of their own. Respondent Allie said she had experience using an old, modified cement mixer to wash freshly picked vegetables. It was far faster than doing it by hand, and the mixer held many vegetables at one time. Respondent Erica used a new invention that helped clean horse stalls by sorting good bedding from manure over a wheelbarrow rather than doing so by hand with a shavings fork, saving her a large amount of time.

In agricultural sectors that make use of mechanical innovations, young women farmers
often view these new innovations as “investments” as many of them, like tractors and their implements are incredibly expensive, and therefore need to be paid off over time rather than bought all at once. This also extends to purchasing upgrades for existing machinery. Respondent Meg recalls when she first started with her partner that the farm operation they inherited had been “stagnant” before she started suggesting how they should move forward, which included purchasing new tractors and a hay baler in order to promote their hay baling business. Investing in innovation provides young women farmers the means to “update” farming operations, keeping up with a more modern form of agriculture, even if the innovations are small, hand-operated tools to help with daily tasks, or purchasing a new tractor to help expand business. New farming technologies reduce a demand for farm labour and increases farm efficiency (Pouliot 2011, 12). Innovations also provide opportunity to move forward with the agricultural industry as opposed to being “stagnant.”

In this study, five of the 15 research respondents were active dairy farmers and used some form of modern innovations and technologies in their farming practices. These respondents used a Total Mixed Ration (TMR) mixer-wagon for feeding cattle, robotic milking parlours, and automatic calf feeders. These innovations have been credited by the respondents as beneficial to their livestock as well as timesaving measures when it comes to doing chores. As Vera indicated in the previous section, the dairy industry is more advanced in terms of the use of innovative practices and technologies than others. Often, this innovative equipment has become a standard in the dairy industry to ensure that milk production is at its best and most efficient. While dairy farmers still need to do physical chores themselves, the robotic milk parlours allow cattle to enter the diary at their leisure and be milked until completion, digitally keeping track of the amount
milked from each cow. Dairy remains semi-automated, although full automation has become standard in some industries, such as the poultry sector – in which, as respondent Bridget describes, broiler and layer chickens are fed and watered via computer. Some of the dairy farmers in this study also utilized a more digital form of technology for record-keeping of their cows and their milking statistics, which, like the robotic milking parlour, used a radio collar and data profiles. Many of these programs are transferrable to applications accessed via smart phones. Smart phone usage is imperative to many of these farm practices. Many other digital applications are used by crop and vegetable growers to predict weather patterns, identify weeds, and check their fields from above using satellite technology. These kinds of applications are easily accessible and usable for today’s farmers.

As smart phones became widely available, more people gained mobile access to social media accounts. For many young women farmers in this study, social media plays a substantial role in their daily lives. Social media is used for more than just a personal use. Farmers often use social media to promote their production and the services offered on the farm. Seven of the respondents in this study used Facebook to advertise their farm, promote and sell goods, livestock and services, seek connections in the agricultural community in groups, and read ag-related news. Three of the 15 respondents were active members on Twitter, who sought connections in the community and promoted agricultural awareness. Another fifth of respondents used Instagram to promote their farms, posting pictures of daily operations and tasks as they occurred during the day. Social media in this regard is used to ‘correct’ anti-agriculture attitudes on social media that have become recently prevalent online. Respondents Debbie and Vera noted that they wanted to dispel many of the myths and rumours about agriculture through their social
media accounts by showing viewers what they do on their farms. Agricultural awareness and education on social media have become important for farmers to counteract organizations and movements like *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)*\(^8\) that promote misunderstood or untrue facts about animals and farming. Vera in particular felt that, while PETA seemed to have a wide-base of support, the comments on anti-agriculture Facebook posts that she saw were often “fifty per cent vegan, fifty per cent pro-agriculture”, which demonstrates that advocates for agriculture are using social media to counteract anti-agriculture opinions and correct misinformation. Other pro-agriculture pages have become prominent on social media; Vera mentions individuals like “Farmer Tim”\(^9\) that are “opening their barn to the Internet.”

Young women farmers also use social media to seek information. For example: respondent Erica said she used Facebook and other social media sites to promote and advertise open stalls for her horse boarding facility; Vera said she found out that “4-H animals need to be vaccinated against rabies” through Facebook; and Debbie mentioned that social media can be useful to help with learning certain skills – in particular, she learned how to livestream and film her farming activities with the help of a tutorial found on YouTube. Social media in this regard is valued as a useful tool for young women farmers who wish to spread awareness and education about agriculture and learn from it for their own farming practices.

However, it is important to note that in this study, two respondents were against the use of social media for both personal and farming purposes. Let it be noted that even though both respondents were against social media use, they still used smart phones and the Internet for


personal and professional use. Respondent Sonia felt that there was no need to “brag” about her farming accomplishments to others on social media, and that she did not spend time on social media promoting her livestock. Karen felt strongly that social media was a “big time sink” – and more importantly, described it as something where “[…] people are bombarded with information constantly. And to me, what makes an impression on people is how you live your life and how you can speak truthfully to someone, face-to-face, eye-to-eye, and I try to make those relationships count in promoting our industry.” Contrary to Vera and Debbie’s views, Karen values personal connections over online connections as means to make meaningful impressions and promotion for the agricultural industry. As Karen said, the constant bombardment of information via social media may overwhelm people, while promoting misleading or untrue information. While these views were held by a minority of the respondents, they are still important to understand; they are not necessarily upholding a “traditional” view given that they use other modern technologies, but rather, they hold a view that stands against both misinformation as well as the exponential expansion of digitized social interaction.

All in all, social media plays a prominent role in the ways that young women farmers are interacting with those within the agricultural industry and those outside of it. Pairing social media use with other new innovations and technologies, young women farmers are changing the face of farming practices by experimenting and moving away from more “traditional” methods of farming. While many of these practices are still relatively new to the current generation of farmers, these practices are due to become a prominent part of the new, modern era of “traditional” – meaning that social media will likely be a strong component in farmers’ lives in the future.
4.3 Inheritance and Succession

Inheritance and succession planning derive from the patrilineal culture in farming, with the expectation that property ownership of a farm and its land is to be passed on from father to son. However, in the modern era, farm succession practices have changed significantly. To clarify, succession is defined as the transfer of the management of the farm business and inheritance is the transfer of ownership of assets (Wheeler, Bjornlund, Zuo, and Edwards 2012, 268). Notably, it is rare to find multi-generational farms in Canada today (Pouliot 2011). The process of inheritance and succession has become much more complex than its previous, historical version. As noted in the literature review, inheritance and succession practices are often delayed as young people are delaying their entry into farming by attending post-secondary school at the same rate as the general population (Ahearn 2016, 1). Older farmers are also staying on the farm longer because they do not want to retire and transfer ownership of the farm (Epps 2017; Uchiyama, Lobley, Errington, and Yanagimura, 2008) because the farm and its land are considered their “retirement security” (Martz and Brueckner 2003; 141; Pouliot 2011; Epps 2017, 5). Older farmers are thus delaying inheritance and succession planning, which can result in a loss of the farm if no inheritance or succession plan is in place (Epps 2017). Additionally, corporate take-over of farms has also pushed out many traditional, small-scale family farms, which eliminates a dependence on inheritance and succession planning (Haalboom 2013; Mills 2013). With these factors in mind, inheritance and succession planning for farmers today is more complex than their predecessors.

Today, however, young women farmers are taking on the mantle of inheritance, further altering familial traditions in agriculture. When young women are sole farm operators, they have
access to the decision-making process, which includes inheritance and succession planning for the future. Family status of the respondents determined the ways in which they answered the question; the respondents in this study who came from family farming backgrounds mentioned some aspects of inheritance and succession from their parents, while the respondents who were pregnant or who had children discussed their plans for the future of their farms with their own children. However, while inheritance and succession planning are a vital part in the continuation of the family farm, it is important to note that the respondents in this study did not place a great emphasis on inheritance and succession planning when they were asked what they saw themselves doing in five to ten years’ time. This suggests that young women farmers do not currently believe it is necessary to create succession plans or discuss inheritance with family members, which is likely because they themselves are young, and their children are still quite young as well. For the respondents, a time frame of five to ten years does not dictate the need to plan for a long-term future.

For the current context of succession planning, Uchiyama et al. (2008) found in their comparative study of farm business succession in Canada, England, the United States, and Japan, that Canada had “few problems in farm business succession” (2008, 45) likely influenced by early retirement schemes and succession planning initiatives as led by the Canadian Farm Business Management Council – now known as Farm Management Canada.\textsuperscript{10} However, Uchiyama et al. (2008) do not reference women in their study and the affect of gender on succession. It is noted in Forbes-Chilibeck that Canadian farm succession and inheritance tends to focus on male children (2005, 27), which may create difficulties for young women interested

in taking over the family farm. Additionally, other issues may arise. Often, a clash of operating styles between the parent and their successor can occur; the parent may be more fiscal with their money while the child may be more of a risk-taker (Taylor, Norris, and Howard, 1998) which may cause disagreements and hesitation in going ahead with succession. In Taylor et al., it was found that all successors in their study on Canadian family farms experienced a difference of opinion when they wanted to try a new way of farming for the operation (1998, 563). These differences were a part of a broader power struggle between generations and was resolved only when parents gave legal ownership to children, relinquished some control of farming operations, and created a legal partnership that “spelled out how the final transfer [of property] would occur” (Taylor et al. 1998, 563). Lobley, Baker, and Whitehead (2010) suggest that intergenerational farm families may have further conflicts as they often avoid discussing the issues surrounding the process of succession altogether.

