Making a Place at the Table: Examining the Influence and Impact of Women in Agricultural Leadership in the Canadian Prairies

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Since the first days of cultivation of the land, women have played an essential role in the development of agriculture of the Canadian prairies. Over the past 150 years, as prairie agriculture has undergone a range of socio-cultural, economic and technical changes, so too have the roles, contributions and expectations of women. The opportunities for and advancement of women in leadership in the sector are increasing, but not always evenly and not without difficulty. This research explores the ways in which women in agricultural leadership in the Canadian Prairies are positioned – and are positioning themselves – as leaders and contributors to a sector that is experiencing shifts both internally and externally. Externally, these changes are being influenced by public concerns, such as those related to the health and environmental impacts of the agri-food system; internally, the shifting gender dynamics have created a new milieu of contestations over which women should be promoted to positions of leadership, and what they must do to get there. Women are typically underrepresented in positions of high level leadership, from agricultural politics to government, to research and development. This is slowly changing, as more women are graduating from agricultural colleges and taking on professional jobs. Further, women continue to grow in their proportion of owner/operators on farms throughout Canada.

These are interesting shifts within the sector and co-exist with larger public conversations around the importance of having women more equally represented around the leadership table. As such, this dissertation hinges on the following questions: how are women shaping agricultural processes and policies in all sectors within agriculture in Western Canada; and how do women navigate the complex and patriarchal terrain of the agriculture sector in this region to achieve their leadership success? Through 70 in-depth, qualitative interviews with women in agricultural

leadership from the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, Canada I explored these key questions.

Overall, women in agricultural see themselves contributing in important ways within the sector, particularly around their communication and marketing abilities. They see themselves as bridge builders among disparate stakeholders; and between the 'old' and the 'new' approaches to agriculture. More specifically, women see a distinct opportunity to use their motherhood capital as knowledgeable and expert feeders of children to demonstrate the safety and efficacy of conventionally produced food. The road to leadership has not been without difficulty, and advancing in agriculture, as a woman, still requires complex gender performances rooted in expectations of the past. To gain legitimacy as a leader, some women must enact a performance of respectable farm femininity: a complex mix of respectable femininity and masculine-coded farm credibility. These expectations are rooted in more traditional constructions of rural, hegemonic masculinity, but continue to carry important weight in conferring credibility to a woman in agricultural leadership. This has important implications for how women are able to carve out their career path on the way to leadership.

Finally, evidence from this research indicates that part of the changing dynamics within the sector are, in part, because of the influence of post-feminism and neoliberalized organizational environments. A strong belief in gender-neutral, meritocratic advancement coupled with equally strong anti-affirmative action dispositions render many of the larger, structural and institutional barriers to women's advancement both invisible and irrelevant. Despite all of these complications and obstacles for women in leadership in agriculture, there are reasons to remain hopeful. Strong women leaders are working hard to change things within the sector including: asking difficult questions around institutional sexism, changing workplace

policy and culture to support parenthood; and collaborating on interesting projects that enhance

social and environmental sustainability. There are, indeed, 'possibilities, with openings'

emerging throughout the world of agriculture in the Canadian Prairies, one just needs to work

more diligently to find and promote them. I do this through the lens of critical feminist hope as a

way to ensure that both the hope and the seeming hopelessness are represented in my portrait of

Canadian Prairie agriculture.

Key Words: agriculture, critical feminist hope, gender, motherhood capital, respectable

farm femininity, rural sociology, women in leadership

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Jennifer Ashlee Jane Braun. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, "Making a Place at the Table: Examining the Influence and Impact of Women Agricultural Leaders in the Canadian Prairies**"** No. 00065963, 09/09/2016.

Dedication

This work could not have been accomplished without the unwavering support, encouragement, and love of my partner, Kristen Braun. He was by my side, cheering me on, through the highs and lows of this entire process. Kristen put in immense time and energy into his parenting responsibilities, often disproportionately covering off my duties so I could focus on completing this project. It was because of him that I was able to juggle all of the demands made of me; as a mother, an academic, and an active community leader. For this, and so much more, I am deeply and eternally grateful. I would like to dedicate this work to him, because without Kristen, this work would not exist.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

In so many ways women are integral to agriculture. They have laboured in the fields, tended animals, and processed the fruit of these labours for human consumption. They have sold produce in the marketplace, planned for next year's crop and looked after household needs. Despite their immediate physical involvement in farming, in most societies of the world the roles that women play in agriculture and the reality of their daily lives are greatly influenced by a particular form of social relations based on their gender (Fletcher & Kubik, 2016). Gender is embedded in the social landscape of agriculture (Leckie, 1996). Agriculture, both in Canada, and across the developed world, remains imbued with a masculinist culture and hegemony that has been sustained by ideologies, discourses, and practices on farm and all the way up to national policy levels (McMahon, 2015; Roppel, Desmarais, & Martz, 2006; Wiebe, 1996). The social, cultural, and economic landscape of agriculture in Canada has changed substantially in the last hundred years, and with that, so have the roles, contributions, and expectations of women who work therein. Slowly, women advanced from the farm, to the classroom, to the board room, but not always easily and not always evenly. As Canadian scholar and agrarian feminist Nettie Wiebe (2017 para 11) observes,

> I have experienced unsteady but ongoing changes in the position of farm women. The women's movements articulating and fighting for women's rights in other sectors and the larger cultural norms favouring the equality of women permeate rural cultures also. Social and legal progress towards greater equality is ongoing.

Today, women are outnumbering men in agriculture college classrooms (Gilmour, 2014) they are increasing in numbers as farm owner/operators, more women work in agriculture business and government, and just recently two women were appointed to the top posts on the Canadian

federal government's grain and dairy commissions. Despite these advancements for women in the sector, the struggle for equality continues: women are still underrepresented in senior management positions in government, private businesses and around boardroom tables. The legacy of patriarchal and unequal gender relations that contributed to women's marginalization and subordination on the farm retains a visible grip on the ideologies, discourses and practices within the Canadian agriculture sector for women in leadership. This continues to be the case, despite the purported 'gender neutrality' of merit-based achievement and advancement in these positions, or corporate diversity programs that proclaim "everyone matters and everyone counts"[1] that characterize agriculture today. Given the rich history, active involvement, and vital role of women in agriculture throughout time and place, it is a curious (and frustrating) phenomenon that women continue to hold much less power and influence at the decision-making tables.   My research intervenes in the literature at this point, as it examines the contemporary context of agriculture in the Canadian Prairies and how women understand their influence as a strong and growing voice in a historically masculine environment. Further, it explores the complicated ways in which women must grapple with the patriarchal legacy of their marginalization and subordination within agriculture in contemporary professional leadership settings across the sector.

The remainder of this chapter unfolds as follows: a brief background and context for women's involvement in agriculture in the Canadian Prairies; a statement of my research questions and objectives, the methods used to obtain the data; and an examination of my social location and reflexive journey. Finally, a brief summary of each of the chapters will be provided.

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[1] https://www.cargill.ca/en/inclusion-and-diversity

A History of Women in Canadian Prairie Agriculture

Since the first days of cultivation of the land, women have played an essential role in the development of agriculture in the Canadian prairies. As they emigrated to Canada during the early parts of the nineteenth century and onward, they homesteaded their farms on the prairie lands of what is now known as Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, labouring together with their families to build their lives in Canada (Carter, 2016). During the First World War, women 'farmerettes' were mobilized to take over all operations of the farms, while men went off to war. Women proved themselves as capable and competent farmers, spurring various farm organizations to request homestead rights for women to help increase grain production. This was not to be, however, as authorities declared that "women were not capable of working the land" (Carter, 2016 p.327) citing The Dominion Lands Act of 1872; "Every person who is the sole head of a family and males over the age of 18" could apply for the free 160 acre homestead parcels being distributed to mostly European settlers. So, according to scholar Nettie Wiebe (2017 para 7) "the fix was in against women farmers owning the land on which they worked and depended for their livelihoods from the beginning of prairie agriculture." This "curiously strong prejudice" (Carter, 2016 p. 328) set the stage for a long period of struggle for women's rights to land and recognition.

Despite this assiduous position of the authorities, women remained on the farm, alongside their partners "ploughing, milking, tending cattle, and harnessing draught horses" (Carter 2016 p. 329). Life was hard and the risks were high. Bankruptcy, drought, pest infestations and disease plagued Western Canadian farmers, as they continued to rely on central Canadian business to provide their production inputs, and to finance, purchase, and transport their grain. To gain control of the economic forces which controlled them and advance their own interests, men and

women came together to advocate for change. The newly formed agrarian movement mobilized, educated, and unified Prairie farmers as they campaigned for provincial ownership of inland elevators and the co-operative marketing of grain. Through a series of political movements and pressure from farmers' organizations, in 1935, the Canadian government introduced the Canadian Wheat Board. In 1943, the Wheat Board was made compulsory for the marketing of western wheat, and in 1949 the Board's authority was extended to western barley and oats (Dick & Taylor, 2017).

According to scholars, the agrarian movement in Western Canada was more than an economic phenomenon. Members of Provincial Wheat Pools, the Grain Growers' Associations and farm political parties intervened and were influential in Prairie culture, society and politics, as well as in economics. In particular, farm women were active in the women's suffrage movement, child welfare and rural education, as well as in the economic and political struggles they shared with farm men. *The 1929 Persons Case[2]*, for example, provoked by five prairie feminists, was an important landmark in the fight to achieve land rights. Wiebe (2017) observes that, as with the successful fight to win the vote for women a decade earlier, this case demonstrated the strength and effectiveness of the prairie women's movement. Due to the rich and embedded socialist tradition of the agrarian movement in the Canadian Prairies, rural was synonymous with agriculture and family farms, and agriculture policy was rural policy that supported those farmers. This began to change starting in the 1970s and into the 1980s.

In 1969, the Report of the Federal Task Force on Agriculture entitled *Canadian Agriculture in the Seventies* advised that is was "desirable to end farming by the individual

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[2] See for example https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/persons-case

farmer and to shift to capitalist farming…In sketching out the kind of model for agriculture circa 1990, we are of course rejecting the 'public utility' or socialized concept of agriculture" (Federal Task Force on Agriculture 1969 quoted in Roppel et.al. 2013, p. 2). The Task Force also emphasized the realignment of the Canadian agriculture economy with that of their primary trading partner, the United States (Roppel et. al. 2013). From that point on, and in keeping with wider neoliberal political and economic paradigms happening around the world, the shift in agriculture policy began. By 1994, Canada signed the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the North-America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the World Trade Organization Agreement on Agriculture. This resulted in the loss of support programs such as the Crow Rate – which was a transportation subsidy for prairie farmers. All of these agreements sought to reduce economic barriers and increase agricultural trade. Canada no longer had an agricultural policy; instead it had a trade policy (Wiebe, 1998). By the mid-1990s, the world political ethos was governed by a rush to remove national economic borders, increase foreign investment, increase production for export and integrate into an international market while encouraging unfettered economic growth (Roppel et.al. 2013). As a result, agriculture (and rural communities) in Canada were restructured in radical ways.

The restructuring of agriculture in Canada had significant impacts for the family farm. The main tenets of agricultural restructuring were to expand export production, reduce government spending and support mechanisms, reduce regulation, attract and increase foreign investment, and corporatize agriculture. Roppel et. al. (2013) note that the experience of farmers and farm families everywhere during the last 25 years can be described as "crisis" (p.17). Boyens (2001) stated this reality bluntly:

Is it a crisis? Well, the word crisis implies a situation that may improve. Sadly, this is a fundamental, structural change in agriculture that is dimming the lights on a way of life that defined Canada's very nature throughout the past century.

The ongoing effects are well documented. In Canada, there has been a steady decline in the number of farms and farm operators and those who remain are getting older. The average age of a Canadian Farmer is 55 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Farms are getting much bigger. And with larger farm sizes, more capital investment is needed. Profit margins continue to fall on farms, and net incomes have remained virtually unchanged since the 1970s (Statistics Canada 2016). Increased trade and higher gross receipts have not translated into higher realized net income for farmers. Along with stagnant incomes, farm debt has risen dramatically: even though income has tripled, expenses have quadrupled, leaving little room for profit while debt continues to grow by leaps and bounds (Roppel et.al. 2013).

Agricultural restructuring has hit rural communities equally as hard. Rural communities must grapple with livelihoods that are continually threatened by economic downturns, unfair trade restrictions, changing demographics, social challenges caused by high unemployment, depletion of natural resources and climate change. The State of Rural Canada 2015 report notes that,

We have been neglecting rural Canada. Despite the vital role of rural places in this country, and despite their partnership with urban Canada, we have been neglecting rural places and permitting the erosion of an important community development foundation of Canadian society and economy. Fundamentally, we have forgotten how to re-invest in rural and small town places, preferring instead to simply run down the capital invested by previous generations (p 1).

As Epp and Whitson (2001) keenly observe, "the people who leave farming…are not simply commodity producers; they are members of communities that will bleed with their departures" (p. xxxii). Studies note the effects, documenting the consequences of high pressure economic decision-making, high seasonal workloads, increasing paperwork, family conflicts and

succession planning, and off-farm employment on farm families and communities. The delivery of quality health and education service is degrading, as communities are depopulated and the remaining population ages. Rural communities now face chronic staffing shortages, specialists and counsellors are in short supply and the waiting lists are long (Kubik & Moore, 2001).

A limited amount of scholarship in Canada documents the impacts of agricultural restructuring on women. It is generally understood, however, that women's lives have been significantly altered as a result of the changes (Fletcher, 2015). Beginning in the 1980s, women started to take on the 'triple shift' of agriculture: on-farm work, off-farm employment (to subsidize the main farm operations), and the work and care of human beings. Razavi (2002) examined the impact of neoliberalism and restructuring in rural areas and concluded "rather than 'shifting the terms' of trade toward agriculture, neoliberal policies have been, in effect, 'shifting the burdens' of adjustment toward small farmers, and especially the women in rural households. Heather, Skillen, Young, & Vladicka (2005) note the detrimental physical and mental health effects on women of these 'shifting burdens', but at the same time document the ways in which women continue to wait for a time when things will get better and their needs will be addressed, both on the farm and in their community, and at a policy level.

That being said, Canadian farm women continue to be marginalized in policy development and political debates around agriculture and rural communities (Fletcher, 2015; Kubik & Moore, 2001; Roppel et al., 2006). In recent years, Canadian women's limited access to the policy process has further been undermined. Gerrard and Russel (1999) found that the loss of funding for health services and other programs (due to rural restructuring and government cutbacks) profoundly affected women's ability to participate in a variety of activities related to policy development. Aside from a few key studies, the literature on women's involvement in

Canadian agriculture policy making is "embarrassingly sparse" (Roppel et al 2013 p. 28). The continuing male hegemony in rural areas, along with things like patrilineal inheritance practices and inequities over land ownership and control, shapes the resistance women face to be treated as equals in mainstream farm organizations and government. Further, because women have only recently (since 1991) been counted as farmers in official Canadian statistics[3] it remains difficult to establish legitimacy in these organizations. "Overnight, 25% of Canadian farmers suddenly became women. They had been there all along; they had just been invisible" (Roppel et al. p. 29).

It is not surprising then, that women remain "embarrassingly sparse" (Roppel et. al. 2013 p. 28) in agriculture leadership positions, too. The restructuring of agriculture created a whole new slate of off-farm, often urban, professionalized jobs: from highly specialized agronomists, to grain marketers, to professional farm data collection and management all the way to input and machinery sales, food processing and safety and sustainability regulators. There are even jobs in agricultural non-profit organizations doing public relations training or classroom education to kids. The agriculture and agri-food sector now employs about 2.3 million people, all the way from input and service suppliers, primary agricultural producers, food retailers and wholesalers and foodservice providers. As the agri-food industry continues to evolve and grow, professionals within the agriculture business sector are facing increasingly complex human resource issues from attracting and maintaining farm workers to the conspicuous lack of human diversity in agriculture business.

Although increasing in number, women are still underrepresented as farmers in Canada, and they are substantially underrepresented in agricultural leadership in businesses and

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[3] Women only were included in Canadian official farm statistics in 1991.

government. The Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council (CAHRC) has invested

significant resources in their 'Agri-Diversity Initiative', doing foundational research to examine

and address critical barriers to advancement facing women in the agriculture industry "in order to

support improved access to leadership opportunities and strengthen business success for women

working in agriculture[4]". The response to these efforts in Canada has, on the surface, been

positive. Leadership development toolkits, mentorship resources, best practice guides, women in

agriculture conferences, and research reports are now readily available for businesses and

agricultural organizations. Agricultural media continues to spotlight these efforts[5], as well as the

contributions and voices of women in agriculture, from farm to boardroom. Mainstream

understanding of the barriers women face tends to focus on the lack of technical skills,

mentorship and networking opportunities, and the need to make the right choices in order to

'have it all'. The responsibility for change ultimately rests on the shoulders of women, while

little is spoken of the legacy and implications of the particular ways in which naturalized, historic

'truths' imbedded in on-farm gender relations create and maintain unequal power relations

between men and women in the sector (Knutilla, 2016), going all the way back to the Dominion

Lands Act of 1872. My dissertation research is an exploration of how women in Canadian

Prairie agricultural leadership are experiencing, contributing and navigating these changes, both

to agriculture more generally, and to the shifting focus and rhetoric around the lack of women in

agriculture leadership.

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[4] See for example https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/

[5] See for example the 4-part Western Producer series on Women in Agriculture
(https://www.producer.com/2017/03/women-in-agriculture-3/).

Research Questions and Objectives

My doctoral research broadens the feminist rural sociological literature through an examination of the agency of women in agricultural leadership positions in government, industry, non-profit organizations, research and education institutions in the Canada. I want to know if and how these women are shaping agriculture policies, practices, and processes, given the traditional and persistently patriarchal environment they must work in. My research is situated in the Canadian Prairie Region, where agriculture continues to play a key role in the economic, environmental and social fabric of the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. My work centers on the following question:

- How are women shaping agricultural processes and policies in organizations, educational institutions, government, and industry in the Canadian Prairie Region?

This will involve asking an equally substantive question:

- How do women navigate the complex and patriarchal terrain of the agricultural sector in this region of Canada?

In so doing, four objectives guide my work:

- to learn, document, and analyze the ways women see themselves contributing to Canadian Prairie agriculture;

- to understand the history and contemporary context of women in agriculture in Canada;

- to bring a nuanced understanding to the ways in which the agriculture sector in Canada presents particular challenges to women in leadership;

- to explain and illustrate empirically the complex ways women must continue to navigate being both a woman and a leader in a sector that is still entrenched in hegemonic masculinity, as interpreted from the experiences of women in agriculture leadership.

Theoretical Framework

While each individual paper of my dissertation employs a different (though related) theoretical framework, I was guided by a few key pieces of literature and theoretical approaches that undergird my dissertation research as a whole. Overall, this is a feminist research project. Distinct from other theoretical approaches, feminist research begins from the premise that the nature of reality in Western society is that is unequal and hierarchical (Skeggs, 1997) and therefore is attentive to issues regarding power, social location, and identity. In all three papers, there are various representations of feminist literature from division of labour and foodwork, to organizational studies to popular culture and post-feminism.

In order to understand and appreciate the larger gendered power structures and contexts within which women in *agricultural* leadership must operate, I was guided by the literature on hegemonic masculinity, organizations, and agriculture (Knutilla, 2016). Scholarship on gender and organizations has demonstrated that both in definition and practice, leadership is intricately connected to the construction and enactment of hegemonic masculinity (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Sinclair, 2011). While emphasizing the temporality of hegemonic definitions of gender, (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997 p. 121) suggest that in the contemporary West hegemonic masculinity mobilizes around: physical strength, adventurousness, emotional neutrality, certainty, control, assertiveness, self-reliance, individuality, competitiveness, instrumental skills, public knowledge, discipline, reason, objectivity and rationality (Knutilla, 2016). Even when discourses of management change, from the traditional managerial style of paternalism to more contemporary forms of strategic management and managerialism, hegemonic masculinity continues to reverberate in how these discourses are conceived and deployed (Knights & Willmott, 1999). Whatever the script, management remains strongly connected to hegemonic

11

masculinity by privileging traits such as control, competition, reason, efficiency, independence, and purposefulness.

The rural sociological literature contends there are parts of managerial masculinity construction peculiar to the farming context (Alston, 2018; Alston 2000; Bryant & Pini, 2006; Liepens, 1998). Writers in this field suggest that the tough and powerful masculinities embedded in on-farm constructions of agriculture (battling nature, toughness, independence) permeate the construction of masculinities in agri-politics. Masculine gendered identities, these authors argue, still occupy a dominant position in the sector (Knutilla, 2016). Those managers operating in the public world of agriculture draw credibility by aligning themselves with on-farm notions of masculinity. Thus, the managerial man may be photographed next to farm machinery or in work clothes rather than a business suit (Pini, 2005).

Next, drawing on the work of Pini (2005) and Ranson (2005), I understand that being a woman in agriculture, or in a male-dominated industry more broadly, requires a particular gender performance of women (West & Zimmerman, 1987) that encompasses both masculine and feminine self-presentation. For Pini, (2005) it is the performance of someone belonging to the 'third sex', a complex, ambiguous, precarious and sometimes contradictory gender performance that requires a continual balancing act to exhibit both masculine and feminine characteristics. This type of performance or balancing act is not required of men in agricultural leadership positions. Similarly, Ranson (2005) speaks of women entering engineering (another male-dominated industry) as 'conceptual men', but at the same time needing to negotiate their feminine subjectivity as well, particularly after they become mothers (Ranson 2005). While the primary focus of this study is not on "woman travelers in a man's world" (Marshall, 1984 p. 25) this theoretical work informed my understanding of the context and inner workings of

agricultural institutions and organizations that shape, constrain, or even promote the contributions women make.

Methods

This is a qualitative research project with a feminist approach. Feminist researchers have long advocated that research not just be "on" women, but *for* women, too (DeVault, 1991) and that feminist research should be concerned with broader issues of social change and social justice (Fonow & Cook, 2005). Feminist research is considered distinct because it begins from the premise that western society is unequal and hierarchical (Skeggs 1997), and therefore is attentive to issues regarding power, social location, and identity. A feminist approach is also actively engaged with methodological innovations that challenge more mainstream ways of collecting, analyzing, and presenting data (Naples, 2003). While my data collection methods were quite conventional, the ways in which I intend to bring my research findings to a more popular audience (of women in agriculture), and the content and tone of my third chapter on Critical Feminist Hope is my attempt to avoid the 'mainstream ways of presenting data' while adhering to the feminist commitments undergirding the research project. This is discussed further in the Reflexivity section.

This research project explored how 70 professionally and managerially employed women in Canadian Prairie agriculture leadership see themselves and other women contributing to and shaping the agricultural sector within their respective fields. I examined how my participants navigate the complex and patriarchal terrain of agriculture to achieve their success and positions of leadership. The women interviewed for this research project were recruited via a process of targeted and purposive (snowball) sampling, although not all women who were recommended included women in positions of leadership. The term 'leader' included women who held

positions of power and influence at the top of their organizational and institutional hierarchies, as well as those who were considered by their peers and colleagues to be a person of influence and driver of change. Research participants held, for example, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), Executive Director (ED), President, Senior Vice President (SVP), Senior Manager, Dean, Minister, and Deputy Minister positions within and related to agriculture. Women are active (though not prolific) in almost every sub-sector of agriculture. My research participants ranged from owners of multi-million dollar farm, ranch, and food production operations, to research scientists, academic deans, high level political leaders, commodity organization presidents, international corporate senior leadership, and trailblazers in the organic and international farm workers movements. Many women, in addition to their professional occupations, were also leaders in the voluntary and non-profit sector, working diligently to create space for a more active and robust discussion about the role of women in agricultural leadership and agricultural sustainability, both nationally and internationally. Agriculture in Canada in the 21st century, as mentioned previously, is a fascinating and complex sector with seemingly endless opportunities for employment and engagement, particularly for women. From communications (i.e., promoting McDonald's sustainable beef initiative) to field agronomy, niche marketing (e.g., organic locally made goat cheese) to research and development, big data management, to political activism for farmers at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome, agriculture has it all and women are involved in all of it.

Participants ranged in age from 25-75, with a median age of 50. The average level of educational attainment was a university graduate degree, but most participants completed some level of post-secondary education. All participants were of European-Canadian descent. The sample was very homogenous, which, I would argue, is illustrative of the larger rural –

agricultural community in Canada.[6] Participants for this research were selected from the Prairie

provinces of Canada: Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. These three provinces comprise the

main agricultural export economies in the country.[7] Further, these three provinces were the most

accessible and familiar to me as the researcher, having grown up in rural Manitoba and then

having lived in Alberta for nearly ten years. I also have a strong background in prairie agriculture

and am able to understand the climate, culture, livestock and crop choices (and characteristics)

that make up the rural, agricultural communities in these areas because I lived on a farm for the

first eighteen years of my life.

The qualitative, empirical material that comprises my data was derived from in-depth,

semi-structured interviews, as well as observations made from participation in various

agriculture conferences and community events. In addition to the formal interviews undertaken

for this research, I participated in many informal discussions about women in agricultural

leadership, the role of women's voices in agriculture, and the problems that continue to plague

the industry. Farmers, and those employed in the agriculture sector are avid users of social

media, so during the yearlong research process, I created a Twitter account so that I could follow

the prolific voices on current topics and receive general information about agricultural events in

the country. I also followed several Women in Agriculture groups via their Facebook pages, and

I purchased a membership to one of the largest Women in Agriculture groups in Canada, again,

so that I could stay up-to-date and informed about the discussions, events, and general processes

that these groups participated in. The data generated through the different methods provided a

detailed picture of gender relations, reactions to the criticisms levelled at the industry, and

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[6] It was difficult to find people other than 'white', middle-class women in leadership within the sector,
despite my best efforts.

[7] See for example www.statscan.gc.ca/eng/ca2016

overall discourses around women in agriculture. The depth and breadth provided by these methods was further enriched by my commitment to reflexivity and the broader feminist framework that informed the research. I maintained an ongoing journal in which I recorded observations, events, feelings, and thoughts about the things I was learning and experiencing as a feminist researcher in a somewhat anti- or post-feminist research setting.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were guided by an exploratory set of questions around career development, significant professional accomplishments, impact and influence of gender, and future opportunities for women in the field. The research questions were broad and underpinned by the literature related to the deeply embedded patriarchal terrain of agriculture, women's exclusion, their professional experiences around gender in agriculture, as well as scholarship on women in leadership more broadly.

For the final analysis and presentation of the findings of the research, only 40 interviews were transcribed verbatim and used. That is not to say that the remaining 30 interviews were not incorporated into the research. The interviews that did not get transcribed were carefully listened to and notes were taken. These notes were used during the initial coding stages, but not as a source for verbatim quotes and vignettes presented in this research. Not all interviews were useful or informative for the project; this was due to the fact that not all women who were interviewed were professionally employed as high-level, senior managers or administrators or as large agricultural business owners. Women were recruited through purposive sampling methods, but not all recommendations included women in leadership positions. For example, women who were, in title, Executive Directors of their organizations, but only performed basic administrative duties as volunteers, had no budget or staff to supervise, were not included. Similarly, women who were no longer employed in agriculture and who were never in leadership positions when

they were in the sector were also excluded. The data saturation point came when no new insights were being generated and no new names could be referred.

All of the relevant interviews were transcribed verbatim, by either myself or by a paid professional transcriber. The interview transcripts were both hand coded in the preliminary stages (before I had access to qualitative software), and then coded in the qualitative software program NVivo 11. Interviews were coded based on themes from the literature, and emergent themes as the research progressed. In the presentation of my findings, I only attached the participant's position (e.g. Senior Vice President) and sector (e.g. Industry) to the quotes and references in my chapters. For example, if a participant was a CFO of a major corporation, the citation would read (CFO, Industry). This position/sector delineation is so generic because of my desire to protect the identity and anonymity of my participants. There are so few women in high level leadership/management positions, it would be quite easy for someone to identify some of these women by their position description alone.

Reflexivity

Engaging in reflexivity about one's own position as a researcher in the field is not an exclusively feminist strategy, but it is a strategy widely used in feminist research (Taylor, 1998). More specifically, it is also a strategy being engaged by those feminist researchers who are concerned with exploring women's involvement in leadership (Coleman & Rippin, 2000; Whitehead, 2001). What reflexivity means has been the subject of some debate within feminist (and broader) scholarship, but I understand reflexivity to be a process involving "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as a researcher" (England, 1994 p. 82); it should encompass an examination of how participants may position you, the researcher, in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual identity and class, to understand more fully

who and what are under investigation (Pini, 2004). I also acknowledge the intersubjectivity of research, meaning that there is reciprocal sharing of knowledge and experience between researcher and the researched and an understanding that the researcher is part of the production of knowledge (Shields & Dervin, 1993).

For me, one aspect of reflexivity involves acknowledging my rural, agricultural past that precedes paid work and academic study as well the shifts that have occurred in my perspective as a result of my urbanized life over the last fifteen years. Thus, this research was firmly rooted within my personal experience, emerging as it did from my own lifelong interest and background in the agriculture and food production industry. The questions I was interested in as an academic can be traced back to those which plagued me growing up in a rural, agricultural community, particularly regarding the importance of farmwomen's labour juxtaposed against their unequal treatment within the community. I could not always separate myself as the 'critical, outspoken farmer's daughter' from myself as an 'academic' as traditional research paradigms would assert is necessary.

Much like Pini's (2004) work on women in the sugarcane industry in rural Australia, my non-university identities were often of far greater import to my participants than my academic identity. Quite often, my participants were interested in my marital/family status, my experiences living and working in a rural community, my parents' farming operation and my involvement with the farm. I was often able to leverage this 'insider knowledge', or what I call 'farm cred' (or cultural capital) to establish rapport with my participants. I found that it helped put people at ease when they knew that I was from a farm, and not just some suspicious 'city dwelling' researcher who had no idea what agriculture was really about (a sentiment often observed throughout the course of my research with regards to those who lived in urban areas).

For reflexive researchers seeking to understand and critique their adoption of, negotiation around, or resistance to different identities, Judith Butler's (1990) notion of performance is useful. Depending on who I was interviewing, what sub-sector of agriculture they were working in, and their views of people who were interested in agriculture, required a different iteration of my identity as a researcher/farm girl/feminist to be foregrounded. This process of adjusting one's performance as a researcher as you interact with different participants is not uncommon, but one that deserves some consideration in the context of my own research (Pini 2004). This is not to suggest that while undertaking research I took up various gendered identities in arbitrary, thoughtless, and casual ways, for as Butler (1990) suggests, gender is policed and monitored within a rigid, regulatory frame. Rather, it is to acknowledge that our identities are constituted across a range of different discourses, often competing and inconsistent, and constructed not only by us, but for us (Pini 2004). This process, as I quickly discovered, is far messier and complicated than I anticipated.