Notably, when comparing Canada to other Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries, the results are similar. For example, in Australia, most agricultural enterprises are still family farm businesses. Succession is important because it plays a “significant role in the long-term viability of individual farms” (Wheeler et al. 2012, 266). The most significant predictor in succession planning and practice was farm size. Larger farms tended to have more capital, therefore leading to higher incomes for operators (Wheeler et al. 2012, 269). Notably, Australian farmers tend to discuss succession planning more so than Canadian farmers (Wheeler et al. 2012). However, the number of farms being transferred to a successor is declining in Australia. The suggested cause of this decrease is a shift in focus on the well-being and education of children than the handing off of the family farm (Wheeler et al.
Despite this, it is suggested that farming in Australia and similar settings is likely to remain family-based for the immediate future (Wheeler et al. 2012, 268). Additionally, Lobley et al. (2010) have a comparative study drawing on data collected from the international FARMTRANSFERS project developed by Errington and Lobley (2002), that examines farming data in England, France, Canada, and the United States. In their comparison, Lobley et al. (2010) found that the “number of daughter or daughter-in-law successors internationally is low” (Lobley et al. 2010, 53). For Ontario, they found that less than 10 per cent of respondents had female successors, which was roughly the same for Quebec, the state of New Jersey in the United States, and Australia (Lobley et al. 2010, 54).

In this research study, young women farmers who run family-owned farming operations have some kind of succession plan in place, or at least, an idea of what succession will look like in the future. Debbie noted that she was trying to get her parents to do more planning for the future, emphasizing its importance for their large family. She noted how important it was to figure out the division between family members and doing so without “hurting people’s feelings.” As mentioned in the previous paragraph, succession can often “give rise to deep-seated and prolonged family conflict” (Wheeler et al. 2012, 267). One respondent, Ruby, had a set plan in which her parents’ farm would be sold, and the funds split between herself and her four sisters equally, unless one of them wanted to buy the farm at market value. Notably, respondents in the 31 to 35 year age range, like Bridget, Sonia, and Rita, had already inherited or bought out their parents’ farms at the time of the interviews. Family status can also complicate succession planning, leaving those involved in a place of uncertainty towards the future. For example, Vera noted that her parents were going through a divorce – she felt that it was not just a matter of
splitting the value of a house with the contents within but trying to split a “really big backyard” of farmland – and thus, figuring out what will be left to inherit between herself and two brothers is difficult to plan for currently. It is still “on hold.” Another example of family status affecting inheritance and succession planning is how respondent Joan talks about how her parents’ divorce was what led her to moving in with her father. If Joan had not stayed with her father, she would not currently be operating the family farm, and it would not have a current successor. Lastly, young women farmers who plan to have children or already have children have a desire to see their farms continue in the future. However, given that their children are still very young, the respondents could only hope that their children would continue to be interested in farming as they got older. Notably, for young women farmers in this study, their children’s gender was irrelevant to succession planning. They were more focused on how they did not want to pressure their children into taking over the farm if farming was not something they were interested in as teenagers and young adults. As respondent Rita said, “you don’t have to have a plan in stone, but a plan in place” with regards to her children’s interest in farming and creating a succession plan for their future.

Young women farmers are changing the patrilineal tradition of father to son inheritance. For the respondents in this study, succession planning does not rely on gender so much as it does on availability and capacity for doing so. Ten of fifteen respondents came from family farming backgrounds, and currently work as sole farm operators for those farms today. Evidently, these young women were able to inherit or purchase the family farm without gender discrimination. For example, Susan described that she decided she did not want to continue her university education and came home to “run a dairy farm” with her father. As she was one of two
daughters, gender was not a factor in allowing her to become the eventual successor, despite her and her father’s difficult relationship discussed in Chapter 3. Bridget, a poultry farmer, explained that her parents initially asked her if she wanted to purchase the farm after she completed high school. She declined at the time and continued with post-secondary education. She worked in the financial sector for a decade before coming back and purchasing the farm. She did not discuss any gendered difficulty in doing so and felt that purchasing the farm “opened a lot of doors” for her in terms of opportunities and knowledge. Respondent Sonia, a dairy farmer, told the story of how her father had a severe heart attack when she was in her early twenties. She returned home, continued university, and worked on the farm. Over time, she continued farming as the sole operator and key decision-maker. Gender was not an issue for Sonia. These examples demonstrate that inheritance and succession are more modern than the traditional parochial property transfer regime that founded patrilineal culture in Canadian farming. This creates equal opportunity for young women to farm alongside their male peers. As young women are now sole farm operators, they have decision-making power for the future of their own farming operations. As such, the gender of their children is irrelevant when it comes to inheritance and succession planning. Rather, they are more focused on maintaining their children’s interest in farming as they age.

4.4 Relationships

Young women farmers’ relationships are necessary to discuss. While their relationships are not something that greatly changes the Canadian family farm, they continue to enforce the family structure of traditional agriculture. Ten of the respondents in the interview part of the study had male partners; eight of those respondents were married. Two respondents were single
but expressed that they preferred dating men. Three respondents did not specify or mention anything regarding their relationships. No respondent was declared common-law or previously divorced. Six married couples in the study were pregnant or had young children, whereas coupled but not married partners did not have children. In the online survey portion of this study with a total of 74 respondents, 24 respondents were single, 16 respondents were married, 11 were common-law, 23 were in a relationship, and once again, none of the respondents were divorced or previously married. In Canada, the average age of first marriage for women is 29.6.\(^{11}\) Compared to this average, the young women farmers in this study are marrying slightly earlier than the national average. Unfortunately, this data was last collected in 2008, and newer information will be more accurate.

Young women farmers with male partners therefore dominated the study sample from the interviews. While this does not change the traditional nuclear structure of the farming family, the respondents in this study did not mention any discriminatory issues in their romantic relationships when asked about any gendered difficulties they experienced. It is also noted in the literature review that a “heterosexual gender regime” is required by patrilineal culture in order to maintain power over women and resources (Price 2012, 255). However, it is evident in these partnerships that the women involved had more or less equal standing with men when it came to labour – although, as mentioned in the previous chapter, women still took on more of the domestic duties and child-care than men did. The structure of the farm family still remains visibly heterosexual with the societal expectation that they will raise children, but women share

equal decision-making roles and therefore, hold power within their relationships.

However, Canadian family farming continues to uphold a heteronormative tradition, in which women are expected to date men, get married, produce children, and grow old with their male partners. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) representation in the agricultural community is rare\textsuperscript{12,13}, and often, farming individuals are not comfortable “coming out” due to the traditional conservative and religious views held within the agricultural community. Unfortunately, heteronormativity in farming is a tradition that has yet to change, and more research will be needed to investigate the prevalence of LGBTQ+ farmers and their impacts on the traditional Canadian family farm.

That said, for the young women farmers in this study who “remain single by choice”, they are breaking the norm held by society for young women. They are choosing to live by their own direction without a partner, which in of itself is changing the structure of the family farm. This is not to say that they will not someday chose to pursue a partner or a family, but as it stands, single young women farmers who are opting to “go it alone” in seeking an agricultural farming career, are not dissimilar to women in other areas of employment who are career-oriented. Once again, more research is needed to investigate the notion of farming as a “career”, especially in the era of large corporate farms and agribusinesses in the industry and the resulting impacts on family farms, which goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

4.5 Children

Just as young women farmers are the next generation of farmers, their children are key to the future in agriculture. The young women farmers who were interviewed in this study were in the age bracket of 18 to 35, which is the timeframe when women typically choose to have children. The respondents were at various life stages. On average, those that were in the 31-35 age bracket had one or more children, while respondents that were between the 26-30 age bracket had one child or were pregnant with their first child. Ten respondents, with a majority of them under the age of 25, did not have children, but some expressed their desire in having children in the future. Of the young women farmers who had children, all were under the age of 12. This wide range gave a variety of responses about the involvement of children now and in the future.

Young women farmers and their partners allowed their children to take on small roles on the farm, which was often similar to their own experiences growing up. These tasks included feeding livestock or sweeping barn aisles. These tasks were often used to keep children preoccupied while the respondents did their own farm chores. This allowed children, even at a very young age, to become involved on the farm and become familiar with the processes involved, and it gave young women farmers an opportunity to work from home while watching their children. Notably, children’s strong farm family orientation is constructed “within the context of frequent and meaningful work activities on the farm” (Wiley, Bogg, and Ho 2005, 1). Farming parents want their children to be involved on the farm to become future successors with enough learned skill to continue the operation (Wiley et al. 2005). However, gender roles found in farming carry over into parenting. Boys are more often taught to operate tractors and other
heavy equipment than girls (Stoneman and Jinnah 2017) – and this was demonstrated earlier in Chapter 3 with respondent Susan’s experience, in which her father did not teach her how to drive tractors nor maintain them as a child. Additionally, fathers are more often responsible for supervision when children are using tractors or heavy equipment than mothers are (Stoneman and Jinnah 2017, 251).

However, farming mothers still have a central role in socializing their children to farm or not to farm, as well as providing non-farm socialization (Wiley et al. 2005). Respondent Bridget, who had four young children, noted that farming “gives us the flexibility to be at home with our children, and being able to raise the children ourselves as opposed to sending them off to daycare at one year old.” This suggests that farming allows mothers to spend time with their children, “raising them ourselves” on the farm, and in the ways that young women farmers deem acceptable for their own children. Raising children on the farm then can alleviate women’s need to further divide their labour; women can “multitask” by working on the farm while also keeping their children at home rather than sending them off to daycare like many mothers who have a workplace away from home. This gives farm children a unique childhood compared to “city kids” wherein farm children are exposed to livestock and crops, while learning important aspects like responsibility and the importance of their contribution to the farm household (Wiley et al. 2005). However, farm children may experience difficulties with this responsibility to farming. Farm children tend to be less involved in extracurricular activities than non-farm children and spend many hours working on the farm, especially during on-season times (Wiley et al. 2005, 3), therefore, spending more time at home and less with other non-farm children.

As mentioned, many young women farmers grew up on family farms from a young age.
Therefore, they earned their farming knowledge from firsthand experience. The motto of the youth organization 4-H (4-H Canada 2018) is “learn to do by doing” – this motto can thereby be applied to those who grew up on farms, learning by doing the tasks at hand with some guidance from parents or mentors. From this perspective, young women farmers who come from family farms are able to pass on their knowledge to their own children in the same way. Therefore, the children of young women farmers who are active as sole farm operators are learning these valuable skills from their mothers – as they grow up and become more involved with tasks on the farm, they are able to see their mothers as mentors in farming, which was not as common in the past as women were rarely in a mentorship role. Children are able to then see both parents – male and female – as equal contributors to their farming education. As noted in the literature review, young women farmers do not often have older women as mentors (CBC News 2016), but now as young women farmers are taking on these roles with their own children, they will be able to provide mentorship for the next generation. Therefore, young women farmers who choose to have children are changing the structure of the family farm by becoming educators and mentors for their own children, along with others in the agricultural community.

4.6 Conclusion

As the next generation in agriculture, young women farmers are changing the traditional Canadian family farm. Traditionally, family farms consisted of a nuclear family, in which women controlled the domestic realm of the farmhouse while their husbands operated the farm and committed to physical labour. With young women taking the helm as sole farm operators, they are challenging this “traditional” notion in several ways. Young women farmers are more current in their agricultural practices than their parents and grandparents and use a number of
technological innovations to promote their operations. However, age and gender are two important factors that hinder the acceptance of young women farmers’ contributions and ideas on the farm. Further, young women farmers are bringing changes to the traditionally patrilineal system of inheritance and succession by including their children as potential successors, regardless of gender. Young women farmers’ children are also allowed small participatory roles on the farm, but most importantly, they have the opportunity to learn from their mothers as mentors, and not just their fathers. However, despite these advancements, young women farmers often maintain heteronormative relationships found within patrilineal culture, though there are few exceptions within the study. While these changes to traditional Canadian family farming are brought on by a small sample of young women farmers, they are indicative of greater structural changes for future generations of farmers.

While small-scale farms are becoming less common (Statistics Canada 2017c), the tradition of family farming remains dominant in Canadian agriculture. It is crucial then to understand how modern family farms are run and organized in order to benefit them through governmental financial programming and through agricultural organizations. Specifically, as more young women are sole operators of modern family farms, it is pertinent to understand their perspectives and direct policy suggestions to accommodate their needs. The following chapter discusses current agricultural policies in depth in order to understand the current governmental context for farmers in Canada. It also discusses the role of agricultural organizations and their respective programming for young women farmers and provides suggestions for future policy.
5 Chapter 5 – Agricultural Policy, Organizations, and Representation

5.1 Introduction

Using financial assistance is a common practice in the agricultural industry. A great amount of capital is required to start up farms, especially given high input costs and the price of land (Pouliot 2011). As discussed in Chapter 2, young people often do not have the economic means to purchase farms and older farmers simply cannot afford to sell their farms below market cost (Haalboom 2013, 5). This creates one of the largest barriers to entry for young farmers, especially for those that are new to farming and do not inherit a family farm. Young women farmers in this study were asked if they knew of any governmental policies that helped farmers like themselves financially to advance their current position in the industry. Many were unable to name policies, but they were able to name several programs available through various agricultural organizations. The respondents were then asked if they worked or volunteered for any of these agricultural organizations, and if they felt that they were adequately represented within those organizations. This chapter intends to highlight the issues of promotion and availability surrounding agricultural aid, at both the governmental and organizational levels, while incorporating the respondents’ experiences regarding representation as young women farmers in the industry, relative to their visibility in the agricultural community as a whole.

5.2 Agricultural Policy

For the purposes of this chapter, agricultural policies that are for financial aid for young women farmers will be used. This section will mainly focus on Canadian agriculture policies, but it will also examine policies found within the province of Ontario. Important policies provided
by the government will be highlighted and briefly examined for their benefits for young women farmers. Going further than a base level examination of these agricultural policies is beyond the scope of this thesis.

5.2.1 Governmental Agriculture Policies: Canada

11 of 15 respondents in this study were not able to name agricultural policies from the government that were geared towards helping young women farmers like themselves. The remaining four respondents that were able to name agricultural policies mentioned Farm Credit Canada (FCC)\(^ {14} \), Canada’s Economic Action Plan (EAP)\(^ {15} \), and Growing Forward 2 (GF2)\(^ {16} \), which is a federal-provincial-territorial policy program, and in Ontario is run by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)\(^ {17} \). First, Farm Credit Canada is a “financially self-sustaining federal Crown corporation reporting to Parliament through the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.”\(^ {18} \) FCC lends money and provides other services to primary producers, agri-food operations and agribusinesses that provide inputs and add value to agriculture. The Farm Credit Act was first introduced in 1959,\(^ {19} \) and FCC continues to provide specialized and personalized business and financial services and products to farming operations, which includes family farms, and businesses that are related to farming. FCC is also responsible

for agricultural awareness campaigns such as “Ag More Than Ever”\textsuperscript{20} and the “FCC Vision.”\textsuperscript{21} 
Farm Credit Canada was mentioned by a few of the respondents. Primarily, a “Young Farmer Loan”, or rather, the “FCC Starter Loan”\textsuperscript{22} was referenced most by the respondents in this study when referring to FCC as a whole. A “Young Farmer Loan” gives young farmers the opportunity to build credit. It is designed for those between 18 and 25 years of age and does not have any fees for loan processing. It also offers special interest rates. Respondent Susan detailed that “…we just bought land next door and they put it in as a Young Farmer Loan […] I think it’s because there’s no fees and they can go slightly lower on interest. Um, so that’s good.” Due to no fees for taking out a loan and a lower interest rate, Susan felt that taking out a “Young Farmer Loan” was a viable option. These are beneficial options, but in the end, it is still a loan that needs to be paid back. Respondent Meg detailed her experience with FCC:

“[…] I do know of young farmer grants from Farm Credit Canada, because we have a couple! (laughs). Um like that’s how we bought – oh, we bought a new-to-us combine – that’s how we got a combine. So Farm Credit has been really great to us. They see that my boyfriend and I are 22 and running our own farm, and my boyfriend’s younger brother, who is a full-time truck driver, so he’s not here a lot, but he helps us out with buying equipment for us sometimes. But he’s only 19. So, they were very happy to be like ‘Awesome, there’s a really young farmer here’ that they were pretty much willing to throw the money at us to get started, which was really great. But that’s about the only thing I can think of in terms of policy that would help me. Yeah.”

By being able to access this loan, Meg and her partner were able to invest in a used but “new” to them combine to harvest their crops. This is significant as combines, like other pieces of farm machinery, are an “investment” that many farms do not or cannot afford on their own. Meg also mentions her and her partner’s age, along with her partner’s younger brother. Age is an important incentive for FCC to approve of these loans, although their definition of “young” is about ten years younger than the average definition of “young farmer” is for both this study (18 to 35) and Statistics Canada (18 to 34) (Statistics Canada 2017a). While Meg and Susan described positive experiences with using FCC, Respondent Maxine contrasted their opinions. Maxine stated, “I know FCC – Farm Credit Canada – has some programs that help you out too, but then you’re kind of like, you’re locked into using FCC.” Maxine succinctly described the key issue with using a loan program, which is that it is something that must be paid back and therefore, the respondent of the program is “locked into” doing. While FCC is providing these opportunities for young farmers in Canada, they are through borrowing money rather than being awarded a scholarship or monetary aid, which can become difficult to pay back given the risk of investing in farming due to the high costs of operation and the low returns on agricultural production (Robinson 2008).

The second governmental program mentioned in this study is Canada’s Economic Action Plan (EAP). This program was launched in 2009 to “fight the effects of the global recession.”23 By concentrating stimulus spending over a period of two years, the Government of Canada boosted the economy through the creation of jobs. The majority of these infrastructure programs

were completed by March 31, 2011, and the program has since completed. Respondent Debbie mentioned this policy program, but in the context that it is “for construction and medical, but I don’t ever see them saying, you know, there’s stuff for farmers here!” As such, the EAP is not for agriculture. More in general, respondent Ruby gives an explanation for how government funding like the EAP, could apply to agriculture as a business venture:

I feel like if you wanted to start a small business project, that they might help you with funding for that but I’m not sure because… it’s a live animal. It’s difficult to get a government or get funding on board for something that, unfortunately, you could walk outside and it could be dead the next day. So I think it’s probably limited, if you can get funding.

Despite Ruby’s assumption of agriculture as a small business, like Debbie insinuated, the EAP does not have any agricultural components. Since then, the policy has come to its end, and the original EAP website no longer exists. Evidently, these respondents were not made aware of these changes, and assumed that they were still in place. This is yet another example of the lack of current information available to young women farmers regarding their options for financial aid from the government as the EAP is not for agriculture. Arguably, more advertisements or public announcements are needed to ensure that the general public understands what policies are available to them in the present, what policies are now in the past, and what policies will be available to them in the future.

Currently, the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) section of the Canadian Government has a fundamental feature to the framework of their agricultural policy. Starting in 2008, the Canadian federal and provincial/territorial governments implemented the first five-year “Growing Forward” policy agreement which was used to address “competitiveness, innovation, environment, and provided a “suite of […] business risk management (BRM) programs (Scott,
Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 545-546; Deaton and Boxal 2017) which assisted risk management for agricultural producers. However, these programs offer more whole-farm support than offering production incentives, which means that BRM programs focus more on supporting finances for the farm rather than providing benefits or subsidies for producing a specific commodity. BRM programs offer protection from market volatility and market disasters. (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017). It is noted that the degree of effectiveness of these programs is due to the ways that subsidy is built into their structure; each program’s premiums are subsidized by the government in some way (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 560). The BRM suite offers four key programs: AgriInvest\(^{24}\), AgriStability\(^{25}\), AgriInsurance\(^{26}\), and AgriRecovery.\(^{27}\) Since then, both Growing Forward (GF) and Growing Forward 2 (GF2) policy agreements have been retired. In a period of ten years, changes were made to the BRM policies.

Firstly, AgriInvest provided farmers with managing small income declines and supports investments to “mitigate risks or improve market income.” (AAFC 2010b). An AgriInvest account was set up with a financial institution so that participating farmers could make annual contributions up to “1.5% of allowable net sales (ANS) where ANS was capped at $1.5 million per producer” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 546). These contributions were then matched by a government contribution and the account itself earned interest, like a savings account. Withdrawals were allowed at any time. Under the GF2 policy framework, the rules


changed for both producer and matching government contributions: the producer limit was increased from “1.5% of ANS to 100% of ANS” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 547), but only the first one per cent was matched by the government. The policy changes also implemented a limit on annual matching government contributions to $15,000. However, the account balance for the producer was allotted to “400% of ANS” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 546). These changes allowed producers to have greater flexibility with their account in order to set aside funds for future withdrawals for income shortfalls, but then also resulted in “reduced support from the program provided through government matching contributions” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 546).