Assumptions about who I was, and what I assumed about the Canadian agricultural paradigm were often made in advance of me even conducting an interview. Most women employed in the conventional agricultural sector assumed that when I used the term "women in agriculture" it meant that I thought there should be more women working in agriculture, but more specifically that the problem was just a set of identifiable, concrete barriers (lack of technical skills; lack of confidence) to be overcome. Most popular research and discussion within conventional Canadian agriculture regarding women is primarily an examination of the barriers women face and how to overcome them (throughout my chapters I reference all of those different initiatives). They also assumed that because I was from a farm, I knew what agriculture was 'really' about and that I, too, saw the absurdity in the critiques levelled at the industry from

urban consumers who did not even know 'how to tell the difference between barley and wheat'. Most of the time I also downplayed or avoided the fact that I was approaching my research from a feminist viewpoint because many of the most powerful women were explicitly against what they thought feminism was and made that point abundantly clear at the outset of the interviews. There were countless references to the importance of finding 'the right people for the job' and not to place women in positions of power 'just because they were women'.

In order to negotiate these assumptions and retain their candor, interest and hospitality, I made the decision to foreground my experience and identity as a 'farm girl from Southern Manitoba interested in agriculture' instead of the 'curious, critical researcher from the University of Alberta' or 'academic feminist' during the interviews. While the identity of 'feminist' is important to me, it was an identity that brought significant negative connotations for most participants and I therefore did not think it was prudent to highlight this identity. This is not to say that I was purposefully deceptive or duplicitous about who I was; I often spoke of my journey on how I became interested in the research topic and that included a description of my growing interest in feminist theory and research after I completed my Masters degree. In some ways, it felt like this identity was both conferred upon me (because of my rural background) and one that I chose to inhabit in a particular way. This choice precipitated continuous and prolonged reflection throughout the course of my research because I felt uneasy with the fact that I was not being fully transparent with my participants. I was also highly aware of the fact that their assumptions placed me as 'one of them' when, in fact, I really was not. I continually asked myself: was this completely deceitful and was I pretending to be something I was not? Could I justify adopting a 'farm girl from Southern Manitoba' position when it was the identity participants had conferred on me rather than one I myself drew on in everyday life? Ultimately,

this decision about identity foregrounding was motivated by a sympathetic engagement with the context and culture in which I was conducting the research (rural, anti-feminist, etc.). This position has been articulated by other feminist researchers working with non-feminist women (Armstead, 1995). Armstead (1995) suggests that this does not mean resigning from a commitment to feminism, but means recognizing that "other ways of looking at the world do exist" (Millen, 1997 p.13) and that rather than imposing one's own ideological position unilaterally one should attempt to understand these positions.

The same level of identity foregrounding did not always take place during my interviews. I became skilled at gauging how revealing I could be about my feminist leanings and views on various topics that would inevitably come up during our conversations. In some cases I could be fully open and honest about my commitments, but in others I had to carefully select what I was going to reveal about myself. Feminist methodological commitments require the researcher to always think carefully about ethics and power and so in addition to my reflexive investigation into this issue, I was also continually refining and editing my interview guide (to ask the kinds of questions I wanted to ask without creating a division or separation between us), and also how I could best represent my authentic self in the interview, without losing some of that 'farm cred' I felt I had. That being said, being a 'farm girl from Southern Manitoba' conferred a legitimacy for me in the field, and enabled me to make connections with the participants. Being a 'feminist' afforded no such immediate legitimacy. Was it right then for me to foreground the 'farm girl' identity and not the 'feminist' one? I am still unsure about this, and still have that uneasy feeling about how I represented myself. Perhaps my reflexive journey on this is not quite complete. One thing this experience did teach me was empathy: switching roles and gauging how much or how little of one's identity and feelings should be revealed is difficult,

emotionally and mentally tiring work. For many of the participants I interviewed, this complex

identity work is often a routine component of their work in leadership within the industry, and it

cannot be easy.

Chapter Summaries[8]

The first chapter addresses the research question that asks how women are shaping agriculture

policies, practices, and the future of agriculture. As noted in the title ""Trust Us, We Feed this to

Our Kids": Women in agriculture and the battle for public trust in the Canadian agri-food

system", one of the biggest opportunities women saw for themselves was to take the lead in re-

shaping public perception of conventional agriculture in Canada. Public trust is now one of the

defining issues for the Canadian food supply chain. Farmers, civil servants, and non-farming

agriculture professionals are being encouraged by industry and government to ensure that

Canadians know "The Real Dirt on Farming"[9] because "if there is no trust, there is no us"

(McConnell, 2016). The "us" McConnell (2016) is referring to is the agri-food industry in

Canada. Participants that I spoke with saw this call to change public perception as a unique

opportunity for women to use their 'inherent trustworthiness' to advocate for their industry. One

way women saw themselves being able to do this was through the public sharing of their own

food work (within their own personal families) as a way to demonstrate the safety, necessity, and

trustworthiness of conventional agriculture that they perceive to be under attack. The

experiences women have of their own maternal food work are seen as opportunities to amplify

their voices and be relatable to consumers like the 'millennial mom', and, in some cases, as a

tool for career development. While this may seem like an exciting opportunity for women to

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[8] This is a paper-based dissertation containing three distinct presentations of the research findings.

[9] See for example http://www.realdirtonfarming.ca/

promote themselves and their voices within the industry, I argue that it is problematic because it reinforces the disproportionate burden women bear to be 'good mothers' as measured through their own food work (Cairns & Johnston, 2015; DeVault, 1991). It implies women's contributions are corporeal versus intellectual; it also reproduces the antiquated idea pervasive in on-farm gender relations that 'tough men farm and women care and nurture' (Liepens, 1998) and locates it in the public and professional sphere for women.

The second chapter, "Wrangler jeans and pencil skirts: negotiating respectable farm femininity as 'sometimes privileged women in agriculture leadership" addresses the second part of my research question: 'how do women navigate the patriarchal and masculine terrain of agriculture?'. Much feminist organizational scholarship has examined this question in the context of corporate workplaces for women, but my chapter looks specifically at the agriculture sector and the kinds of nuances that exist in that space for professional women. Previous research has shown that women in leadership roles live within a paradox and negotiate at least two cultures: that of leader which is inherently masculine and the wider societal culture where they are socially disadvantaged. Women's approaches to leadership render them highly visible and open to scrutiny, particularly in terms of their appearance, disposition, and management approach. As women leaders strive to achieve credibility or respectability, the rules are ambiguous and complex. I found that women in agricultural leadership face an added dimension of navigational difficulty: having to establish themselves as credible *vis a vis* their 'hands on' masculine coded farm experience and knowledge (e.g. knowing how to drive a tractor or calve a cow). This requirement, what I call 'masculine farm credibility' has roots in the larger discourses of rural, hegemonic, managerial masculinity and has shaped the culture and expectations of high-level, professional agriculture work environments. I go on to develop a conceptualization of

respectable farm femininity to analyze and explain the tensions that arise as a result of being both a woman and a leader in agriculture, when normative notions of leadership and femininity are radically conflicting and where a level of masculine farm credibility is required. I argue that respectable farm femininity illuminates the subtle ways in which particular historic naturalized 'truths' present in on-farm theorizations of gender and agriculture have consequences for women leaders in contemporary work contexts.

The third chapter of my dissertation, "Critical Feminist Hope: Women in agricultural leadership and the struggle for gender equality" takes a slightly different tone than the other two chapters. During the course of the field work and after leaving the field, I struggled with how to best represent the community I was investigating, taking into consideration my own positionality, my feminist commitments around ethics and power, and what I learned during my field work. While I do see many problematic and unhelpful processes, practices, and discourses for women in leadership within agriculture, that is not the only thing I see. Throughout my year-long field research of women in agricultural leadership, spanning all of the diverse sub-sectors within the field, I found that even though the dominant narratives of women in leadership were infused with post-feminist sensibilities and resistance to more fundamental change, there were small (but not insignificant) micro-narratives, ideas and activities, that when read differently (but still critically), have the potential to form the basis of hope for a shift towards a more equitable and sustainable agriculture sector in Canada. Within this third paper I present critically important 'micro narratives', or, stories, experiences, and insights from a diverse array of women in leadership across the Canadian Prairies in an attempt to provide a more complete and comprehensive picture of the makeup and complexity within female leadership in agriculture today. These micro narratives contain discussions, initiatives, and activities that are challenging

the status quo treatment of women in agriculture, from sexual harassment, to supportive parenting policies, to language and power – women are not sitting idly by. It is through a particular, but critical analysis of these experiences as women in leadership that I present a reason to be hopeful, while simultaneously acknowledging that much work still needs to be done. To do this analysis, I employ a critical feminist hope framework: critical feminist hope seeks to locate what is made possible in terms of critique and transformation amidst powerful post-feminist rationalities, as well as what it precludes for women, without becoming complacent, uncritically positive, or losing the critical edge of feminism. This paper is, in the words of writer Rachel Solnit (2016 para 2) "an account of complexities and uncertainties, with openings". These openings, while insufficient to forge claims around large scale, fundamental, structural change within the industry, when read differently, create a somewhat different, but still hopeful picture of an agriculture industry that must listen to the voices of its women and respond accordingly.

In the final chapter, I provide a brief discussion on the synthesis and integration of the three chapters as a whole, as well as some implications of the research and its contributions to the literature more broadly. Women in agricultural leadership are growing in numbers and finding employment in a variety of agricultural-related fields within the sector. They are also being tasked with addressing the mounting challenges related to environmental sustainability, consumer trust, and social equity. It is within this dynamic environment of 'new' (opportunities and jobs due to technological innovation, expansion, diversification) and 'old' (hegemonic rural masculinity, meritocracy, sexism, and underrepresentation) that women must navigate their own way within a sector that is, by most accounts, hesitant to fully embrace them.

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Chapter 2

"Trust us, we feed this to our kids": Women and Public trust in the Canadian Agri-Food System

Introduction

Public (dis)trust of conventionally produced food is now a pivotal issue for the Canadian food supply chain as consumers are increasingly demanding traceability, transparency and sustainability of the agri-food system. Prominent agriculture marketer and Order of Canada recipient Kim McConnell (2016) understands the problem as rooted in consumer ignorance and a misunderstanding of the science behind agriculture. Similarly, Rob Saik, Founder and CEO of Agri-Trends asserts that "the greatest threat to food security in the 21st century is 'non-science'".[10] The term 'non-science' refers to those perceptions that contradict scientific evidence, for example, that genetically modified food products or the agrochemicals approved for use in crop production are not safe.

To ensure that Canadians understand "the real dirt on farming" [11] – what farmers do, how they do it, and why – there has been significant human and financial investment by both the agri-food industry and government over the last decade. Farmers, civil servants, and non-farming agricultural professionals alike are being encouraged to join the national conversation promoting the legitimacy of conventional agriculture because "if there is no trust, there is no us" (McConnell, 2016). A variety of communication and educational techniques are being used in this public relations campaign to engage the non-farming, urban public on these issues.[12] Notably, conventional farmers are being professionally trained by public relations experts to tell their personal stories of what they do as farmers, and why it is important. Commodity

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[10] Saik, Robert. Conference Presentation, "The Future of Agriculture" Royal Society of Agriculture of the Commonwealth International Conference, Edmonton, Alberta. November 2018.
[11] See for example http://www.realdirtonfarming.ca/
[12] See for example "Canada Agriculture Day" https://www.agriculturemorethanever.ca/cdn-ag-day/

organizations are producing and promoting professional documentaries about the importance and trustworthiness of Canadian agriculture and farming practices.[13] New government programs provide grants to non-profit agriculture organizations that deal with improving public perceptions of agriculture[14] and there is a significant lobbying effort to include public trust within the next national agricultural policy framework. At primary levels of education, farm educators are coming into urban classrooms to teach young consumers about how food is produced in Canada and what a career in agriculture could look like.[15]

As part of this large-scale effort, women in agriculture (both on and off farm) are advocating, in gendered ways, for the safety and legitimacy of the agri-food system and its conventional farming[16] practices. This is being done by utilizing a concept developed by Lo (2016) called motherhood capital. This motherhood capital legitimizes the authority granted to mothers as expert decisionmakers regarding their children's food consumption (Bourdieu, 1990; Lo, 2016). Through the usage of their motherhood capital, women are being positioned – and are positioning themselves – as an important voice in re-narrating the story of conventional agriculture through the circulation of their maternal foodwork experiences. Using their authority as mothers (and feeders or caretakers of families) they are advocating for the safety, necessity,

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[13] See for example http://licensetofarm.com/

[14] See for example http://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/agribusiness-farmers-and-ranchers/agriculture-awareness/building-public-trust-in-agriculture

[15] See for example http://www.aitc-canada.ca/en/

[16] Conventional farming, industrial farming or modern agricultural systems vary from farm to farm and from country to country. However, for the purposes of this paper, it is defined as farm practices characterized by rapid technological innovation, large capital investments in equipment and technology, large-scale farms, single crops (**monocultures**); uniform high-yield hybrid crops, dependency on agribusiness, mechanization of farm work, and extensive use of pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides. In the case of livestock, it is when animals are highly concentrated and confined. (taken from https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/envirobiology/chapter/9-3-conventional-agriculture/).

and trustworthiness of conventional agriculture to counter narratives of mistrust and risk. Narrating the performance of their own maternal foodwork is seen as an opportunity to amplify their voices and be relatable to consumers like the 'millennial mom'. While on the surface this may seem like a niche opportunity for professional agricultural women to become more visible, I argue that it is potentially problematic because it subtly reinforces the disproportionate burden women bear to be 'good mothers' as measured through their foodwork (Cairns & Johnston, 2015; DeVault, 1991). It implies women's contributions are corporeal instead of intellectual (Witz, 2000) and it reproduces the antiquated idea pervasive in on-farm gender relations that 'tough men farm while women care and nurture' (Liepins, 1998) and locates it in the public and professional sphere for women.

Much of the feminist rural sociological literature has moved away from Liepins' (1998) gendered dualism because it does not accurately reflect the current reality of gender relations operationalized on many family and corporate farms (Bryant, 2005; Coldwell, 2007; O'Hara, 1998). My research, however, examines the ways that this gendered dualism has resurfaced in new contexts and for new purposes within the agricultural landscape of the Canadian Prairie Region. This analysis echoes a dominant narrative found in early feminist rural sociological research - that domestic work performed by women is essential to the survival of the family farm (Bryant, 2005; Liepins, 2000). Drawing on the findings from my study, I elaborate how women use the power afforded to them through the symbolic capital of motherhood to access larger social platforms that enable them to circulate their maternal foodwork narratives as an antidote to public fear and mistrust of the industry. As a result, the socially discursive practices of 'good mothering' are injected into professional workspaces in agriculture.

In this paper I explore the ways in which the use of motherhood capital is used to legitimate claims regarding the safety and trustworthiness of Canadian conventionally produced food: a phenomenon previously unexamined in this professional setting. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1997) notion of cultural capital and Lo's (2016) notion of motherhood capital, sociological theories of maternal foodwork (Cairns & Johnston, 2015; DeVault, 1991) and women's bodies (Witz, 2000), and the rich literature developed by feminist rural sociologists on gender and agriculture, I show how the attempt to change public mistrust of conventional agriculture now includes what professional women in agriculture leadership are putting on the table to feed their families. The practice of incorporating and narrating their foodwork experiences within the public sphere as mothers is counter to the often strict boundaries women draw between their private and professional lives, particularly within masculine organizational cultures (Gatrell, 2013). This new agricultural public relations strategy is relatively unexamined within Canada but serves as an interesting heuristic to explore more broadly women in leadership within the sector. As Tourangeau (2017) argues, pro-industrialized agriculture frames are constituted and sustained by historically and culturally embedded norms and values, observed here through the deployment of traditional roles and identities of women in the rural and agricultural.