Secondly, AgriStability is a program that intended to protect producers against large decreases in farm income (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017). Producers were eligible for an AgriStability payout if their program margin (i.e., eligible revenue minus eligible expenses) falls below “a reference margin” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 546). In the original GF policy, the payment amount depended on the degree that the program margin fell short of the reference margin. Program margin deficits that were within fifteen per cent of the reference margin were not covered by the program (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017). If the program margin was below 85 per cent of the reference margin, the coverage “increased with the degree of shortfall” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 546). For this service, producers paid an annual administration fee and a premium. AgriStability changed under the GF2 policy: first, instead of a 15 per cent deficit that was required to trigger a payout, producers now needed 30 per cent; secondly, payouts were “equal to 70 per cent of the eligible decline, regardless of the degree of decline” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 547); and finally, changes were
made to the calculation of the reference margin for eligibility of payout in that it now used the lesser of the historical average program margin and the historical average of allowable expenses (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 547). These changes impacted the amount of funds in the payout and likelihood of receiving a payout for producers, which then led to the reduced ability of the program to “support and stabilize farm incomes” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 547).

Thirdly, AgriInsurance provided producer insurance “against economic losses from natural hazards associated with production” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 546). This includes natural events such as drought, excessive moisture, fire caused by lightning, frost, flood, hail, insect infestations, wind, snow, wildlife-related damage, and other perils as designated by the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017). This form of insurance is not new, as crop insurance has existed for many years beforehand (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017). The cost of this insurance is shared between the federal and provincial governments and the producers. Appropriately, specific levels of coverage and pricing change based on provincial jurisdiction. Unlike AgriInvest and AgriStability, AgriInsurance remained unchanged from the shift in policy programming from GF to GF2.

Lastly, the AgriRecovery framework is a disaster relief framework “intended to work together with the core BRM programs to help agricultural producers recover from natural disasters.” This program also can extend beyond natural disasters. For example, in November

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of 2016, the Canadian Government stepped in to assist Albertan beef producers in dealing with bovine tuberculosis and the “extraordinary costs” as a result of quarantine measures.\textsuperscript{30} Much like AgriInsurance, this program has not seen changes since its formation in 2008. AgriRecovery is cost-shared on a “60:40 basis”\textsuperscript{31} between the federal government and participating provinces or territories.

Overall, Canadian public BRM programs “do reduce risk, although more through subsidization rather than true stabilization” (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017, 544). At the time of this study, Growing Forward 2 has since completed its five-year time frame, expiring in March of 2018 (Scott, Trautman, and Unterschultz 2017). Therefore, it is imperative to discuss the newest framework that the Canadian Government has put into place. The “Canadian Agricultural Partnership” (CAP)\textsuperscript{32} is set for another five-year term from 2018 to 2022. This is an ambitious move forward from GF2. The previous four programs (AgriStability, AgriInvest, AgriInsurance, and AgriRecovery) are still in place under CAP, but changes have been put into place to each of them. For AgriStability, the Reference Margin Limit (RML) has changed to guarantee that all producers will get “at least 70 per cent of their Reference Margin”\textsuperscript{33} CAP assures that the RML will continue to give assistance for significant income losses that threaten the viability of producers’ farms. CAP also states that a “late participation mechanism” has been added so that provincial and territorial governments can allow producers to enter the program


\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
late in situations “where there is a significant income decline and a gap in participation”\(^{34}\) in order to ensure that all producers can access the program in case of a significant revenue decrease. CAP has also shifted funding from the Allowable Net Sales (ANS) of AgriInvest to $1 million from $1.5 million, and it has limited government matching contributions to $10,000 per AgriInvest account, down from the previous $15,000.\(^{35}\) To further accommodate funding, producers are now required to pay a minimum payment of $250 as opposed to the previous $75, and the same has been applied to AgriStability. Furthermore, the AAFC is holding the BRM program under review to assess program effectiveness and their impacts on growth and innovation in the agricultural industry.\(^{36}\)

All of these federal BRM programs are easily accessible via the Internet. Yet, the respondents in this study have an explicit lack of awareness toward the BRM suite. It is incredibly telling that not a single respondent was able to list these programs, despite their recent changes and updates in early 2018. The federal BRM programs are available for young women farmers to use, but there is little to no promotion or advertising that outlines how farmers can access and earn sponsorship or financial aid through the government.

Again, while the respondents were able to name policy programs like Farm Credit Canada and the Canadian Economic Action Plan, many of them were neither able to describe them in any detail nor did they understand the specific requirements to apply from memory without looking it up. Two of the respondents, Allie and Bridget, were able to list Growing


\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) Ibid.
Forward 2, and Bridget in particular knew that through GF2, anyone can apply, but as a producer with quota\textsuperscript{37}, she was not able to apply for AgriStability or AgriInvest as those are for “non-quota-based individuals.” Allie also had some experience in using GF2 to attend an ag-related educational conference. She states that “[…] the amount of paperwork – it was just so intense to get a couple of hundred dollars back.” Allie insinuates that, despite having access to parts of the Growing Forward 2 program, there was a lot of excess paperwork, which denotes that it is a lengthy and difficult process without much of a financial gain. This is evident of a lack of accessibility to these programs. They are available to use, but extensive forms may limit some farmers from pursuing applications. Another limitation of these initiatives is the lack of promotion and advertising. Respondent Karen succinctly pointed out the key issue: “[…]if it’s not [promoted], how are you supposed to find out about it?” The lack of outreach, arguably, is the key barrier to preventing young farmers from accessing these programs. They cannot use these beneficial programs if they are not aware of their existence.

It is important to note that the programs under Growing Forward 2 and now the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, are applicable to all Canadian farmers who qualify, not just young or women farmers. While these various programs are useful to farmers generally, these programs do not focus on the additional issues that young women farmers have, based on their age and gender. Arguably, young women farmers would benefit from governmental programs that focus on young farmers, but more so if a program was created to help women. Specifically,

\textsuperscript{37}“Quota” is an aspect of Supply Management (SM) policy framework used in Canada that coordinates supply and demand of dairy, poultry and eggs through production, import control, and pricing designed to prevent surplus of supply and shortages. “Quota” is the license to produce and market certain products in Canada. There is a limitation of the amount in which a farmer can produce and sell. Quota represents a share of a market. (Chicken Farmers of Ontario. 2019. \url{https://www.ontariochicken.ca/Farmer-Member-Resources/Quota-Info}. Accessed: March 29, 2019).
based on the difficulties experienced by the respondents in this study, it would be beneficial to help young women farmers by subsidizing financial costs and promoting women’s involvement in the agricultural industry through advertising. While currently agricultural programs subsidize costs to some degree, having a specific program geared towards women farmers would also act as an incentive to encourage the young women to enter the industry as it would give them a financial step up and help promote women’s participation. Providing a program for young women farmers could include agriculture education opportunities, a creation of a social network specifically for young women farmers to connect with one another, and free promotion of their agricultural operations to the industry. However, as the population of farmers is predominantly male, and thereby, men maintain hegemonic control via patrilineal culture in farming, there may be political resistance to such a program, further providing another social barrier to young women farmers’ participation.

Moving forward, while there are limited agricultural policies from the Canadian Government, there are a number of agricultural organizations – at national, provincial, and local levels – that offer beneficial programs that the young women farmers in this study actively took part in. The following section will examine some of the organizations and their programs, as well as how young women felt represented within those organizations. This is important as programming provided by agricultural organizations can benefit young women farmers specifically, at an individual level. Agricultural organizations can also allow young women farmers the opportunity to have a voice and represent themselves to the agricultural community (Shortall 1994).
5.3 Agricultural Organizations

Agricultural organizations are a prominent feature in Canadian agriculture. Organizations vary in their purpose and contribution to the agricultural industry. From the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) of the Depression Era (Winson 1994) which was a political party made up of farmers, intellectuals, and labour groups, and had significant political success and later led to the foundation of the New Democratic Party, to local agricultural boards run by volunteer members, agricultural organizations play a vital role in the farming community. In 1933, the CCF contributed to advancing women’s rights at the time through the labour component of the Regina Manifesto which called for “equal reward and equal opportunities of advancement for equal services, irrespective of sex” (Winson 1994, 55). This progressive stance was the first of its kind. Many women were CCF party members, seeking to promote women’s rights among other issues, such as “cost of living, rent controls, and equal pay legislation.” (Azoulay 1995, 72). Historically, many women’s agricultural organizations provided farm women with the means of building community and connections with one another through shared experiences. Some rural women’s organizations and networks have been openly sympathetic to feminist goals and the promotion of women’s equality, although it is difficult to evaluate the influence of the feminist movement on these organizations (Teather 1996). As referred in Chapter 2, women’s agricultural organizations have played a vital role in the promotion of women’s inclusion and involvement in farming and lobbied their interests to the community and government to have their voices heard and influence policy (Shortall 1999; Tanner 1999). Organizations like the Canadian Farm Women’s Network (CFWN) provided the means for rural farm women to express their concerns and address a number of issues (Shortall 1994; 1999).
Over time, organizations like CFWN allowed women through their active participation to influence social change and government agricultural policy (Teather 1996; Shortall 1999). However, evidence of CFWN’s existence is no longer found online.\textsuperscript{38,39} As such, it is likely that the CFWN lost membership, funding, and outreach over time. It is possible that these outcomes occurred because farming women no longer felt the need for such an organization at the time, however, this is not a definitive cause.