In the following sections I lay the theoretical foundations for this paper by briefly outlining the social- historical context of women's positioning in agriculture, followed by an explanation of the concept of motherhood capital, and how it relates to 'good mothering' and maternal body work and the socially discursive practices therein. I then present the findings from my own research in the Canadian Prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.[17]

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[17] These three provinces are considered the 'bread basket' of Canadian agriculture and their economies rely significantly on their agricultural exports (Statistics Canada 2016)

The findings are laid out in three broad conceptual categories, followed by a discussion of the implications of these findings within the larger feminist agrarian literature.

Literature Review

In Defense of Conventional Agriculture

Advocates (or '*ag*vocates') of the Canadian agri-food system consistently deploy what scholars have labelled as 'technological progressivism'(Kleinman & Kloppenburg Jr, 1991) and 'scientism' (Fennell, 2009) to promote and legitimize their existence as an industry. These pro-industrial agriculture arguments are constituted and sustained by historically and culturally embedded norms and values and are at the center of normative assumptions that drive these arguments and give them their weight (Tourangeau, 2017). Often, this manifests itself in narratives that link food insecurity with farming practices that do not exemplify progressive, technological innovation. Arguments for increased productivity associated with technological innovation hinge on the threat of predicted population growth and insufficient food supply; how will we feed 9 billion people without the use of genetic engineering or agrochemical inputs? McMahon (2015) argues that agri-food development, for example, is coded female and often construed as the hungry woman and child of the Global South in need of technocratic help (p. 401). Transnational life science[18] companies like Bayer continually work to reaffirm science as progress while also claiming to engage in dialogue about public concerns around food production (Fennel 2009).

Gender and Agriculture

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[18] 'Life Science' is a new term that refers to the consolidation of chemical, seed, and biotechnology companies into 'life science' enterprises, for example, Monsanto, Syngenta, and DuPont (Fennell, 2009).

Over twenty years ago it was predicted that the shift to industrial agriculture was likely to have implications for gender and gender relations in the sector (Bryant & Pini, 2006). Feminist rural social scientists have produced an important body of literature documenting the myriad ways that women have been traditionally excluded from agricultural production through lack of access to land, credit, education, training, and decision making (Liepins, 2000; Sachs, 1983; Shortall, 1999; Whatmore, 1991). They have also detailed the different ways in which rurality is socially and culturally constructed, with gender and rural masculinity as key themes (Brandth, 1995). Rural masculinities accentuate the role that technology, physical strength, and the physical body play in maintaining hegemonic masculinity's ascendant position in agriculture (Alston, 2000; Brandth, 1995; Bryant, 2003). Liepens' (1998) work on agricultural discourse narratives emphasize a tough, strong, controlling masculinity associated with men, while farm-based femininity is constructed discursively with domestic objects and activities with caring work and family and community relations. As a result, these dominant meanings support unequal economic and power relations, since the articulation of these narratives of masculinity and femininity enable the circulation and naturalization of 'truths' and 'knowledges', particularly that domesticity and caring are required for the sustenance of the family farm (Liepins, 1998). This observation becomes particularly salient when we examine the current context of Canadian agriculture (and by extension the family farm) being positioned as under siege from those outside of the agricultural community.

The historic exclusion from agriculture also had critical implications for women's position in the public sphere of agriculture for, as feminists have argued, the gendering of private space cannot be segregated from the gendering of public space (Bryant & Pini, 2006). This can be seen in how agricultural women have been under-represented as leaders in commodity boards,

producer groups, agricultural bureaucracies, agricultural research and development, and agricultural media (Alston, 2000; Pini, 2005). The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) notes that, in 2014, the agricultural workforce was 70% male and 30% female; agriculture managers were 75% male and 25% female; agriculture business owners were 71% male, 29% female; and national and provincial associations chairs and presidents were 88% male and 12% female.[19] Women and other visible minorities have had little influence over the direction that agriculture has taken: agriculture is a typically masculine space both on and off the farm (Hassanein, 2000).

Those women who do find their way to management and leadership positions also experience difficulty. In a study of women in agricultural leadership, Margaret Alston (2000) looked at professional women in rural Australia and found that women were mainly appointed as token gestures, and were often left feeling isolated and ignored. Further, she found that women's issues were often sidelined and their presence merely tolerated. Women also viewed agri-political structures as elitist, hierarchical, and insular which attributed to their ambivalence about being in leadership at all. When women are in high profile agricultural leadership positions, they actively create and enact a position that Pini (2005) describes as 'a third sex': a complex, ambiguous, precarious and sometimes contradictory gender performance that requires a continual balancing act to exhibit both masculine and feminine characteristics. This echoes broader gender and organizational research on women in professional positions: women are often under conflicting pressures in their workplaces as they try to navigate the demands of masculine organizational cultures while also needing to display the expected traits of a feminine personality and controlled, self-contained, professional bodies (Gatrell, 2011; Haynes, 2012; Shilling, 2008).

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[19] See for example: (https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/programs-services/agridiversity/agriwomen/fast-facts).

Not all current feminist rural sociological research is characterized by these trends. Work on 'detraditionalized' farming identities describes the ways in which on-farm relationships are more egalitarian with less adherence to ascribed gender roles. More emphasis is placed on progress, professionalism, and risk taking, which closely parallels shifts in the nature of farming, agricultural policy, and global farm regimes consistent with discourses of neoliberalism and managerialism dominant in agricultural policy. Women increasingly see themselves as active and equal partners on the farm, not as an extension of their housework, but rather as part of a larger business operation (Bryant, 2005; Coldwell, 2007). The 'tough men/caring women' dualism is constantly being redefined over time, where farmwomen commonly perform hybrid feminine identities to achieve wider goals of the family farm (Riley, 2009). The gendering of farm work is thus not a process that is fixed in space and time; definitions of what roles are appropriate for men and women in agricultural production are always changing (Leckie, 1996) . While the scholarship on detraditionalized identities is primarily focused around on-farm gender relations, it has not seeped into off-farm professional agricultural arenas. There is little to no contemporary work that examines women's experiences as off-farm agricultural professionals.

Cultural and Motherhood Capital, Maternal Foodwork & The Female Body at Work
For Bourdieu, cultural capital is conceptualized as high-status cultural signals (e.g. attitudes, orientations, styles, and knowledge), typically acquired through socialization, social background and education but generalized as universal standards of intelligence and sophistication (Bourdieu 1990; Lo, 2016). For example, in their negotiations with institutional gatekeepers, upper-and middle-class parents and children often receive positive treatment because their negotiation styles are generally regarded as intelligent and engaging (Lareau, 2002). In Bourdieu's framework, cultural capital is 'homologous': across most mainstream institutions, dominant

cultural standards are applied and consistently privilege the styles and practices of the upper and middle class, creating barriers for the working class and the poor (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Painting a more nuanced picture, intellectuals have also started to discuss how non-elite cultural resources can sometimes gain value, although only in 'niche' fields. For example, feminist Bourdieusian scholars have expanded understandings of gender capitals. Huppatz (2009) argues that in the caring field, feminine dispositions function as cultural capitals that facilitate promotion among paid caregivers. Skeggs (1997) describes how working-class women might try to acquire traits of femininity to counter negative representations of the working class and achieve respectability in the caring field. Unlike cultural capital, though, the advantages of these "non-dominant cultural capitals" (Carter, 2003 p.45) rarely transfer beyond the boundaries of specific niche fields; for example, gender capitals may lose value when a caregiver competes for management positions (Huppatz, 2009).

Lo (2016) develops another conceptual form of non-dominant cultural capital, what she refers to as 'motherhood capital', based on her research with immigrant mothers and their experiences in different institutional settings. Motherhood capital is a concept that attempts to characterize mothers' interactional styles and informal knowledge that signal to institutional gatekeepers their deep caring for and intimate understandings about their children. This concept articulates how mothers can transform domestic care work into a cultural resource to facilitate negotiations outside of the home space. The deployment of motherhood capital describes practices in which mothers extend their care work beyond the home space while also providing a conceptual language to describe how mothers do so as an individualized coping strategy to bargain for better outcomes (Lo, 2016).

Using the work of Bourdiesiean scholars on 'non-dominant cultural capital' (Huppatz 2009, Carter 2003) and specifically Lo's (2016) concept of 'motherhood capital', I argue that women in agricultural leadership use their motherhood capital by transforming or interconverting (Bourdieu, 1997) their domestic feeding practices and care work into a cultural resource that symbolically legitimates the health and safety of conventionally produced food while also countering narratives of risk and mistrust. Women in agricultural leadership use stories and personal experiences of their informal knowledge and practices of feeding their children to signal to people they perceive to be institutional gatekeepers (e.g. the 'millennial mom') their deep care and knowledge of their children through the kind of food they feed them. In this way, mothers extend their care work beyond the home space, into their professional work space, to facilitate negotiations around the use of conventionally produced food.

Feminists have long argued that women's foodwork constitutes a form of gendered labour that produces the heteronormative family (Bugge & Almas, 2006; DeVault, 1991; Parsons, 2014). This foodwork extends beyond the practical task of preparing food to include mental and emotional foodwork, like planning meals, making sure nutritional needs are met, and managing conversations at the dinner table (Cairns and Johnston 2015). Research on the division of family foodwork within heterosexual relationships indicates that women's inequitable share of food labour often becomes more pronounced with the arrival of children, suggesting this gendered burden is heightened with motherhood (Cairns & Johnston, 2015; Fox, 2009). In her influential text *Feeding the Family*, Marjorie DeVault (1991) describes how women are recruited into mothering discourses of nurturing the family through foodwork. The notion of 'recruiting' is useful for understanding how women engage with mothering discourses because it emphasizes how mothers' emotions are impacted by cultural discourses that associate maternal love with

foodwork. Scholars have also noted that the gendered division of household labour can be legitimized through rationales that do not explicitly name gender, but rely upon gendered assumptions. One such assumption is the idea that women are more interested in health than men. Canadian sociologist Brenda Beagan and colleagues (2008) found that in the absence of explicitly gendered discourses "health becomes a central rationale for a gendered division of labour" (p 662). Women, and especially mothers, are not only associated with family health, but are responsible when a household does not maintain a nutritious diet: women must act as "guardians of health" (Beagan, Chapman, D'Sylva, & Bassett, 2008). As Cairns and Johnston (2015) observe, "the ideal mother does not just fill her kids' bellies; she plans mealtimes so that children are able to appreciate 'good food' and make healthy, quality food choices (p 69). In their study of Toronto mothers, they found that the boundary of 'good mother' depends on three interconnected elements: providing healthy meals, socializing children's developing palate, and protecting children from food system risks (70). This also aligns with Bourdieu's theorizations around gender and symbolic capital, as he notes that women are crucial in the intergenerational reproduction of things like taste and prestige. Women oversee their families' symbolic and cultural capital by purchasing status-laden goods, passing tastes onto their children, which could include the 'right' types of food they should eat. As such, cultural expectations of 'good mothering' are tightly bound up with maternal foodwork, where mothers must shoulder the burden of fostering the next generation of healthy, responsible food consumers, or risk being pushed outside the boundaries of good mothering (Cairns and Johnston 2015). In the literatures represented here, however, maternal foodwork is studied and regarded as a private, domestic or household pursuit, but does not explicitly discuss what happens when these ideals and expectations are repositioned in the professional and public sphere for women.

Most of the current scholarship on this phenomenon looks at the professional impacts that occur when women become pregnant and new mothers while working. Gatrell (2013), for example, builds on the theorizing of the sociological study of body work through a new concept, 'maternal body work' to illuminate the contrasting types of body work required of 'good' mothers (according to contemporary health narratives), and 'good' employees who are expected to comport their bodies appropriately through professional and managerial contexts. Maternal bodies, in this context, denotes mothers who are pregnant or caring for infant children. The concept of maternal body work is framed around socio-cultural, feminist understandings of the 'mutable' reproductive female body (Witz 2000), which are often seen to be out of keeping with the norms of professional embodiment at work (Haynes 2011). Gatrell (2009) concludes that mothers felt marginalized and undervalued at work, experiencing the borders between maternity and organization as unmalleable. Professional women are often under conflicting pressures as they navigate the embodied demands of masculine organizational cultures, while also endeavoring to display expected traits of feminine persona (Shilling, 2008).

Further, Gatrell (2007) asserts that the abject, or 'mutable' maternal body correlates with disadvantages in the workplace for mothers when they are defined by their reproductive capacity and located as corporeal (rather than intellectual) beings. Witz (2000) also notes the history of female corporeality, as a "proximate fleshiness, as sense of woman as saturated by her body and existing only in and through her body" (p. 11). Further, she argues that historically women have been over-invested with corporeality and under-invested with sociality, while men have invested themselves with sociality and divested themselves of their corporeality. Associations made between the 'mutable' maternal body and corporeality are damaging to employed women because they compromise employers' perceptions of women's sociality or intellectual

competence. By contrast, male workers are seen to exemplify traits of 'sociality' (consistently rational behaviour and intellectual competencies) who are in control of their minds and bodies (Witz 2000 p.11). As demonstrated, professional women, who may also be mothers, have much to attend to in their places of work, particularly issues that are not related to the work itself, but their bodies, their maternal responsibilities, and their success. It is professional women who work in agriculture that must also navigate these demands.

Methods

In this article I explore how 40 professionally and managerially employed women in Canadian Prairie agriculture see themselves and other women contributing to and shaping the agricultural sector within their respective fields (i.e. government, academia, industry, non-profit etc.). Further, I examine how these women navigate the complex and patriarchal terrain of agriculture in Canada to achieve their success and positions of leadership. This is a feminist research project that furthers my belief that research should not just be on women, but for women, too (DeVault 1991).[20] Feminist research is considered distinct because it begins from the premise that the nature of reality in Western society is unequal and hierarchical (Skeggs, 1997) and therefore is attentive to issues regarding power, social location, and identity. At the same time, I also acknowledge the tensions between sometimes abstract theoretical notions around the cultural constructions of women's bodies and care work and their everyday experiences of caring for their loved ones (Mullin, 2005).

The qualitative, empirical material considered below was guided by an exploratory set of questions around career development, significant professional accomplishments, impact and

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[20] The results from this study will be made available to the research participants, and the author intends to write several non-academic publications (i.e. blog posts, agricultural newspaper/magazine articles) presenting this research for a larger, popular audience.

influence of gender, and future opportunities for women. The interview questions were broad and supported by the literatures discussed above that indicate the deeply embedded patriarchal terrain of agriculture, women's exclusion and professional experiences around gender in agriculture. Interviews were undertaken with approximately 40 women from within provincial government, academia, industry, non-profit, and research and development organizations in the agricultural sector in the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, Canada. These three provinces make up the Prairie region of Canada, and their economies rely significantly on their agricultural exports and products.[21]

Women were recruited through both targeted and purposive (snowball) sampling methods but not all recommendations included women in leadership positions. For example, women who were, in title, Executive Directors of their organizations, but only performed basic administrative duties as volunteers, had no budget and staff to supervise, were not included. Participants were employed in managerial and professional roles, and were also recognized both formally and informally for their demonstrated leadership in the sector. They ranged in age from 25-75, with an average age of 50. The average level of educational attainment was a university graduate degree, but all participants had completed some level of post-secondary education. All participants were European-Canadian. Criteria for inclusion were based on their job title and description (e.g. CEO, Senior Vice President, Dean, Executive Director, Deputy Minister) and a reference or recommendation from their peers and colleagues. The data saturation point came when no new insights were generated from the data and no new names were referred. Names and revealing details about the interviewees have been changed, and each woman was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and anonymity.

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[21] https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/ca2016

To protect the identity of my research participants, I have only attached the participant's position (e.g. high level bureaucrat, owner, president etc.) and sector (e.g. government, industry, commodity group etc.) to the quotes used in my findings section. For example, if a participant was a Chief Financial Officer of a major Life Science Corporation the citation would read (CFO, industry).[22]

Findings

Three key themes emerged from the interview data, each of them interconnected and overlapping with one another. The first theme is that agriculture in Canada is under attack from sources like the 'millennial mom', urban consumers, and 'the media'. For some women, this challenge has serious implications for the family farm and the agriculture industry and how things are typically run. The second theme relates to the first: this perceived incursion on agriculture prompted women to speak about how they can and should put into circulation their motherhood capital regarding the feeding of their families to counter the discourses of distrust and risk. Finally, in addition to mobilizing their motherhood capital related to their foodwork activities, women also saw opportunity for themselves to be the trustworthy face of agriculture, to educate and inform the public of "how great agriculture really is" (Co-owner, agriculture business). As mentioned previously, all the women interviewed were speaking from a professional context from their various positions of leadership within the agriculture sector.

'Ag' is Under Threat

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[22] It should be noted that this position/sector delineation is very generic because of the desire to protect the identity of my participants. There are so few women in high level leadership/management positions, it would be quite easy for someone to identify some of these women by their position description alone.

There is a broad consensus among women that work throughout the agri-food sector (e.g. crop, livestock, dairy) that conventional agriculture ('Ag') is under threat and in need of protection (although none of those interviewed would preface agricultural with the conventional/industrial/modern descriptor). This incursion on agriculture has incited unwarranted fear in the public, "and the media like to portray farmers as these… slash-and-burn, chemical using, animal abusing people to customers so they're so scared of their food (Owner, farm business). The general sentiment expressed by many of the participants was that "they think that you're torturers of animals, polluters…Frankenstein monsters (Senior Executive, Industry). The other 'enemy' of agriculture is the "food activism people saying that the corporate sector is trying to poison the world and suck all the profits out and farmers are being hard done by" (High level civil servant, government). As demonstrated here, and consistent with the literature (Fennell, 2009; D. Kleinman & Kloppenburg Jr, 1991) the problematic 'millennial mom', or typical urban consumer is perceived as lacking knowledge and information on what agriculture really is, and how it is done (hence the public relations material entitled "The Real Dirt on Agriculture[23]") or that "everything they eat is grown, hunted, raised by a farmer or a fisher" (President, National Commodity Organization). As a result, agriculture as they know it, is being unfairly scrutinized.

When describing their views on why agriculture is losing public trust, or 'under attack', many of the women participating in this research deferred to arguments centered on technological determinism and scientism to support their arguments, criticizing their opponents as lacking knowledge and being anti-technological. A strong undercurrent prevailed among the

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[23] See for example: http://www.realdirtonfarming.ca/

interviewees, promoting the necessity and importance of technology throughout the participants' concerns around social license and public trust. As one participant notes, "I would argue that agriculture is one of the most scientifically advanced industries in the planet and yet it's the opposite of how we are viewed publicly" (Senior executive, national agriculture organization). In fact, this participant argued how devastating it would be if farmers had to farm without the use of crop protection products or advances in equipment, and were instead forced to "turn back time and go back to the horse and buggy". This is indicative of how farmers and agriculture professionals view consumers' knowledge of agriculture: anti-technology and driven by unscientific fears. Powerful members of the agricultural community like Kim McConnell (2016) believe that Canadian consumers want their food "free and natural" because they "love animals and the environment", and that average consumer cannot separate out the facts from their values and feelings because they just don't get the science. Similarly, a CEO in a different area of agriculture (agriculture retail business) noted "I think the desire to limit half the technology that's out there when we accept technology in every other part of our life is really unfortunate to me". As a result of this perceived threat to the agri-food industry in Canada (and the location of said threat), many of the women I interviewed believed that it was their responsibility, both collectively and individually, to "advance and protect" it (President, National commodity organization), not only because it was the source of their employment and livelihood, but because of its necessity in feeding the world and sustaining life. This responsibility to protect agriculture manifested itself in particularly gendered ways.

Women and Feeding

As part of their responsibility to protect and advance their industry, interviewees suggested that it would be (and has already been) useful to use their status as a mother – by invoking their motherhood capital– to position themselves as those who are responsible for feeding their family safe and nutritious food, to connect with consumers (particularly other mothers) on an emotional level, and to counteract the anti-technological stance. One high level senior management participant at a transnational life science corporation characterized the food risk debates in Canada as highly emotional and philosophical, stating that there's nothing more emotional than feeding a family, noting:

> And I think that the more we do of it… I think that's a huge gap and opportunity for us…you know when you start doing more of that, provider, kind of mother to mother type pitches… there's many ways to influence change.

She is a very influential person in the Canadian agricultural sector, both in the policy realm and within the industry. Numerous times throughout the interview she spoke of the powerful opportunity and responsibility mothers have to affect change,

> …food is the core of our existence and the only people, and the people I believe that can best influence change…from a public discussion perspective, is a mother.

Cairns and Johnston (2015) note this trend in their own research - this oft depicted, romanticized image of maternal foodwork as a labour of love naturally suited to the nurturing mother. In this context, however, it is being hauled directly into the professional sphere for women.

Further, the ways in which women talk about their maternal food work experiences and the rationale for their food choices in promoting the agri-food industry illustrate how mothers are positioned as guardians of children's health, and the health of the environment (Cairns and Johnston 2015; Beagan 2008). For example, a provincial government employee in the department of agriculture says,

> …we are mothers and we are wives, and we're still seen to be the nurturers. We can extrapolate what we do, the technologies we use in agriculture to those GMOS we grow on our farms, we feed our kids, right? Those pulse crops we use the pesticide on, we know they're safe, the residue is gone, we're feeding those to our kids. I raised my beef animals this way, we use hormones…it leaves less of an environmental footprint when we use hormones. We grow the animals faster…I feed that to my kids, I have no problem with that.

Women must demonstrate their faith in the safety and legitimacy of conventionally grown food by locating it as conscious choice that will not harm the health of their children. It should be noted that feminist scholarship examining the gendered effects of the risks associated with industrial food system demonstrate how North American mothers are increasingly beholden to a new mothering ideal: raising an 'organic child' (Cairns & Johnston, 2015; MacKendrick, 2014). This new mothering ideal requires mothers to protect their children's bodies from anxieties surrounding industrially produced food (pesticide residue, chemical additives, etc.). The argument is the same on both sides of the debate (this type of food, whether it be industrially produced or organic, is the best option for my child) but both rely on the assumption that mothers are the guardians of their children's health and include the pressures associated with feeding children according to a good mothering ideal. A retired senior leadership staff at a different Life Science transnational corporation spoke of the conversations she would have with women,

> …speaking to farm women…about chemistry and biotech and GMO and this kind of stuff, and it was very much that whole idea of, I'm a woman talking to a woman and that's okay, you know, you can eat GMO, I feed my children GMO, you can feed your children too!

Not only do women in agriculture adhere to the same discourses compelling them to conform to good mothering ideals as enacted through their maternal foodwork, but they are highlighted both in the public and professional realm to do so. Schilling (2008) along with scholars Alston (2001, 2018) and Gattrell (2013) note the already conflicting pressures that are

placed on women as they navigate the demands of a masculine organizational culture, while exhibiting their feminine characteristics and body types. This deployment of their motherhood capital is almost a direct reversal of the deeply entrenched masculine culture that permeates the agri-food industry: one that values hard physical work, intellect (vs emotion), and rationality, devoid of emotion, nurturance and domestic concerns.

Women and The Future of Agriculture in Canada

Public trust and social license were at the forefront of many formal and informal conversations I engaged in during the research. Relatedly, so was the responsibility of women to speak up and to speak out, using their motherhood capital and femininely coded attributes, experiences, and dispositions to accomplish this. A different CEO of an agricultural retail company noted women leaders' responsibility to be well educated on the food business in Canada "so that when you're at…the side of the hockey game, or soccer tournament, that when somebody says something that's absolutely inaccurate, that you have something to say about that". The location of responsibility for advocating for agriculture is seen to be resting on the shoulders of women, because of their perceived 'natural' abilities to be nurturing, good communicators, superior educators, and trustworthy. As a top executive exclaimed, "if you think about the public spectrum of trust, moms and farmers are right at the top! So you combine the two, it's like 'oh wow'!" Another participant, a strong advocate of the public trust initiatives in Canadian agriculture and former high level civil servant explains,

> we do have a connection to food in a different way than men do, its traditional, its community…we tend to be the ones who sort of run the food business of our families - people view us as a credible voice on food - so when we talk about what we feed our families and speak up for the industry, our voices may be listened to a little more than men because people view women as credible voices on the topic.

61

This responsibility manifested itself in other ways, too. The non-profit organization 'Ag in the Classroom' that delivers "accurate, balanced and current, curriculum-linked resources on the agriculture and food industry" [24] to classrooms across Canada, is run and delivered entirely by women.[25] A co-owner of a mid-sized agriculture retail store now dedicates most of her time to being out in the community promoting agriculture, organizing community events, and connecting her industry with local politicians, school boards, and institutions because she wants "everyone to know how important and awesome Canadian agriculture is". Another strong industry spokesperson, farmer, and commodity group past president sees her immediate career path needing to be focused almost entirely on public trust. People, she explains, see her as a person who will give them honest answers about her industry, because she has established herself as a "legitimate" farmer, and because she is a mother. What is interesting here is the consistent way that the responsibility to fortify public trust is shouldered by women in highly gendered ways, from feeding families to utilizing social media to community-wide public relations events. When asked what opportunities lay ahead for women in the industry, many women spoke about the potential for women to really build and strengthen public trust, both locally and nationally

> …because its [speaking with a woman] like talking to their daughter, or talking to their wife, they just immediately tend to open up and chat with you a bit more…women could really jump in and do a huge amount of work on the marketing side, saying exactly where their food is coming from (Manager, Agriculture Banking).

The future of agriculture, in some ways, seems to lie with women.

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[24] (www.agintheclassroom.ca)
[25] See for example http://www.aitc-canada.ca/en/staff.html

Discussion

The most striking juxtaposition emerging from this research was, on the one hand, the consistent deferral to technological determinism and disregard for the average food consumer's unsubstantiated "feelings" about the agriculture industry, while on the other hand, the invocation of their motherhood capital regarding feeding practices and the care of communities and the environment. The latter can be viewed as emotionally charged, 'unscientific', and gendered - the complete opposite of the core tenets of scientism professed earlier (Cairns and Johnston 2015). This reflects the larger contradiction that surfaces from the research: the call for women to be open and explicit about motherhood and their feminine-coded foodwork activities within an industry that is predominantly characterized as deeply patriarchal, masculine, and historically inhospitable to women or femininity (Brandth, 1995; Pini, 2005; Wiebe, 1996).

On the surface, this blurring, or even reversal of the strictly delineated professional and private boundaries for women could be seen as a path forward, or as a tool of empowerment for women and their work: a testimony to the choices women have to make and their ability to 'do it all' and be successful. However, if we situate it in the larger context of the historical marginalization of women in agriculture both on and off the farm, and its contemporary manifestations (the lack of women in agricultural ownership, leadership, and media representation) the picture becomes less clear. Further, if we place these findings within the larger scholarship on gender and organizations, or feminist sociological thought on body work, feeding, and motherhood, this picture becomes even more indiscernible, as it begins to look more like a scenario that has already been observed, particularly by feminist rural sociological scholars like Liepens (1998).

The 'tough men farm/women care' dualism (Liepens 1998) still seems an apt characterization of the results of this research. While it might not be directly related to agricultural media as it was in Liepins' (1998) study, it still resonates within larger organizational discourses of public trust and women's superior trustworthiness (on matters regarding maternal and community care). As discussed, women are using their motherhood capital, or their interactional styles and knowledge to signal to institutional gatekeepers like the 'millennial mom', their deep caring for and intimate understandings about their children. As such, they are able to use their stories and experiences as a way to transform their domestic care work into a cultural resource to facilitate and legitimize the types of food choices they are making. As Lo (2016) posits, the traction and legitimacy the motherhood capital garners among institutional gatekeepers, may hinge on the possessors' intersecting identities. All mothers can deploy motherhood capital, but its operationalization may be shaped by the mother's race/ethnicity and social class, among other things. The agricultural leaders wielded their motherhood capital by drawing similarities and adherence to the cultural legacy of white, middle-class 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) ideals. All of the mothers in agricultural leadership studied here were white and middle-and upper-class women. The intensive mothering ideals that were signaled included things like child-centered, expertly-guided food choices, that were a 'labour of love' (Hays 1996 p 8). Unlike Lo's (2016) study participants that deploy motherhood capital to bargain for better outcomes for their children, women in this study deploy their motherhood capital for better outcomes for their industry. This is a sobering thought.

If agriculture is under question (including the way of life of the family farm), and if women do possess a unique ability to assuage those larger fears, then, just as Liepins' (1998) work concludes, caring and domesticity are positioned to save the family farm (and subsequently

agriculture, more broadly). The trouble comes when we start to see how these cultural

constructions of masculinity and femininity (tough men/caring women) are still "crucial to the

production and maintenance of unevenly gendered power relations even when there are clear

examples of men and women living out farming and industry relations that counter these

dominant narratives" (Liepins 1998, p. 385). Other scholarship corroborates these findings: from

women taking on a 'triple shift' working on-farm, off-farm, and within the home and its

contribution to poor health (Fletcher 2015; Heather, Skillen, Young, & Vladika, 2005), to the

low representation of female farm owners, workforce and leadership within the Canadian

agricultural sector writ large (Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council, 2016).

Dragging the socially discursive practices of 'good mothering' and its constitutive food

work and health guardianship practices directly into the spotlight of the professional work sphere

does not land evenly for women, either; the kinds of conflicting pressures women feel about their

maternal foodwork choices alongside the disproportionate responsibility they shoulder as

guardians of their children's health are well-documented (Beagan et al., 2008; Cairns &

Johnston, 2015). These choices and practices are often deeply personal, highly emotional, and

are always subject to social scrutiny, even before the baby is born (Brewis & Warren, 2001;

Hays, 1996). To have these choices on display and subject to judgement in a professional context

in a way that men's are not, is to add more complexity and weight to an already full mental load

for women.

Finally, it is equally troubling that women's marked contribution in the battle for public

trust and agriculture's positive narrative more broadly, is seen and understood through their body

work – the work of feeding their children, and by caring for their communities and the

environment. Anne Witz (2000) speaks of the historic investment in women's corporeality (or

bodies) and their body work (labour, caring, nurturing etc.) alongside the divestment in their sociality or intellect. Men, on the contrary, have historically been invested with sociality and intellect and divested of their corporeality (Witz 2000). By understanding women and their positioning as mothers who feed their children industrially-produced food because it is safe and nutritious renders their value and contribution to their profession through their bodies and body work. One of the tasks of feminist sociology has been to insist that being a woman means more than being in a body; female sociality is built on more than simply fleshy matters (Witz 2000 p 4). When women are defined by their biological/social reproductive capacity, they are located as primarily corporeal (vs intellectual) beings (Gattrel 2009). The associations between the mutable, maternal body and corporeality are damaging to employed women because they compromise employers' perceptions of women's sociality or intellectual competence (Witz 2000; Gatrell 2009). Research also indicates that maternal bodies are associated unfairly with irrational decision making (Annandale & Clark, 1996) and mothers may be judged as 'fecund and unreliable ... unfit for the cool rationality' of professional settings (McDowell, 1997 p. 34). Consequently, co-workers may assume that women's commitment to paid work is lowered (Corse, 1990; Gueutal & Taylor, 1991). Unfavourable views about mothers' work-orientation are illuminated by research which positions mothers as prioritizing maternity over paid work (Hakim, 2011).