With more women involved in agriculture today, agricultural organizations are targeting women farmers (Barbercheck et al, 2012). This suggests that some organizers are aware of women’s participation in the industry and that there is a need to provide them with support. Women who hold positions in these organizations gives them both a voice to be heard and visibility that accurately represents their gender in the industry. There are few organizations today that represent women farmers like the CFWN, such as the Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference\textsuperscript{40}, and the Ag Women’s Network.\textsuperscript{41} However, these organizations do not focus on young women farmers and their specific issues located at the intersection of age and gender.

The young women farmers in this study took part in a number of different agricultural organizations (\textit{see Appendix D}). 12 out of 15 respondents actively participated in these organizations to some capacity. Some of the respondents said they took part in “just 4-H” which

\textsuperscript{39} The address found on this website is no longer connected to the CFWN.
\textsuperscript{40} Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference. 2017. \url{https://www.advancingwomenconference.ca/}, \textit{Accessed:} March 4, 2019.
\textsuperscript{41} Ag Women’s Network. 2017. \url{http://www.agwomensnetwork.com} \textit{Accessed:} March 4, 2019.
was seen as a minimal time investment volunteer position, whereas other respondents had much more active roles such as being a Director for their respective association’s Board. Participation levels varied based on a few factors. Primarily, if the respondents had other priorities or were overburdened with their work-life balance, they found they did not have extra time to volunteer elsewhere. However, respondents like Rita did not want to exclude their potential participation later on in life, stating, “[…] my only excuse would be time at this point but it’s not something that I wouldn’t necessarily not do in the future.” When asked what Rita would be interested in volunteering for, she answered: “I don’t know! And that’s my other thing. I don’t know. I haven’t done any leg work or anything on it. I don’t know what’s out there or where the need is.”

As a new farmer, Rita found it difficult to know what organizations were available and what needed help. As stated in the previous section, promotional awareness around agricultural programming is often limited in its outreach to potential respondents, members, and volunteers. Respondent Karen noted that she was not interested in volunteering “at this time” but made it a point to say that she was more interested in volunteering for the “community” in the future more so than volunteering within agriculture. Karen also noted that volunteering was “very important” to her. Unlike Rita, Karen had more interest in volunteering for the community as opposed to agriculture. This stands out as most of the respondents in this study felt some inclination to participate within agriculture, and more so within their respective sectors (for instance, with certain Breed or Member Associations, such as Dairy Farmers of Ontario for example). Farmer participation in agricultural organization provides the means for farmers to connect with one another, to find adequate aid and resources for farming issues, and the sense of fulfillment that often comes with volunteer work. Respondent Sonia felt that taking part in a lot of committees
was “[…] like a sort of counselling service. You get to realize that you’re not the only one going through this or that, or everybody’s having the same issue, so you always look forward to the board meetings.” Respondents like Maxine and Doreen both felt very “passionate” about their respective ag-sectors, and thus, felt that by volunteering with certain organizations, that they were able to use their passion for good. Maxine noted that she volunteered for the Wellington County Farm and Safety Association because there had been a number of farm-related injuries and deaths within her neighbourhood. She felt that the association was “very close” to her heart for that reason. Personal reasons and passions are a deciding factor for individuals when it comes to volunteering.

Many agricultural organizations in Canada provide different forms of programming intended to help their members. These programs often include some kind of financial aid or incentive, but they can also include informative educational programming, along with certain opportunities for travel and exchange. The funding for these programs primarily depends on sponsors or partnerships with the government or big, corporate ag-related companies. Other organizations may rely on donations or volunteers that fundraise money. The respondents in this study referred to a number of different agricultural programs that were available to them through these organizations. Respondent Debbie said that the Brant County Federation of Agriculture (a subset of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture) has a scholarship program for individuals who are looking to go into a post-secondary “ag-based program” and that she was a part of the committee that decided who won the scholarship. Respondent Vera mentioned that the Beef Farmers of Ontario is in partnership with OMAFRA for a “clay-belt initiative” – formally called
the “Northern Livestock Pilot Action Plan”\textsuperscript{42} – in which these organizations are encouraging beef producers to move and expand their farm operations to the clay belt of northern Ontario to increase production numbers while remaining environmentally sustainable for the future. There are several assistance programs\textsuperscript{43} for beef producers to access, which includes access to resources and loan programs – once again, through Farm Credit Canada as a “young farmer loan.” This program in particular, while run through the Beef Farmers of Ontario, is still, at its core, a governmental program. Respondents Bridget and Karen mentioned the New Entrants’ Program in the poultry and dairy industries, respectively, in which a selection of new farmer applicants are selected to receive financial aid through quota matching, in which the organization matches what the producer purchases in quota, and after a period of time, the producer slowly pays the matched quota back (Chicken Farmers of Ontario 2017; Dairy Farmers of Ontario 2017). Karen notes that she received a substantial amount of quota for her operation and cites that it “gives a huge boost” to farming operations, which was more than enough to pay back the debt. While beneficial to those that are selected, there are many more new farmers who could use this kind of programming. As for educational programming, respondent Joan referred to the Ontario Young Farmers’ Forum\textsuperscript{44}, which is a convention put on by the Junior Farmers of Ontario that runs many workshops and hosts speakers for young farmers. For example, Joan attended a workshop titled “Growing Your Farm Profits” and found it useful for her own production. Respondent Allie mentioned that she partook in the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer

Training (CRAFT) network\textsuperscript{45} which is comprised of several ecological farms that offer internships and educational workshops. These opportunities provide a hands-on learning experience and often give respondents enough skills and knowledge to operate their own farm afterwards. Further, FarmStart\textsuperscript{46} is an initiative that works with new farmers and the agricultural sector in order to “think about agriculture in new and innovative ways” to meet the challenges of an aging industry, along with the structural, economic, and practical challenges that prevent new and young farmers from entering the agricultural sector. Since its foundation, FarmStart has expanded with several programs created in response to the needs of prospective and current start up farmers, working with new Canadians, young people from non-farm backgrounds, and second career farmers.

These are just a few examples of the programs that are available from various agricultural organizations that young women farmers in this study attended. It is also important to note that respondent Doreen, who was born in the United States and moved to Canada after she married, found that in her experience, there were more programs available for farmers in the United States than in Canada. Arguably, this could be a result of a smaller general population, and therefore, a smaller agricultural population in Canada than south of the border. That said, however, farmer respondent in agricultural organizations is necessary to keep them functioning, but also, their participation provides current insights of the industry and for what is in the farmers’ best

interests. For young women farmers, participation in agricultural organizations is key for their own representation.

5.3.1 Representation Within Ag-Organizations

Agricultural organizations are often led by self-governing bodies with members that are elected to those positions. These elected leaders are then responsible to represent the best interests of those within the organization, and the organization itself. Therefore, it is imperative that those who are elected are aware of the issues within and outside of the organization in order to make meaningful contributions to the organization’s efforts. However, the issue of representation arises as many of these boards are still reflective of current society: they are still, relatively male-dominated. Young women farmers’ visibility within agricultural organizations is minimal, which prevents their voices from being heard over the many men that are both present and hold leadership positions.

Within this study, the respondents were asked how they felt represented in the agricultural organizations that they worked or volunteered for. The respondents’ experiences of young and female representation in their respective ag-organizations varied. The key factors that affected representation included gender distribution of members, age of members, and the type of agricultural organization.

Gender distributions within agricultural organizations affect the ways that young women farmers feel represented within them. A number of the respondents in this study felt that many of their organizations were “50-50” when it came to the division of men and women, and similarly to their more general experiences, felt that they did not “see” their gender as an immediate factor. However, in some instances, the respondents felt that, despite the equality in numbers, equal
representation for women did not occur. Others felt that they were vastly outnumbered, such as respondent Joan who described her experience with board meetings: “It’s tough to walk into a meeting room and you are the only woman in the room.” Joan, among others, felt that a lack of women “in the room” played a role in how women’s contributions were received. Respondent Vera stated that she felt her fair board was “75 per cent women” and when it came to feeling represented on the fair board during its meetings, Vera felt that the only reason she had any equal say was because the board was “woman-dominated.” This suggests that if the board was male-dominated, like in Joan’s experience, then Vera would not have equal say in discussions and decision-making. Respondents like Sonia and Susan felt that without women’s involvement in these agricultural organizations, “nothing would get done” because women are “more willing with their time” and “more organized.” This provides insight to the ways that women are perceived within organizations and by women themselves. These respondents felt that women contributed in substantial amounts for their organizations and were more organized than men. This highlights women’s importance to how these organizations are able to function, but some respondents feel that they are “pigeon-holed” into taking on certain organizational roles in order to maintain the integrity of their organization. This demonstrates that there is a demand and “need” for women’s involvement; however, this is only a selective opportunity where women are only used for organizational skills rather than being asked for their ideas and contributions, therefore reducing young women farmers to a specific skillset that they may have rather than anything else that they could add or do for an organization.

The respondents in this study mostly felt that they were “accepted” within their specific organizations, but initially, many had to assert or “prove” themselves to existing members. As
mentioned in Chapter 3, young women farmers often change aspects of their personalities in order to be more assertive, confident, bold, and brazen in order to be taken seriously by older men. This is certainly applicable to young women’s experiences in agricultural organizations, as many of the respondents felt that they often had to “defend their position” and participation. That said, however, their presence in these ag-organizations is desired, not only to change the “status quo” of gender within the farming community, but also to continue the organization into the future. However, some young women farmers do not feel wanted or appreciated for their efforts and contributions. In this study, only respondent Vera described an explicit experience with direct sexism within one of the organizations she participated in, in which an older male member made sexually-charged jokes towards her and gave preferential treatment to young male members rather than young women who participated in the organization. At the time of the interview, Vera was no longer a part of that organization, but said she did not experience that issue in other volunteer organizations.

Other factors that affected gender distribution included locality and the agricultural sector of the organization. Respondents in this study mentioned that they felt there could be more women farmers within their own specific agricultural sectors, but perhaps those women were not living in the same physical area or county, and therefore could not travel to meetings. Some respondents felt that their specific agricultural sector still had far more men than women as a general whole, and therefore, there were even fewer women who would attend organization meetings. Unfortunately, current statistics only demonstrate agricultural sector by the age of operators in the Agricultural Census, not by gender (Beaulieu 2015).