This is a complicated conversation because the women who participated in this research were deeply committed to, and proud of their industry. They were willing to use their symbolic capital as mothers and put their personal stories of feeding their children and taking care of their communities into the public spotlight as means of supporting their belief in the safety, legitimacy and efficacy of the Canadian agri-food system. These women were not ignorant dupes, blindly

tricked into telling their stories for some corporate public relations agenda. They were articulate, intelligent, and warm; they were happy to participate in the research and tell their personal stories. I would be remiss if I did not mention the struggle I had in how I represented my research participants because of these experiences and the knowledge that their passion and love for their work, the people, and industry, runs deep. On the flip side, the traditional understanding of gender roles and associated expectations remains largely unquestioned and profoundly entrenched within and among the women in the industry..

There are, of course, limitations to this study. All of the research participants were European-Canadian with no representation of racialized and minority voices. This is not for lack of trying; the industry in Canada is, at all levels, predominantly white, particularly at the elite leadership level. It is unknown whether these views about public trust, motherhood, feeding, and women's superior trustworthiness are shared by people other than white women, an area ripe for further exploration. There are many avenues to explore, using this research as a jumping off point; for example, the amount of money that has been granted by the Canadian federal and provincial governments in promoting and developing the 'public trust' agenda and the kinds of implicit and explicit messaging being delivered to the Canadian public, particularly women. It would also be useful to measure how effective this messaging is, and whether public trust is, in fact, on the rise, and whether or not invoking maternal feeding practices in these narratives is a useful tactic. There is much more to be investigated within this phenomenon, particularly if it involves significant corporate and taxpayer dollars, and, more importantly, the future of our food system.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that the agri-food industry and its modus operandi is perceived to be under threat from the Canadian public. The source of this pressure is understood to be people like the 'millennial mom', the media, and those located in urban areas. As a result, women in the industry are using their voices, albeit in gendered ways, to advocate for the legitimacy and safety of the agri-food industry in Canada. Most significantly, they are using their motherhood capital to authoritatively put into circulation their trustworthy feeding choices and experiences to those outside the industry in order to counter narratives of distrust and risk. I suggest this happens through an alignment with their intersecting identities of being white and middle-and upper-class and the ideology of intensive mothering. Through signaling their expertly-guided, labour-of-love food choices, which becomes symbolically powerful in this social space of food and agriculture, women are trying to pursue better outcomes for their industry, specifically enhanced legitimacy and social license to operate fully once more. Contrary to what Bourdieusian scholars would argue is significant about using symbolic power in order to challenge the "rules of the game" (Lo 2016 p. 709) that seem unjust, the power utilized here is not challenging anything, but rather holding up the status quo.

Through using the legitimacy afforded to them by their motherhood capital, women in agriculture are using their collective power to try and advance an industry that has been historically opaque in its production practices; has a questionable environmental track record; and an uneasy history with its treatment of women. Using power in this way seems, at the very least, troubling for a number of obvious reasons and raises a host of other questions: what of those women who chose not to have children and cannot invoke their feeding practices; what of those women who chose to avoid conventional and GMO food; what of those women who have

worked hard to draw strict boundaries around their personal and professional lives? The answers to these questions could have critical implications for professional women who are also mothers. Using the analytic of symbolic capital of motherhood and its underlying assumptions may ultimately expose these and other broader issues inherent in the food system.

By exposing how maternal food practices are legitimized and deployed through the use of motherhood capital, spaces may be opened up that expose broader issues in the food system; particularly the flaws in understanding, by proponents of the industry, as to why agriculture is being overly scrutinized to begin with. It is not a mistrust based in a simple anti-technological stance over genetically engineered food, but rather much larger issues that include gender, race, class, and the environment. Further, these perceived threats are not just emanating from 'millennial moms', but also 'millennial dads', 'baby boomer grandmas', and 'generation X uncles', for example. They also exist among the next generation of farmers, too! Using overly simplistic tropes of 'mother-to-mother' pitches regarding feeding practices is, by most accounts, an overly simplistic and unhelpful response to the growing concerns facing the sector. More sophisticated and responsive solutions will undoubtedly be needed to address the mounting concerns about how food is produced and how it gets to our plates.

While on the surface the strategy identified and discussed in this research may seem like a tool of empowerment for women, giving them an opportunity to contribute in an unorthodox way to the larger discourses on public trust in agriculture, there is little evidence to show or indicate that lauding motherhood and maternal foodwork in masculine organizational cultures is beneficial or equalizing for women, or in addressing the very complex concerns that surround the industry. In fact, it may add more pressure and stress to women's already full plate of navigating the complex patriarchal terrain of Canadian agricultural organizational culture, while putting

their private choices of how they feed their children on display in another social arena: the workplace. Finally, locating women's contributions to their professional portfolios vis a vis their work of feeding and nurturing their families overshadows their ability to be seen as intellectual and competent beings and that their value extends beyond just 'fleshy matters'. If the goal is to address, respond, and regain public trust in agriculture, perhaps a less gendered and more wholistic response is needed.

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Chapter 3

Wrangler Jeans and Pencil Skirts: Negotiating respectable farm femininity as 'sometimes privileged' women in agricultural leadership

Introduction

Women in leadership live within a paradox and negotiate at least two cultures: that of the leader role which is inherently masculine and that of the wider societal culture where they are often socially disadvantaged. They accumulate social privilege through organizational hierarchical positioning - President, CEO, Executive Director - but also experience social disadvantage because of their gender. Women's approaches to leadership render them highly visible and open to scrutiny, particularly in terms of their appearance, disposition and management style. As women strive to achieve credibility or respectability, complex identity work is expended creating congruence between being both a woman and a leader. In *agricultural* leadership, women face an added dimension of navigational difficulty: having to establish themselves as credible (like a man) vis a vis their 'hands on' masculine-coded farm experience and knowledge (e.g., driving a tractor, doing difficult manual farm labour) while simultaneously differentiating themselves (as a woman, but also from *other* women) in a male-dominated space. This requirement, what I call 'masculine farm credibility' has roots in the larger discourses of managerial masculinity and has shaped the culture and expectations of professional agricultural work environments, particularly for women in a way that it has not for men.

From my research, I argue that the precariousness of women's privilege as leaders in the agriculture industry is played out and either enabled or constrained through the possession of masculine farm credibility *and* performances of respectable femininity. In this analysis I also use Mavin and Grandy's (2016) categorization of 'defending privilege' to document how some

women also reject and challenge gendered and experiential expectations of woman in agriculture leadership, thereby defending their privilege. In so doing, I propose a theory of *respectable farm femininity* to analyze and explain the tensions that arise as a result of being both a woman and leader in agriculture, when normative notions of leadership and femininity are radically conflicting, and where a level of masculine farm credibility is required. Women are required to be both *like a man* (through their masculine coded farm experience), but they also need to be *like a woman* (through the enactment of respectable femininity) to differentiate themselves, as they navigate both similarity and difference in their gender presentation. These tensions manifest through an appraisal process in which members of the agricultural community confer and contest privilege when privilege is precarious.

Three objectives guide this work:

1. To disrupt the notion of privilege for women agricultural leaders;

2. To explain the dynamics of privilege, respectable femininity, and masculine farm credibility and to propose a theory of respectable farm femininity to explain the particularities and complexities of being a woman in agricultural leadership

3. To illustrate empirically respectable femininity, masculine farm credibility, and respectable farm femininity as interpreted from the experiences of women in agricultural leadership

I begin by discussing women agricultural leaders as 'sometimes privileged' and outline research into contemporary respectable femininity. I follow this with a brief overview of the scholarship on women in agricultural leadership and hegemonic rural masculinity, and link this to what I call masculine farm credibility. To illustrate the value of respectable farm femininity, I discuss accounts from women agricultural leaders in the Canadian Prairie Region and their

experiences navigating expectations around respectable business femininity and masculine farm credibility and argue that privilege is contested, conferred, or defended therein. I conclude with a discussion of the implications for theory and practice.

Literature Review

Precarious Privilege for Women in Agricultural Leadership

It is often assumed that women who secure elite leadership positions have achieved 'parity with the One' (De Beauvoir, 1949) in that they share space with men within a gendered order and hold significant organizational power. Yet as women they are also socially disadvantaged and are "simultaneously on the borders, paradoxically both One and the Other" (Mavin & Grandy, 2016 p.5). Women leaders can find themselves in a dynamic interplay of holding power, whilst marginalized in social relations (Gatrell, 2008; Haynes, 2012; Mavin & Grandy, 2016). Within their professional context, they are afforded privilege through their organizational position and their formal titles, however, this experience of privilege is dynamic and sometimes mediated by gender and other categories such as race, ethnicity, ableism, and sexuality. The intersection of one's identities influences experiences of privilege, making that privilege socially constructed, fluid, relational and unstable (Berry & Bell, 2012; Leonard, 2010).

Similar to Atewologun and Sealy (2014) and Mavin and Grandy (2016), I problematize privilege accumulated through organizational position and presume privilege to be experienced as complex and unstable by women leaders in agriculture. As simultaneously One and Other, women leaders may move in and out of privilege because sometimes dominant identities exist simultaneously with disadvantage (Choules, 2006). Atewologun and Sealy (2014) offer an elaborated conceptualization of organizational privilege and propose three dimensions: contested, conferred, and contextual, noting the changeable aspects of privilege over time and

across context. Following their approach, I consider women leaders in agriculture as a 'sometimes privileged' minority in organizations where they face tensions and contradictions in performing as leaders.

Respectable Femininity

Women leaders operate within complex gendered milieus where patriarchy as socio-structural practices shapes gendered relations (Walby, 1989). Gender is enacted within a web of non-discursive and discursive power relations (Mumby & Ashcroft, 2006). Engaging with patriarchy can constrain the femininities appropriate for women to gendered stereotypes, or what has been called "emphasized femininities" (Connell, 1987 p228). To be admired or held in high regard, women leaders face gendered double binds and are expected to perform femininities associated with being a 'woman' whilst also demonstrating masculinities expected of those leadership positions. Thus, women leaders can find themselves doing gender well (femininity) and differently (masculinity) simultaneously against sex-category (Haynes, 2012; Mavin et al., 2014; Shilling, 2008).

Like gender, femininity is socially constructed and contextual; it changes over time, has multiple versions and 'acceptable' femininity may be perceived differently based on race and sexual orientation[26] (Chow, 1999; Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, & Kauer, 2004). Constructions of femininity around body and emotions, and of masculinity around disembodiment and rationality, reinforce leadership as the domain of men and masculinity, where men are institutionalized as 'natural' and women are dangerous (Pullen & Taska, 2017). Women leaders have been definable

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[26] For the purposes of this research, 'acceptable femininity' was a rather homogenous category, as all of the interview participants were highly educated, European-Canadian, middle-class women, shaped primarily by the socio-cultural ideologies and practices of rurality in the Canadian Prairies

by bodies (Haynes, 2012), reproductive capacities (Gatrell, 2013), and shaped by expectations of what is perceived to be respectable for women's bodies (for example, what should be worn, what mannerisms, demeanour, voice, which body size and shape are appropriate), or, in other words: respectable femininity (Sinclair, 2011). Much of the recent work on respectable femininity focuses on women who are marginalized based on race, class, ethnicity, and/or rationality in non-Western settings (Fernando & Cohen, 2014; Radhakrishnan, 2009). Mavin and Grandy (2016) propose that 21st century constructions of respectable femininity play out and are appraised through women's embodiment of elite leadership, specifically through socially respectable bodies and appearance, a phenomenon they call 'respectable business femininity'. Respectable business femininity is the nexus of the struggles and tensions through a disciplining, by self-and-others, of women's bodies and appearance in the elite leader role. This disciplining is a means of appraising women as credible leaders and respectable women where privilege is unstable.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Masculine Farm Credibility

Consistent with the organizational scholarship on gender, being a woman and a leader in agriculture requires a particular gender performance that encompasses both masculine and feminine presentation (Pini 2005; Liepens 1998; Alston 2000). This performance, as a member of what has been called the 'third sex' (Pini 2005), is multifarious and obscure. It requires the simultaneous amplification of a range of normative traits of both masculinity and femininity. On one hand, for example, it requires women in agricultural leadership to be objective, desexualized and rational, unencumbered by domestic duties, while on the other hand, to present themselves as not completely devoid of softness, sexual attractiveness and conviviality. It is a fragile balancing act for women in agricultural leadership, as they manage their sexuality, dress,

intelligence, speech, emotions and knowledge of being feminine, but not too feminine (Pini, 2005).

As feminist scholars have long argued, the categories of masculinity and femininity are not fixed and are historically, socially, and culturally specific. Of course, there are dominant, privileged, and hegemonic ways of doing gender in certain sites and times; scholarship on gender and organizations has demonstrated that both in definition and in practice, leadership is intricately connected to the construction and enactment of hegemonic masculinity (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Knutilla, 2016; Sinclair, 1998). In their classic work defining hegemonic masculinity, Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) assert that,

> hegemonic masculinity mobilizes around physical strength, adventurousness, emotional neutrality, certainty, control, assertiveness, self-reliance, individuality, competitiveness, instrumental skills, public knowledge, discipline, reason, objectivity and rationality (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997 p.121).

This description of hegemonic masculinity, as it is currently manifested in Western society, finds resonance in the literature on managerial masculinities (Pini 2005). Even when discourses of management change, hegemonic masculinity continues to reverberate in how these discourses are conceived and deployed. A good leader exhibits control, competition, reason, efficiency, independence and purposefulness (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Sinclair, 1998).

Previous work that has specifically focused on the construction of gendered identities in agri-political organizations has found that, much like urban discourses of management, rural discourses are constructed in terms of hegemonic masculinity. In this literature, an agricultural leader is seen as one who is strong, determined, aggressive, risk-taking, and knowledgeable (Liepens 1998; Alston 2000; Pini 2005). Scholarship suggests that the tough and powerful masculinities embedded in on-farm constructions of agriculture permeate the construction of masculinities in agri-politics. Those managers operating in the public world of agriculture draw

credibility by aligning themselves with on-farm notions of masculinity. The agricultural leader, for example, may be photographed next to farm machinery or in work clothes rather than a business suit (Pini 2005; Brandth 1995). These dominant narratives support unequal economic and power relations, since the articulation of these narratives of masculinity enables the circulation and naturalization of 'truths' and 'knowledges', for example, the necessity of physical strength of a farmer or of owning a large pickup truck. It is through the articulation of these sets of meanings that dominant patterns of farming and agricultural politics are shaped (Alston, 2000; Alston et al., 2018; Liepens, 1998).

Respectable Farm Femininity

Feminist theorists have long argued that respectability and (sexual) reputation form key dimensions of contemporary femininity (Griffin et al., 2006). Feminist rural sociologists have established that women agricultural leaders are often expected to enact tenets of hegemonic masculinity in their professional work spaces, but are also expected to remain sufficiently feminine (Pini 2005, Liepens 1998, Alston 2000). The prevailing masculinities embedded in on-farm configurations of agriculture permeate the constructions of agriculture in other professional agricultural work spaces, particularly through the expectation of masculine farm credibility. Contemporary constructions and expectations of women in agricultural leadership are sometimes played out and appraised through a dual enactment of similarity and difference: they must possess a marker of masculine farm credibility, alongside their enactment of respectable femininity. For these women, in addition to enacting certain cultural expectations of respectable femininity, they use this femininity to differentiate themselves and their leadership attributes in a highly masculine space, as well as from other women. In this paper I explore respectable femininity as it relates to being reputable, pleasant and dignified through appearance and

demeanour. I juxtapose this against expectations of possessing masculine farm credibility together with leadership and precarious privilege for women in agriculture to propose a conceptualization of respectable farm femininity. Based on my analysis, respectable farm femininity is a discursive and relational process that explains the experiences and navigational strategy women engage in at the intersection of leadership, respectable femininity, masculine farm credibility and being sometimes privileged. These strategies manifest through a display and ongoing enactment of masculine farm credibility to fulfil or satisfy these pre-set expectations (conferring privilege), or as a gatekeeping mechanism to allow women in or keep them out (contesting privilege). Respectable farm femininity serves as a powerful gatekeeper as it forms expectations of women in agricultural leadership roles.

Respectful behaviour is socially, culturally, and contextually constituted (Bolton, 2012). Respect is identified as important to social relations and treating people with respect supports human dignity with those who are respected feeling worthy and recognized (Barilan, 2011). Further, this positive attitude towards a person that comes from favourable appraisal is known as 'appraisal respect' (Grover, 2014). I see appraisal of women's masculine farm credibility as part of the process of respectable farm femininity whereby women (and men) confer, contest, and defend privilege through appraisals of their own and others' simultaneous enactment of respectable femininity and masculine farm credibility. Respectable farm femininity helps explain how leadership and subjectivities are both constrained and enabled through appraisals of legitimacy, credibility, and worthiness in leader roles for women. The process of becoming respectable and maintaining respectability, well thought of, decent, and reputable as a leader occurs within subjective and fluid expectations of what it is to be a 'proper' idealized feminine agricultural leader and the fragility of their privilege (Mavin and Grandy 2016).

Methods

This is a feminist research project that furthers my belief that research should not just be on women, but for women, too (DeVault, 1991).[27] Feminist research is considered distinct because it begins from the premise that the nature of reality in Western society is that is unequal and hierarchical (Skeggs, 1997) and therefore is attentive to issues regarding power, social location, and identity.

In this research I explore how professionally and managerially employed women in agriculture in Canada's western provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta navigate being a leader in an industry that has, for epochs, been dominated by men and hegemonic masculinity. I consider the personal experiences and observations of these women regarding gender, leadership, and the current state of agriculture in the Canadian Prairie Region. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with over 70 women from within provincial government, academia, industry, non-profit, and research and development organizations. Interviewees were recruited through both targeted and purposive (snowball) sampling methods. For the purposes and parameters of this paper, data from only 40 interviews were analyzed as the remainder were not currently professionally employed as high-level, senior managers/administrators or as large agricultural business owners. In this research, the term 'leader' included women who hold positions of power and influence at the top of their organizational and institutional hierarchies. I also consider a leader to be a person of influence and driver of change. Research participants in this study hold, for example, Chief Executive

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[27] The results from this study will be made available to the research participants, and the author intends to write several non-academic publications (i.e. blog posts, agricultural newspaper/magazine articles) presenting this research for a larger, popular audience.

Officer (CEO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), Executive Director (ED), President, Senior Vice President (SVP), Manager / Senior Manager, Dean, Minister, and Deputy Minister positions within and related to agriculture. Also included were women who have founded their own businesses or non-profits in agriculture (with annual operating budgets over 5 million).

The interviews were guided by an exploratory set of questions around career development, significant professional accomplishments, impact and influence of being a member of 'the third sex' in agriculture, advice and future opportunities for young women. The questions were intentionally broad and underpinned by the literatures discussed above that indicate the deeply embedded patriarchal terrain of agriculture, women's exclusion and professional experiences around navigating gender in agriculture. Names and revealing details about the interviewees have been changed, and each woman was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and anonymity. To identify respondents, I reference the position they hold (e.g. high level civil servant, owner, president etc.) and the particular sector they represent (e.g. government, industry, commodity group etc.). For example, if a participant was a Chief Financial Officer of a major agricultural corporation the citation would read (CFO, industry).[28]

Findings

I present the findings by demonstrating the ways in which women leaders both experience and navigate their own professional work environments, and appraise their own and other women's masculine farm credibility, in an environment where they are 'sometimes privileged' (Atewologun and Sealy 2014). The women strive to be perceived as competent and reputable

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[28] It should be noted that this position/sector delineation is very generic because of the desire to protect the identity of my participants. There are so few women in high level leadership/management positions in Canadian agriculture, it would be quite easy for someone to identify some of these women by their position description alone.

leaders through certain gender management strategies as they enact both similarity to men, and difference from men (and in some cases, differences from other women, too) in their gender presentation as leaders. In doing so, they confer, contest, and defend privilege. These efforts and displays of credibility reveal how privilege at the intersection of gender and agriculture leadership is unstable and complex. In what follows I discuss four themes to illustrate the concept of respectable farm femininity.

"You are always obvious": Respectable Femininity and Being the 'Third Sex' in Ag Leadership

The quote, from an Academic Dean in the heading above, succinctly encapsulates the experiences felt by many women in leadership within the agricultural sector. The participants I interviewed were often the only woman or one of the only women in the room at board meetings, senior leadership team meetings, negotiations, or professional development events. "It's been very much a man's world. Everything I've done, it's been me and men" (Past president, Non Profit). Several noted that "when you're a woman in agriculture, you rarely have to line up for the washroom" (Senior Researcher, Government).

Gender and organization scholars have noted that women in management often engage a range of strategies to 'manage gender' (Sheppard, 1989). Those strategies require women to redefine and rework masculinity and femininity. Sinclair (1998) articulates several strategies women in executive boardrooms use to deal with the fact that in their highly masculine organizational culture, femininity is a pejorative term. Much like the participants described by Sinclair (1998) and Pini (2005), women in my research described engaging in a variety of gender management strategies. One of these strategies was dress. Women's bodies and appearance in organizations make a statement about their acceptability and credibility as leaders. Even when unprompted, women spoke about how they chose their professional wardrobes to be

conservative: dark blue and black suits, high necklines, muted tones, pants, or skirts below the knee. This was also represented in participants' advice to young women, by cautioning them in what *not* to wear: low cut and/or tight fitting blouses, bright, attention-grabbing colours, or short skirts. In other words, "don't be a sex pot" (Dean, Academia) or a "floozy" (High level civil servant, Government). This recommended dress code is formulated to conceal women's gender difference and make them less distinguishable, and even devoid of sexuality (Gimlin, 2007). The masculine work environment is "literally 'written on' the body" (Gimlin, 2007 p.363) and, as feminist theorists have long argued, respectability and (sexual) reputation form key dimensions of contemporary femininity (Griffin et al. 2006). Interestingly, though, with many of the younger women interviewed (Millennials[29] / Generation Xers[30]) there was a very clear delineation of what dress was appropriate where. If you had to make a farm visit or literally go to the field with a client, it was important that you wear your Wrangler jeans, boots, and have your hair in a ponytail to display your on-farm competence (Founder, Non-Profit), but keeping some backup dress clothes and a bit of makeup in your pick-up truck was also advisable. This illustrates the complex navigation strategies women engage in as members of 'the third sex', in order to be perceived as legitimate in their roles as agricultural leaders and women. This also demonstrates the ways in which women actively work at negotiating their gender presentation as similar to men (dark colours, conservative, Wrangler jeans) within their professional contexts.

Another prominent gender management strategy for women was the concerted use of humour to "warm up the room" (Past president, Farmer organization), to deflect and downplay

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[29] Millennials is a term used to describe a generational demographic cohort of those born between approximately the mid-nineteen eighties to the late nineteen nineties.
[30] Generation X is a term used to describe a generational demographic cohort of those born approximately early to mid-nineteen sixties till the mid nineteen eighties.

inappropriate sexist comments from men, particularly in professional settings seen in this

exchange between a female Senior VP and a male in the industry:

> Man: If you were my wife I'd never let you talk that way.

> Senior VP: Well first off, I'd never be your wife.

Respectable business femininity requires that women's demeanour remain soft and cordial and

not cross into the terrain of "sour old bitch" (Pini 2005, pg 235). While those norms and

expectations have evolved, there is still a strong sense of how a woman should behave and act to

maintain that respectability. As one participant articulated, you need to be able to control your

"bitch meter" (President, Commodity Organization) and not be too aggressive in how you

present yourself and your ideas. On the flip side of that, one woman revealed, in a moment of

unexpected openness, that she feared that she would be passed up for a big promotion because of

her friendly and personable disposition, leading others to think she was incapable of making the

'tough decisions' required of the job.

Some women saw this ability to bring their 'feminine qualities' to the table as an

advantage, one that distinguished them from the men,

> When I started my career around agriculture I was often the only woman in the room. I always viewed that as an advantage because I looked different, sounded different, thought different, as a result I got to over-leverage my view. I had more leverage than I probably deserved because I was a unique voice (High level civil servant, Government)

As one woman observed, "that's the thing that happens at board meetings…the generally

attractive, well-dressed woman will get a lot of the attention" (President, Commodity

Association).

Women also engaged in extensive monitoring and disciplining their social identities,

particularly by presenting themselves as devoid of sexuality (Pini 2005). Several women

recounted that, when they had to make their on-farm visits earlier in their careers, their first

priority was to make friends with and focus on the farmer's wife, to gain her trust. It was generally understood that farmers' wives did not like or trust young professional women who had to interact, sometimes in close quarters, with their husbands. A mother's advice to her daughter was

> … never wear something or act in a way that's gonna make somebody's else's wife be uncomfortable, because that's the fastest way to get yourself kicked off the farm and that's the fastest way to lose your credibility as a professional in your job (Founder, Non Profit).

This aligns with Acker's (2003) observation that the normatively defined male body has neither sexuality nor gender, while the female body introduces sexuality into the workplace. Similarly, when women had to travel with their male colleagues for work, or participate in social events outside of work, many were very cognisant of how much alcohol they consumed, never being alone with a male colleague, the nature of the jokes and stories they told, and again, how they dressed, "I am super, super careful about low cut shirts and my underwear hanging out" (Founder, Non Profit). Success of a woman leader is about managing one's drinking, socializing, joke-telling, and sexuality because non-participation or avoidance is not really an option (Knights & Willmott, 1999). The rigour these women applied to their strategies ranged from not having one drop of alcohol at work-related events (Co-Owner, Farm Business), to drawing the line at going to strip clubs (Senior Leadership, Industry).

These findings corroborate and reiterate the findings of other rural sociologists work on women in agriculture leadership, by demonstrating that women in agriculture, across all sub-sectors, are still required to enact a particular gender performance that encompasses both masculine and feminine self-presentation, and are still governed by the dictates of respectable femininity within a highly masculine organizational environment. The performance of

respectable femininity at the intersection of demonstrated masculine farm credibility determined, in many ways, the conferring or contesting of privilege for women leaders in this study.

Conferring Privilege: Hard knocks and Blue Ford trucks

Privilege is conferred when women agricultural leaders act within the parameters of respectable femininity, demonstrating their ability to be seen as a woman, while also amplifying certain masculine traits, particularly around their possession of masculine farm credibility. Privilege is dependent on whether women can prove their on-farm experience and their ability to handle the "hard knocks" (Manager, Banking): an essentialized 'truth' (Liepens 1998) of farming. Many women spoke of agriculture as an "old boys club" populated by aging white men who put a premium on the on-farm knowledge and experience. Many of the women mirrored those expectations around masculine farm credibility, too.

> And the credibility that it takes to become a true leader in agriculture, you've got to have a real solid fundamental aspect of what it takes to get your fingers dirty out there first. (CEO, Business Owner)

There was also this sense that if you only had "book smarts" and not enough practical knowledge, farmers would detect and judge that immediately (CEO, Business). Similarly, another woman notes, "I never did finish my degree, the interesting thing is with my role, experience matters more which is really important" (Senior Manager, Banking). One woman attributed part of her success and solid reputation (privilege) in the industry to her ability to "talk farmer" (Consultant, Industry) because she grew up on a farm. 'Talking farmer' was defined as speaking very directly and rationally, clear and to the point, while demonstrating a level of awareness about the industry as a whole.

Masculine farm credibility is also demonstrated through certain kinds of masculine farm apparel, and the ability and willingness to get dirty,

You sit down and talk to a rancher… he doesn't want to see a girl in a skirt [and]high heel shoes show up on his farm … you got to have your boots and jeans on and get ready to get a little shit on your boots. I think we're making changes in how they view their industry and how they view their businesses but it's still dirt in your hands farming (Senior Leadership, Industry)

In order that privilege be conferred, women, or 'girls', need to wear the appropriate clothing in the appropriate context: masculine and rugged dress on the farm, skirt and high heels in the office.

Another way that privilege and credibility was conferred for some women was through their competence and technical know-how in operating large pieces of farm equipment. One woman who co-owned a successful agricultural company, recalled all the things she did in the early days of her career to establish rapport with her bosses and clients. One of these things she did was attempt to drive a piece of farm equipment that she had never set foot in before, because she wanted to be able to say that she had done it (Co-Owner, Business). Nothing about her business or her position within that business had anything to do with her ability to drive farm equipment. Another woman who did not come from a farming background but whose partner farmed, notes that "I never did learn how to drive a tractor…although I use the farm background when I was doing presentations and speaking because it gave me that credibility, you know?" (Past President, Non-Profit). This woman went on to say that she would always check with her husband about the status of the farm or how the crops were doing before she went to any meetings or presentations so that she could speak knowledgeably about their farm, even though her work was about organic certification, and not equipment or the technical specifications of her farm in that moment. Finally, privilege was also perceived to be conferred through the type of vehicle one chose to drive, "I've got the farm cred! I pull up in my big blue [Ford] F-150, and

then they bash me for driving a Ford and then we carry on, right?" (Senior Manager, Banking).

Her vehicle was a particular point of pride and a way for her to convey her legitimacy.

One of the most highly regarded and powerful woman in Canadian agricultural leadership recounted her connection and experiences on the farm to her position within the industry and her reputation around the corporate leadership table,

> …so my levelling in my professional career has been my farm…[it] was very tough when I grew up, so I had the pain of that and the learning from the hardship of that, to [the large farm] that we've been able to grow quite successfully here. If it hadn't been for that initial hardship, then the [industry] experience, then translated back to [my] farm…I would not be where I'm at in my career if it hadn't been for that.

She strongly believes that her privilege was conferred (particularly as an inductee to the 'old boys club') as a direct result of her connection, experiences, and knowledge of farming, particularly making it through hardships and the singular building of their own family farm via hard work and mental tenacity.

Even when women were already firmly established in their leadership positions, there was a deep awareness of how their position was never to be taken for granted and that it was important to assume nothing,

> I think as a woman…and in the bigger political context, what I always had to be conscious of, what I am deeply aware of - I don't come into the room with the credentials already established. Even as a farmer. Even as a farmer among farmers. I don't come in with my credentials already on the table. I usually have to come in, even as the president, I'd have to come in and establish my credentials in one way or another (Past President, Non-Profit; Founder, International Non Profit, Farmer).

Privilege among women in agriculture leadership was consistently conferred through the display of masculine farm credibility – from experience, to dress, to equipment and transportation choices – women felt they needed to boldly enact and exhibit their worthiness by the figurative 'dirt' on their hands, demonstrating their ability to be, in some ways, like a man. As one senior

government agricultural civil servant observes, "I know from myself what gets me the most mileage is that I too am a farmer—hands down". While many of these women held positions of power via their organizational positioning, it is also evident that their privilege is not always stable and that they continually needed to work on establishing or re-establishing that privilege via their masculine farm credibility, layered on to the negotiation of their respectable femininity.

Contesting Privilege: "Farm credibility is old boys. It is what it is. And it's quite annoying"

Research participants who did not always possess the right kind of masculine farm credibility felt the uneasiness and frustration that came with this unwritten job requirement in their respective fields. This was particularly pervasive in the government and commodity group sector, both within the bureaucracy and in research and extension. One senior researcher for a provincially funded research consortium noted,

> I'm not from a farm. And one of the great annoyances when I worked at [provincial agriculture department] was when they came to us - they always described their value to the department as back to the farm, ignoring the professional development skills that people bring to the table. If you were from the farm, they always made it sound like you were a better person than the rest (Senior Researcher, Government)

Another senior researcher in a different area of agriculture observes that she will never be privy to the elite inner circle of women from industry because she does not have the farm background. "I will never be one of them…I'll have trouble getting into the inner circle with the women". It is interesting to note that the women's elite inner circle is also tightly guarded with the same requirements as those of the men's (recalling the old boys club of agriculture). Women know or know of one another in the industry: Canadian Prairie agriculture circles are very small, and knowledge of one's legitimacy and farm background (or lack thereof) was often known far and wide. Possessing 'legitimate' and rightfully earned, merit-based farm credibility was one way that women attempted to distinguish themselves from other women in the industry, too.