Age is another key factor that affects young women farmers’ representation within
agricultural organizations. Age affects the younger members of this study within agricultural organizations more than the older members. Typically, respondents under the age of 30 had more instances of age discrimination than those over 30. As the average age of farmers in Canada is 55 (Statistics Canada 2017c), many members of agricultural organizations are of the same age. This provides unique challenges for young farmers who desire to join. Respondent Debbie described one of her experiences starting in a new organization:

Honestly, it sounds awful, but I was the youngest person on the board, because the youngest person closest to my age was 55. They were mesmerized by the fact that there was someone there – at the time I was only 21. It was like, ‘oh my gosh, new skin comin’ in!’

Often, entering a new organization as a young farmer means that that person is the youngest by far, creating a large age gap, which can lead to further discrimination based on age and experience. Though, this experience is not always negatively received. As Debbie described, she went on to say they needed someone to take over a social media account, and because she was the youngest on the board, she was nominated to the position because of her ability to use that account. Older generations do not anticipate young people’s participation in established ag-organizations. The reasons for this vary, though respondent Maxine felt that a lot of boards are struggling to survive because young members feel that that their “time is not valuable there” and therefore do not join at all or leave shortly after joining. She expressed that young people like herself have busy lives and trying to work in an organization in which older members did not value her contributions was not worth her time. Vera stated that the members of the fair board who were under the age of 30 were often told “shut up, you’re free labour” by elder members on the fair board, meaning that any contributions of younger members were almost ignored outright
in favour of their participation just to complete laborious tasks. This suggests that older members disregard young people’s purposeful contributions to the fair board, and care only for young people to volunteer their physical labour. While it may be “free” labour, young people are still dedicating their time and effort to a volunteer organization. Similarly to Maxine’s previous point, if young people’s time is not valued, then they will no longer participate in agricultural organizations because it does not provide them with any benefit to do so. On the contrary, Susan expressed that as a young person, she had been asked to sit in on a lot of boards because she was “taking over somebody’s spot because they’re old and they don’t want to do it anymore.” She also stated that organizations need “new ideas” to create change and “keep things going” which implies that young people are indeed important, even if older members do not recognize it as such. On that note, though, Maxine and Vera both argued that older people are “resistant to change” when it comes to implementing new ideas, which is reminiscent of Chapter 4 in which the respondents said that older farmers are also reluctant to adapt modern farming practices. Age is a current issue, depending on the distribution of members within agricultural organizations, and as such, can vastly affect the ways in which young (women) farmers are received.

The final factor of young women farmers’ representation in agricultural organization is based on the type of organization they participate in. Gender and age are highly intersecting identities that affect the way young women farmers are treated. For example, Vera was also a part of a local chapter of the Junior Farmers of Ontario and felt that, because the organization is meant for young people under age 35, gender divisions are not as prominent because “nobody cares about your sex. It’s literally just old people or like, middle aged people who are threatened.” Vera, among other respondents, notes that the generational gap between young
farmers and older farmers is one of the key factors of gender discrimination, which is how these two facets of identity intersect. Gender divisions also occur depending on the kind of organization. Vera mentions how the homecraft division of the fair board is only women, rooted in its historical foundations as homecraft was “for women and the fair board was for men only. There was no switching.” Homecraft remains populated only by women whereas the fair board has become “woman-heavy.” This indicates also that women’s organizations remain for women, while other organizations are open and the distribution of gender may vary.

5.4 Conclusion

For agricultural organizations today, an effort needs to be made in order to ensure equality for their members. Some organizations do so by making it a point to make sure they have enough women giving presentations or women as acting executive members, but this is not the case for every organization. While young women are free to join many of these organizations, there are social barriers based on gender and age that may hinder their participation or affect them personally. There are solutions out there to be more inclusive, but member resistance is a key factor in preventing others from implementing them. Respondent Debbie felt that enforcing diversity on boards would be a good thing – she would “hate [for it] to have to be at that point”, meaning that unfortunately, diversity in agriculture is not common, and would thereby need to be forced, but it would lead to diversification and new viewpoints that differ from the majority and give minorities the opportunity to take part.

A couple of respondents noted that young women should make the effort to represent themselves. They ought to seek out positions within agricultural organizations, both at the local level and at the governmental level in order to create and hopefully, enact adequate policy
changes for the agricultural industry that are more inclusive and helpful. Involvement in politics is key in order to get what is needed for a specific group of people – arguably, adequate representation is sorely needed in this sector, given the experiences of young women farmers in this study. Additionally, adequate agricultural policy is vital to promote and provide aid for farmers. The lack of specific agricultural policies directed towards young women farmers is a result of no knowledge of young women farmers’ perspectives and issues at a macro or structural level in government. Therefore, it is pertinent to discuss how age and gender identities affect a minority group in farming in order to advance their current position, bring awareness to their existence, and create opportunity for equity within agriculture. The following discussion and conclusion in Chapter 6 will provide greater detail regarding policy suggestions and what is needed going forward.
6 Chapter 6 – The Future for Young Women Farmers

6.1 Discussion

The findings of this research study highlight the experiences of young women farmers who are involved in the agricultural sector of southern Ontario, as sole farm operators. Returning to the key research question that guided this study, “what are the key barriers to visibility for young women farmers in Canada?”, provides a starting point for a discussion of the findings and how they relate and contribute to the themes found within established scholarly literature. It is evident then that the young women farmers in this study experienced gendered barriers that prevented acknowledgement – and thereby, their visibility at an individual level – in the agricultural community, alongside other difficulties that young farmers in general must deal with. The most dominant issue for the respondents in this study is the acknowledgement as a sole farm operator from agri-businesses and sales representatives, along with other instances of gender discrimination from other people within the agricultural community. As young people, the respondents in this study felt that being taken seriously by older members of the agricultural community was difficult to achieve. Like other young farmers, the respondents also experienced the most difficulties financially, and when it came to financial support initiatives from the government, only few of the respondents could name available programming. As young farmers, these present difficulties also prevent young women farmers’ visibility in the agricultural industry, but at the structural level.

Returning to the first sub-question, “what are the specific gender-related challenges that young women farmers face in their daily lives on the farm?”, provides an analysis of the gendered experiences described by young women farmers in the study, which aligns with the
literature that argues that patriarchal values are still present in farming today. Patrilineal culture is still a predominant force in maintaining the social and cultural beliefs around “who” is a farmer (Leckie 1993; Price 2012; Forbes-Chilibeck 2005). Patrilineal culture in farming is responsible for the expectation that girls and women are not interested in learning how to run farms of their own, and therefore, girls do not receive the same farming education as boys do. This then leads to the assumption that adult women farmers are not in charge of their own farming operations, but rather, that they are “farmer’s wives” or “farmer’s daughters.” It is important to break these assumptions from the cultural mold in order to advance young women farmers’ position within the agricultural community. This is especially important as many respondents in this study experienced gender discrimination from sales representatives, who are, arguably, key players in fostering relationships between farm operators and agri-businesses. Without these relationships, suppliers will lose out on customers, and farmers may not have many other options to choose from. When sales representatives assume that young women are not capable of being sole farm operators, they are continuing to perpetuate the cycle of gender discrimination in farming.

Similarly, in terms of giving legitimacy to “who” is a farmer, the respondents in this study experienced difficulties in attaining the title of “farmer.” Primarily, some young women farmers felt that they were holding themselves “back” from doing certain tasks, which indicates that levels of self-doubt are prominent among farming women, given that certain tasks and jobs are still gendered. At the individual level, young women farmers also experience legitimacy issues within the agricultural community by not being taken seriously by others, including family members and coworkers. Notably, many of the respondents did not immediately describe
themselves as “farmers” when asked, which suggests that the title of “farmer” remains dominantly male or, that young women retain self-doubt about the use of it as a title for themselves (Sumner 2005). At the greater structural scale, the power in farming is in the ownership of the farm, and the access to resources within it (Heather et al 2005, 89; Shortall 1999). In order to have legitimacy, young women must have access to this power. For many of the respondents, they were in marriages or partnerships with men, and shared access to the land and resources on the farm. While they made the key decisions on the farm, they often participated in “traditional” gender roles and a gendered division of labour. While these roles are not as overt as they were in the past, given the advancements of women’s rights and equality in the agricultural sector (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 27), they still have a resounding effect on the way young women farmers orient their lives and partnerships while running the farm. The respondents categorized themselves as sole farm operators. However, many labour tasks were divided between themselves and their male partners, often favouring traditional gender role patterns in giving men labour-intensive or mechanical tasks and women with tending to livestock or crops, as well as household and childhood labour. Some of these divisions are created at a subconscious level, but others are forced due to young women farmers’ inability to perform some tasks given constraints around the size and weight of equipment or physical capability. When it comes to domestic labour and childcare, young women farmers often felt obligated to manage all of these tasks more so than their male partners. Women’s feelings of responsibility once again, stem from societal gendered expectations maintained by patrilineal and male-dominated culture. Once again, as respondent Allie suggests, the agricultural community needs to challenge the norms surrounding gender within farming in order to further advance gender
At both the individual and structural level, young women farmers are ultimately changing the “traditional” family farm. When answering the sub-question, “what are young women farmers’ impacts on the traditional family farm?”, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which modern motions of “traditional” are changing. First and foremost, what was once traditional in terms of women’s involvement has changed and is continuing to change as more women are participating in agriculture. Secondly, while some young women farmers are “doing it the way their grandparents did it”, others are utilizing new and improved methods of farming for the sake of cost and efficiency, as well as sustainability in agriculture. While this seems contradictory to have some young women farmers remain more “traditional” than others, changes are occurring slowly, and therefore, creating “new” traditions for the future. Inheritance and succession are still practiced today, though it is much more difficult to create succession plans, given the current state of the economy for young women farmers. Many are still “too young” to think about it with their own young children. However, young women farmers are still opting to raise their children on the farm, regardless of gender, educating the next generation of potential farmers, and hoping that their children will remain interested in farming. However, the number of female successors on Ontario farms is decidedly low (Lobley et al. 2010, 54). Given that the respondents intend to create succession plans for their children, regardless of their gender, it is hopeful that more daughters will become successors in the future. Young women farmers also maintain future goals for their involvement in a male-dominated industry, creating changes in the traditional aspects of farming one by one. As more young women become involved as sole farm operators, they are given the power of decision-making for their own
farming operations, breaking the “status quo” of traditional Canadian family farms.

Young women farmers are an upcoming and important demographic as the next generation of farmers in the world. They are taking on the role of sole farm operator in various agricultural sectors, despite social barriers that are still in place. This research provides an insight on just a small group of young women farmers, but in general, women’s work is gaining recognition and acknowledgement with their continuous and active participation in the agricultural sector. As the statistics have demonstrated (Statistics Canada 2017c), the number of women as sole farm operators continues to increase over time (Sumner 2005) which indicates that it is likely more women will continue to take part as key decision-makers on farming operations. As more women take a leading role in farming operations, they are changing the notion of “traditional” for the future.

At the structural level, young women farmers experience barriers to entry in agriculture. While agricultural entrepreneurship is cited as the largest source of self-employment in rural and small-town Canada (Epps 2017), young women farmers experience many difficulties entering the industry. For young farmers, this is an incredibly difficult avenue to pursue as there are significant financial barriers related to “start-up and success” (Haalboom 2013, 5) in agriculture. Similarly, the respondents in this study noted that financial issues were their biggest challenge in running a farm. However, for those respondents that came from farming families, inheritance and succession played an important role in their entry to farming. While it is rare to see multi-generational farms today (Pouliot 2011), several respondents in this study were third or fourth generation farmers. The process of inheritance and succession is also complicated by several factors, including financial security and the reluctance of older farmers to sell or retire from
farming (Epps 2017; Uchiyama et al. 2008) as well as gender of the successor (Forbes-Chilibeck 2005, 27), and clashes between parent and child (Taylor, Norris, and Howard 1998). However, the topic of inheritance and succession was not emphasized by young women farmers in the study – which includes their own experience and their future planning for their own children. While inheritance and succession may play a vital role, it was not as relevant to the respondents in this study as the literature suggested.

Lastly, in answering “how do governmental policies at the federal and provincial level affect young women farmers?”, it is evident that agricultural policies do exist at the federal level, through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership framework, trickling down through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs. However, Canadian public policy promotes “high-input industrial agriculture” (Sumner 2005, 82), and has a long-term commitment to accommodate large, corporate farms. This leaves small-scale farmers in a precarious position – making the choice to remain a “traditional” family farm without opportunity for funding, or scale upwards in order to become competitive with corporate entities. Government funding allows young farmers the opportunity to establish themselves in agriculture more so than on their own. However, despite the fact that there are programs that are currently in place, there is a distinct lack of awareness or promotional campaigns that reach out to young women farmers. Many of these policies are based on financial aid, or loan programs, but are still applicable to the respondents in this study. However, that said, it is important to note that many of these programs are limited and have various qualifications for use, and therefore, may limit young women farmers who choose to apply. These policies may ease the number of barriers to entry for young people, but without proper promotion to the agricultural community, farmers cannot access these
benefits.

For young farmers in Canada and beyond, a number of difficulties remain. As costs of land and equipment continue to rise, entering the industry without an inheritance or as a successor is incredibly difficult. While there are subsidies and governmental policies available, these are limited in number. Farming is not often an appealing industry for young people (White 2012), but others desire the opportunity for a rural life, achieving a sense of “emotional wellbeing achieved through working outdoors and feeling connected to the world” (Haalboom 2013, 50). The future for young people in agriculture remains uncertain with a difficult economy and immense start-up costs. However, young farmers seem determined to continue, despite these financial risks.

For future policy suggestions, it is vital to provide programming available for young women in the agricultural industry as not only a financial benefit, but as a social incentive; primarily, providing an adequate promotional campaign would provide access and understanding to not only the general public, but to the young women who may be hesitant to enter the industry for financial and or social reasons (e.g. farming is male dominated). A policy like this would benefit already existing young women farmers again, financially, but socially in promoting women’s involvement in the industry, and therefore, their acceptance. This policy could come in the form of a financial grant as part of a larger ag-women’s awareness campaign. It would be more prominent and powerful if this policy was implemented by the provincial government. That said, agricultural organizations also play a vital role in women’s representation in the industry. When young women participate in agricultural organizations in leadership positions, they are giving themselves a voice, which is important to make changes to rules and regulations within
the organizations themselves and their respective ag-sectors. This can also be translated to taking an active part in politics, representing their best interests at a governmental level.

The findings of this research study are only the start of filling the gap in this particular area of research. Young women farmers remain as a minority group in the agricultural industry in Canada, but this does not relegate the need for research to understand their specific issues as young people and as women. The key findings in this study offer an ample beginning for a small sample of young women farmers in southern Ontario, but many other young women farmers may be experiencing similar difficulties in their daily lives on the farm. In particular, it is important to note the ways in which the greater social structure of farming must change in order to create gender equity as a whole, as well as counteracting the individual gender discrimination that young women farmers face personally. In order to do so, future research ought to include a larger sample of young women farmers, not only from southern Ontario, but across Canada as a whole. This can add depth to the study by examining gendered experiences. In terms of age discrimination, future research studies should also be longitudinal in order to document the effects of ageing and how women farmers are perceived in the agricultural community over time.

Overall, more research would provide a greater understanding for the specific difficulties that young women farmers face in this country, beyond what the Canadian Agricultural Census statistics (Statistics 2017c) and other small-scale studies (Leckie 1993; Van de Vorst 2002; Forbes-Chilibeck 2005; Heather et al. 2005; Sumner 2005; Fletcher 2013; and Haalboom 2013) provide. By providing in-depth, qualitative research, suggestions can be made that not only center on financial difficulties, but the social barriers that young women in agriculture face. This
is applicable for policy creation to benefit and encourage young women farmers to enter agriculture with the hopes to continue a declining industry required to feed the world.

6.2 Conclusion

The future for young women farmers in Canada is mostly positive. More young women are taking on the role of sole farm operator, despite the massive structural changes to farms that have occurred due to the industrialization of agriculture. The greater implications derived from the data of this research study suggest that young women farmers are at a turning point for the future. Because more women are taking to the forefront of farming as sole farm operators, more research is necessary to understand their experiences and their difficulties. In Canada, and similar countries (Teather 1996; Alston and Wilkinson 1998; and Pini 2003), young women have been and are, an imperative part of contributing to agricultural production. While farm women are considered largely “invisible” (Alston and Wilkinson 1998, 391), more women are entering a male-dominated industry, despite financial and social barriers within. It is vital, then, for others to understand and acknowledge the role of young women farmers as a viable part of the agricultural workforce in Canada and beyond. As young women continue working throughout their lives, they will undoubtedly have an impact on the future. As more young women are getting involved, they will continue to make these changes and grow their farming operations in their respective sectors. Setting goals of their own accord gives young women farmers the choice in decision-making as sole farm operators, thereby breaking the “status quo” of the male-led traditional family farm.

Notably, the young women farmers in this research study had a variety of future goals for themselves and their farming operations. These goals are considered important as they are going
to contribute not only to the continuation of agriculture, but to the continuation of young women farmers’ involvement in the industry. The respondents were asked where they saw themselves and their farming operations in the next five to ten years. A majority of them answered that they wanted to expand their farming operations in acreage and building another barn, or significantly upping their production numbers be it in crop yields or livestock. Others wanted to become much more efficient and economical in their farming practices in order to produce more at less cost than the present. This also included becoming financially stable and paying off debts owed on machinery and mortgages. Young women farmers also expressed that they desired to focus on running their farms as the sole operator, while also desiring to move into the next stage of their lives, including marriage and having children. Others desired to become a part of agricultural organizations or communities, and some wanted more extracurricular activities outside of farming. Ultimately, young women farmers’ goals were all positive and realistic; they expressed that they desired happiness and fulfilment for their lives as a whole.

There are a few limitations and gaps in this research study. Primarily, as the sample size was so small, this only provides a brief demonstration of young women farmers’ experiences in southern Ontario, Canada. Ideally, this study could expand its sample size across the province to provide more generalizable data. Secondly, including more young women farmers from vastly different sized farms would contribute greater data as it would give insight to understand the differences in running small-scale farms versus a large-scale or corporate farm. Additionally, the parameters of this study were limiting – the definition of “young” is a social construct and the age limits constricted some farmers from participating in the study. Another limitation is that the majority of the respondents were assumed to be heterosexual and had marriages or partnerships...
with men. As a changing part of the social landscape, investigating young women farmers who are members of the LGBTQ+ community would provide insights of living outside of the dominant heteronormative lifestyle found in family farming, and how these farmers move through the patrilineal culture in farming as a whole, including the process of inheritance and succession.

Additionally, there are a few related research questions which need to be addressed. As young women farmers are certainly present within the agricultural community, what are others’ perceptions of young women’s involvement in agriculture? How do their perceptions contribute to gendered social barriers for young women farmers? Moreover, how does the changing economy and the decline of agricultural operations influence young women farmers’ participation in farming? As these questions are guided towards analysing the structural level of the agricultural industry, they are better suited towards a larger study that focuses on a larger group of farmers, as well as the businesses and government involved in the industry, which is far beyond the scope of this thesis.

Lastly, to conclude, the respondents in this study were also granted an open-ended question that asked if they had anything else to say regarding their experiences as young women farmers. The responses varied, but some respondents gave rather poignant answers. Respondent Bea’s response stood out the most:

Don’t be afraid to let your voice be heard, right. You’re gonna be in a room with a bunch of old white dudes and that’s okay. You still have an opinion that matters and just because you’re young or female or whatever, it doesn’t mean you’re any less valuable. So be heard.
For young women farmers, “being heard” is the most important for their advancement in modern agriculture. The intent of this thesis has been to “hear” young women farmers and understand the barriers to their visibility in the agricultural community. While this study was limited to only 15 respondents, their stories and experiences are vital contributions to the future of research in this field. Because of their contributions, there is also hope that in the near future, when asking someone “who do you think of when you hear the word ‘farmer’??”, their response is no longer just the old man in the straw hat and overalls, but the young woman wearing them too.
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Do you consent to this survey?

Yes (74) / No (0)

1) Age?

Under 18 Years of Age (0) / 18-35 (74) / Over 35+ (0)

2) Gender?

Male (0) / Female (74) / Other (Please Specify) (0)

3) Agricultural Sector Working In? Select All That Apply.

Grain & Oilseeds (17) / Beef Cattle (30) / Dairy Cattle (14) / Swine (6) / Sheep (6) / Poultry (12) / Horticulture (15) / Other (Please Specify) (14)

4) Are you a sole farm operator? That is, "those persons responsible for the management decisions in operating an agricultural operation. Can be owners, tenants, or hired managers of the agricultural operation, including those responsible for management decisions pertinent to particular aspects of the farm - planting, harvesting, raising animals, marketing and sales, and making capital purchases and other financial decisions"

(Statistics Canada).

Yes (74) / No (0)
5) **Marital Status?**

   Single (24) / Married (16) / Common Law (11) / In a Relationship (23) /
   Divorced/Previously Married (0)

6) **Race/Ethnicity?**

   Aboriginal (2) / Arab/West Asian (1) / Black (0) / Chinese (0) / Filipino (1) / Japanese (1)
   / Korean (0) / Latin American (0) / South Asian (0) / South East Asian (0) / White (68) /
   Other (Please Specify) (1)

7) **What Province / Territory do you currently live in?**

   Yukon (0) / North West Territories (0) / Nunavut (0) / British Columbia (7) / Alberta (5) /
   Saskatchewan (7) / Manitoba (0) / Ontario (49) / Quebec (3) / New Brunswick (1) /
   Newfoundland & Labrador (0) / Nova Scotia (2) / Prince Edward Island (0)

8) * **If you live in Ontario, what county do you live in?**

   Brant (0) / Bruce (1) / Dufferin (15) / Durham (0) / Elgin (0) / Essex (0) / Frontenac (1) /
   Grey (2) / Halburton / Halton (0) / Hastings (0) / Huron (2) / Lambton (2) / Lanark (2) /
   Leeds and Granville (0) / Lennox and Addington (0) / Middlesex (0) / Niagara (0) /
   Northumberland (0) / Oxford (3) / Peel (1) / Perth (3) / Peterborough (5) / Prescott and
   Russell (2) / Renfrew (2) / Simcoe (2) / Stormont Dundas and Glengarry (0) / Waterloo
   (0) / Wellington (8) / York (0)

9) **If you are a resident of Wellington, Dufferin, Halton, or Peel county in Ontario, you**
   **are invited to participate in a full length, one-on-one interview for this research**
   **project. You may contact me at this address (aavelar@uoguelph.ca) for further**
   **information.**
Yes, I am interested in participating in an interview (10) / No, I am not interested in participating in an interview (2)
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

1) So, how did you get into farming? Why did you choose to farm ______ (ag sector)?

2) What’s been the most enjoyable part about farming? Do you enjoy running your own farm?

3) What’s been something you’ve struggled with since you’ve started farming? Has it improved over time?

4) Can you recall any specific difficulties in your time farming that had to do with your gender, specifically? Can you elaborate on them?

5) How did you feel about that experience? What do you wish you’d done differently? What would you do the same?

6) How do you feel your gender ties in to your career in agriculture?

7) How do you present yourself when working with men? Do you change your appearance at all specifically for that task?

8) Do you know many other women involved in your specific ag-sector? How many?

9) Do you have any women or girls in your family that are also looking to farm?

10) Do you work or volunteer for any agricultural organizations? If so, what are they and how long have you been working for them?

11) How do you feel represented as a woman within these organizations?

12) What do you do to try and include more women from within your position?

13) Is there anything else you’d like to talk about regarding your experience as a young woman farmer?
APPENDIX C

BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS IN THE STUDY

“Allie”

Allie is 35 years old. She has experience in farming as an apprentice and intern on volunteer farming operations, as well as her own in mixed vegetable and livestock operations. Allie has participated in a number of agricultural organizations. Allie did not specify her marital status, nor did she mention if she had any children.

“Bea”

Bea is 26 years old. She is a University of Guelph graduate who once participated in a co-op working in the apiary, which started her interest in beekeeping. Bea is a new farmer. She currently has four hives but would like to expand her operation. Bea did not specify her marital status and does not have any children.

“Bridget”

Bridget is 35 years old. She runs a substantive poultry operation, containing both layer and broiler chickens in her operation. She is married and has four children. Bridget participates in a few breed associations and boards.

“Debbie”

Debbie is 25 years old. She runs and operates her own vegetable growing operation along with a business. Debbie is single by choice due to being too busy with her work. She and her sisters and cousins are all women and run different parts of the family farm together. Debbie also respondents in many boards and ag-organizations in her community.

“Doreen”

Doreen is 31 years old. She runs a dairy farm with her husband and is expecting their first
child soon. Doreen takes part in the every day care and milking of their cattle and looks to expand in the future.

“Erica”

Erica is 31 years old. She runs and operates her own horse boarding farm. She is married with no children. She has experience in accounting prior to becoming a full-time farmer.

“Joan”

Joan is 25 years old. She runs and operates a crop farm with her father. They also run a pick-your-own pumpkin patch in the month of October. Joan attends many events put on for young farmers in her area and accredits a lot of her learning experiences to youth organizations.

“Karen”

Karen is 31 years old and runs a small dairy operation. She is married and hopes to have children in the future. She works as a full-time farmer. While she does not currently volunteer for any ag-organizations, she desires to volunteer for community efforts in the future when she has more time available.

“Maxine”

Maxine is 29 years old. She operates a medium sized crop farm that typically grows staple crops like corn, wheat, and lentils. She works part time as a farmer and part time for a local agricultural organization. She is married with a young daughter and a second on the way. She also volunteers her time to other ag-organizations.

“Meg”

Meg is 22 years old and lives with her current boyfriend on a farm together, with beef cattle and cropping. She is new to farming but sees herself continuing in the industry for many
decades to come. She is a recent 4-H graduate and is in the process of becoming a 4-H leader to expand on her experiences and leaning opportunities.

“Rita”

Rita is 35 years old and is new to farming. She is married with two children, and it is through her husband that she got into farming dairy cattle. They run a medium milking operation and inherited the farm from her husband’s parents. She does not yet volunteer for ag-organizations but wants to do so in the future.

“Ruby”

Ruby is 35 years old and runs her own horse farm. Coming from a farming family, Ruby breeds sport horses. She is married with two young children. She currently does not volunteer for ag-organizations but has volunteered with horse rescue programs in the past.

“Sonia”

Sonia is 35 years old. She inherited her farm at a young age from her father who became too ill to farm. Currently, she runs a medium sized dairy operation with her husband. She did not specify if she had children or not. She also works as an artificial insemination technician for breeding cattle.

“Susan”

Susan is 24 years old. She runs a dairy operation on her family farm with her father. She also has experience showing dairy cattle for herself and others. She is currently single. She does not work or volunteer for ag organizations at present but has volunteered in helping other local farmers in the area.
“Vera”

Vera is 28 years old. She runs her own small herd of purebred beef cattle on her family farm with her father and two brothers. She also helps them with cropping when needed. She is currently with her boyfriend and wants to have children in the future. She volunteers for many agriculture organizations past and present.
APPENDIX D

LIST OF AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS MENTIONED BY THE RESPONDENTS

4-H Canada

Agricultural youth organization in Canada that offers various programs for children from the age of 9 to 21. It focuses on educating children through various clubs (e.g. Beef Club for keeping and showing of beef cattle). It promotes ideas of creativity, hands on work, learning, and better living, along with teaching children how to be leaders in the agricultural industry. 4-H is found at multiple levels: national, provincial, and local.


Ontario Beekeepers Association

The Ontario Beekeepers Association works towards a “a thriving and sustainable beekeeping industry in Ontario.” They advocate for beekeepers’ interest, support honey bee health research and deliver practical training and information. The OBA also provides education on bees, along with programs for beekeepers.


Breed Associations (various): e.g. Ontario Holsteins


Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farming Training

CRAFT is a co-operative effort organization that seeks to enhance the education of
farming interns and apprentices.

Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farming Training. 2019.


**Dairy Farmers of Ontario**

The Dairy Farmers of Ontario is the marketing group for dairy farmers in the province. Their mission statement is “to provide leadership and excellence in the production and marketing of Canadian milk.” Further, they seek to provide regulations through the Dairy Code of Practice and the quota system through the government. DFO also provides financial aid programs for new entrants.


**Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario**

EFAO is an organization that supports farmers who run ecological farming operations, and EFAO seeks to grow a strong knowledge sharing community.


**Fair Boards (various)**

**Junior Farmers’ Association of Ontario (Junior Farmers)**

JFAO is a volunteer organization that aims to provide opportunities for young people age 15-29 of all backgrounds but especially for those in rural Ontario. JFAO focuses on bettering communities and personal development for individuals. They provide self-directed programs and have over twenty affiliated clubs.

National Farmers Union of Canada – Local Chapters

NFU is a direct-membership voluntary organization that works towards achieving agricultural policies that benefit Canadian family farmers in dignity and securing income.


Ontario Equestrian

OE is an organization that promotes the sport of riding and providing programs for members. They also promote regulatory supports and guidelines for a “safe and level field of play for both equine and human athletes.” It is governed by a Board of Directors.


Brant County Federation of Agriculture – subset of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture

BCF is one of the 52 country and regional federations sponsored by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. They represent the voice of agriculture in a local community and advocate on behalf of Brant County farmers on local agricultural issues. BCF in particular has a scholarship program for young farmers.


Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

OSCIA is a non-profit organization that represents all commodity groups in Ontario.

*Accessed: March 6, 2019.*

**Rescue/Rehome Programs for Animals (Unspecified)**

**Volunteering for Other Farmers (Unspecified)**