These high level positions of privilege were fiercely guarded by women and that
manifested itself through a strong and pervasive anti-affirmative action stance among a startling
amount of research participants. "You need to be able to earn your spot. I truly fundamentally
believe that" (CEO, Ranch). When asked if she thought there was a need for more women in
positions of leadership, one woman noted,

> I don't think you need to be in a board position because you're a woman – that's just
> really not what I believe in. I think if you can do the job well and you're a woman, great!
> If you're a guy and can do the job well - great. (Co-Owner, Ag Retail).

Time after time women spoke of the importance of finding 'the right person for the job' and
women not being hired or promoted 'just because they're women'.[31]

> I believe you get the job on merit. And…if you don't have the merit, get it! Don't
> complain and bitch about it. Go and do something. Go and be the best at what you can be,
> as opposed to saying 'well, I didn't get it because of this'. No! You didn't get it because
> you didn't get it. Now figure out how you're going to get it if that's what you want, go
> and get it. But to say fifty percent of everything should be female, I think that's
> absolutely absurd and rubbish! (CEO, Ag Marketing)

Many women did not elaborate on what those 'right' requirements would be, or who got to
adjudicate them - but the tone and prevalent topic of the need for farm experience leads me to
infer that some form of masculine farm credibility is a piece of what makes you 'the right person
for the job'. This anti-affirmative stance was a way that participants discursively created a
gendered 'other' against who they could define themselves (or demonstrate who they were not)
as ones who 'earned their spot', who were legitimately the 'right person for the job' and not just,
"quota fillers" (Senior VP, Industry) appointed for "diversity calculations" (Senior VP, Industry).

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[31] It should be noted that at the time of the interviews, and continuing today, there were/are a lot
of discussions within Canadian agriculture circles about the conspicuous and prolonged absence
of women in leadership, on boards, and as farm owner/operators. These discussions also came at
a time when the newly elected Federal Liberal party announced the first gender balanced cabinet,
a move many of the women, with whom I interviewed, took issue.

Through the process of rhetorically distancing themselves from other women (presumably those hired because of these presumed affirmative action policies) women in agriculture leadership differentiate themselves from other women while simultaneously aligning themselves with their similarity with men (being hired on merit alone).

Those women who did not have the masculine farm credibility consistently said that they needed to go above and beyond their expected deliverables, while also putting effort into developing relationships with farmers and industry experts. "I have worked so hard to build relationships. And so, when I lacked the credibility and knowledge, I was working on building relationships" (High level civil servant, Provincial Government). Another young (late Millennial) leader in the commodity sector noted that because men are not used to seeing young women in leadership roles there is a need for women leaders to establish legitimacy almost immediately:

> I think that what you have to do is you have to prove yourself a lot more quickly than you would if I were a young man in this role. And so I think you have to establish credibility very quickly…the expectation is that women are going to have to work a little harder and faster. I think if you can do that, you can be a lot more confident. I don't worry about the fact that I don't have a farm background. I don't worry about the fact that I'm often in a room with much older men and I am a younger woman. I don't worry about those things *as much* if I know that I can prove myself. And it's taken me three years to get here.

Other times, women mentioned how they would be 'tested' by farmers or other influential players in the sector,

> And they'll ask you a couple of questions to test you out, and they'll want to see what kind of knowledge you have and nine and a half out of ten times…you're gonna get a stamp of approval just because you can get across that you understood their industry without being arrogant about it (Senior Manager, Agriculture Banking)

Granted, it appears privilege is generally conferred in this situation, but, it should also be noted that "without being arrogant about it" is another example of how women enact respectable

femininity, not being aggressive or arrogant, but maintaining that warm and kind female societal role expectation in their professional display of credibility and knowledge.

Defending Privilege: Being true to yourself and unapologetic about leadership style

In speaking to a broad cross-section of women leaders in the industry, there were also some women who rejected and challenged the idea that they needed to enact a 'third sex' subject positioning or that they were somehow unqualified if they did not possess enough similarity to a man via their masculine farm credibility. When women reject and/or challenge certain constructions of acceptable femininity or the requisite masculine farm credibility, they also defend their privilege. Privilege can be defended when women take a stand against prescriptive norms of respectable femininity and masculine farm credibility as being part of their legitimacy or credibility as a leader. Some of the strongest voices of dissent came from two younger women who co-founded a provincial Women in Agriculture group. This group has grown in size and recognition and is a well-used resource for many women working in agriculture in Canada. These co-founders are asking difficult questions around gender inequality within the industry, while also raising awareness around sexual harassment, sexual assault, and the institutional silencing mechanisms that prevent women from speaking out. These women are strong and fierce advocates for women in agriculture: "We don't want the next generation of women to pay the same dues that we did…We have to make it better for them, for whatever they're going to run up against. We should be doing everything we can" (Co-founder and President, Non Profit). This included pushing back against expected gender performances and other expectations:

> It was really just focusing on my skills and abilities and not worrying if they were feminine or masculine or how they'd be perceived. It was really just my own skills and using those instead of trying to emulate what I thought I should be at the boardroom table (Co-founder, Non Profit)

When speaking about leadership, and the ability to be a leader in agriculture, she said

> I think everyone in this industry is a leader in their own way, and everyone in this industry has something to contribute, no matter how big or how small it is. Whether it's your first day in the industry or you've been in the industry for 70 years.

Several other younger women, particularly in the not-for-profit sector and a few business owners, many of who did not come from any kind of farm background, were not intimidated by the fact that they did not have masculine farm credibility, because they felt like what they were doing was important and certain kind of behaviours, gender presentation, and credentials did not have any direct relevance to their work.

Another example of how a woman challenged certain gendered requirements was through leadership style. A long standing civil servant spoke of how she refused to lead her staff in the rude, abrupt and disrespectful way that she saw many of her male colleagues do. She outright rejected the hegemonic masculine style of leadership that she saw all around her throughout her tenure in the agriculture department, and instead worked tirelessly to create a different work environment for her staff.

> I have been very intentional that the feminine side of me is who I am as a leader. I am not going to become the butch. I am not going to use crude language. I'm not playing that game… And my staff will tell you that I have very high standards, but I treat them with the utmost of respect. You will never see me yelling or [using] condescending, disrespectful behaviour. (High level civil servant, Government)

She was highly aware of what she was doing and how different her approach to leadership was in that department. Part of her rebellion was also to wear "funky shoes" and have an eclectic fashion sense, to go against the norm of wearing conservative dress clothes and dark, drab colours.

Other women also felt that it was most important to be authentic and transparent, and that trying to 'fit in' or hide their lack of farm experience was not a smart or sustainable career move.

"I felt I had to be who I am… and… so I decided I better be true to myself because I couldn't keep up a pretense for very long and, eventually, people would see through that (Executive Director, Non Profit and Research). A common strategy with these women was to focus on the relationship building, and to continually build on their existing professional skills and experiences. Granted, many of them still felt the slight unease of not having the 'dirt on your hands' farm experience, but worked hard to not let that get in the way of their success, or take up too much of their mental energy. All of the women who participated in the research were not afraid to speak of how much they loved their industry: the people, the work, and the impact they had on their communities. Further, as many of these agricultural organizations became increasingly professionalized, and as more and more women are joining the ranks of senior staff (although, to be clear, this number is still quite low) things are slowly and incrementally changing.

Discussion

At the nexus of embodied, masculine leadership requirements and ambiguous expectations of respectable femininity, women in agricultural leadership experience a myriad of conflicting requirements that manifest through self-and-other disciplining of appearance and demeanour as well as overt and covert gatekeeping of high level leadership positions. Being 'the right person for the job' is a deceptively simple prerequisite for a job that has seemingly more unwritten requirements than written ones.

Respectable farm femininity illuminates the subtle ways in which particular historic naturalized 'truths' present in on-farm theorizations of gender and agriculture, particularly rural, hegemonic, managerial masculinity, have consequences for women agricultural leaders in contemporary work contexts. While I acknowledge the ways in which on-farm gender relations

109

are slowly changing and efforts are being made to promote and train women leaders in the sector, there remain those undercurrents that signal 'true' agricultural leadership can be only be garnered if there is an alignment with on-farm notions of masculinity and a tangible demonstration of that likeness to men and masculinity prior to advancement.

Being a woman and a leader often requires a particular gender performance that encompasses both masculine and feminine self-presentation. These findings demonstrate the significant emphasis women leaders place on looking and acting the feminine part including: clothing and 'doing' respectable femininity (recall the use of humour, non-arrogant ways of "proving yourself", what *not* to wear), while also securing their role as highly regarded, dignified, reputable and well thought-of leaders. Hence, women are subject to the reflections of a multi-pane mirror (Mavin and Grandy 2016); they experience pressures to conform to notions of respectable femininity through their body and behaviour to maintain respectability and retain privilege as a credible woman leader. While exact performative expectations are less clear, their accounts reveal efforts to self-and-other discipline ('control your bitch meter'; anti-affirmative action) to ensure women are acting according to those naturalized truths associated with on-farm femininity (Liepens 1998). These feminine expectations are not entirely different from those articulated by other gender scholars who note the myriad ways that women must act 'correct' or 'proper', 'self-restrained' and 'balanced' in masculine organizational contexts (Cole & Zucker, 2007; Radhakrishnan 2009; Mavin and Grandy 2016; Pini 2005).

Privilege is not guaranteed for women agricultural leaders, despite high level positions and their competent performance therein. At the intersection with gender, privilege (through organizational position) is relational, fluid and dynamic and can be stabilized or destabilized through self-and-other appraisals and masculine farm credibility. Achieving the right

combination of femininity and masculinity, a likeable-ness to both men and women, farm credibility is vital to having privilege conferred by men and other women. By extending Atewologun and Sealy (2014) and Mavin and Grandy's (2016) work vis a vis integrating women's appearance, behaviour, *and* on-farm masculine work into existing understandings of 'conferring' and 'contesting' privilege, I further explore the fragility of privilege, particularly when combined with embedded notions of managerial masculinity and acceptable femininity. My work, alongside that of Merilainen, Tienari, & Valtonen (2015) on the ideal executive body, and Pini's on the 'third sex' of agriculture, serve as useful starting points to better understand such complexities.

Accessing and maintaining privilege at the intersections of gender, body, organizational position, and previous farm experience, is relational, played out through how women leaders conduct themselves, their appearance, and their display of masculine farm credibility. Subsequently, this is how other women and men afford them privilege and respect. When they do get respectable farm femininity 'right', privilege as a leader is rewarded and conferred; for example, feeling confident that their position in the 'old boys club' is a result of their hard work and tribulations on the farm. These accounts reveal a prevalence of contesting privilege, manifested through strong gate-keeping behaviour and insistence that positions of leadership should be awarded to 'the right person for the job', but which raise questions about any clear norms of what those requirements, of women's appearance, behaviour, and credibility, should be.

Overall, the norms of respectable farm femininity are ambiguous. Efforts to confer, contest, and defend privilege illustrate how many women embrace, resist, fail and navigate through such nebulous constructions of acceptable femininity, farm credibility and leadership.

My research illustrates, in some cases, how women acknowledge particular constructions of respectable farm femininity, but challenge and/or reject them, defending their right to be who they want to be as a leader. The co-founders of the Women in Agriculture non-profit organization have faced their share of sanctions (loss of privilege) by speaking out against the problematic status quo treatment of women in the industry. In rejecting the disciplining and gatekeeping of women and their bodies, however, women's efforts to contest and defend privilege may offer space for challenge and disruption - a disruption that forces less emphasis on the stereotypically feminine appearance and behaviour, and shifts it to the skills, professional development, attitude, and visioning that are brought to the table.

Conclusion

There is limited empirical work exploring how women in agricultural leadership navigate the everyday choices about how to dress, perform, and display their legitimacy at work. I have discussed women's accounts of their choices, experiences, and attitudes to illustrate a theory of respectable farm femininity. This conceptual framework helps explain agricultural women leaders' struggles and navigational strategies in their quests to be evaluated as credible and respectable as they work to emulate both similarity and difference in their gender presentation . Respectable farm femininity reflects a discursive, relational, and social process experienced by women leaders as One and the Other, simultaneously holding power and being marginalized. Respectable farm femininity also addresses the call to render visible the covert and often-invisible factors which undermine women's capacities to aspire to and achieve success in high level leadership roles (Meister et al. 2017).

Masculine farm credibility has a particular stronghold on the unwritten job requirements of professional women in the sector as it is used to confer and contest privilege. It is an added

dimension of the already complicated minefield women must navigate in their organizational environment, a condition that is often beyond their control and sometimes not related to their actual job requirements. This exists alongside the expectations of respectable femininity juxtaposed with the hegemonic masculinity management styles often expected of women in agricultural leadership.

My work on respectable farm femininity extends Pini's (2005) work on women performing as members of 'the third sex' in agriculture politics by adding some depth to the analysis, while also extending the research field to women in Canadian Prairie agriculture. This research also builds on the work of Mavin and Grandy (2016) and Atewologun and Sealy (2014) and their scholarship on the 'sometimes privileged' position of women in leadership to include a different organizational context – that of agriculture. This analysis focused on an agriculture-specific tenet of the masculine stereotypes connected to leadership more broadly, while layering it onto the already established notions of respectable femininity that women feel pressure to enact as leaders, particularly in male dominated fields. Out of this layering of experiences I propose 'respectable farm femininity', to capture the social, relational and discursive processes women go through in their career journeys to become leaders within agriculture and illustrate how privilege as social and professional advantage is not guaranteed for women leaders, despite their senior level positions and professional skills. Privilege can be stabilized or destabilized through self- and-other appraisals of masculine farm credibility and experience. Having the correct or acceptable level of masculine farm credibility, along with the right mix of respectable femininity and masculine management style is key to having privilege conferred by other women (and men).

This research comes at a time when women in leadership has become a popular and debated topic within many agriculture circles in Canada. Amid this discourse, women are challenging and rejecting the antiquated and unfair discourses, processes and requirements that are assumed to be normative in the agriculture world. These challenges are often small (wearing 'funky' shoes) and sometimes from the margins (non-profit), but they are undeniably gaining a foothold within the minds and hearts of women in all sectors and levels of agriculture. Women defend their privilege by insisting that their diligent work, professional skills, and strong relationships are key to their success and legitimacy as leaders, not their ability to drive a tractor, own a pickup truck, shovel manure, or endure a crop failure.

Women in agriculture leadership feel pressure to enact and embody a certain kind of respectable femininity. The implications for them if they do not get 'it' right results in a destabilization of privilege; leadership is not a matter of "having a body and taking it into an organization" (Bell & Sinclair, 2014 p. 270). In the deeply patriarchal and hegemonically masculine paradigm of agriculture in the Canadian Prairies, leadership emerges from a complex web of gendered performances and expectations. Women in agriculture are judged on job performance, appearance, and their masculine farm credibility, while men are judged on their work (Alston, 2000; Brower, 2013; Pini, 2005). By drawing attention to and defining respectable farm femininity I have communicated its potential power in constraining women's inclusion and opportunities in the agricultural sector while at the same time strengthening women's agency in becoming more aware of the antiquated and irrelevant logic on which it is based. Integrating discussions of respectable farm femininity into organizational diversity and leadership development programs, for example, has the potential to disrupt gendered discourses of women needing to enact the perfect balance of gender presentation and farm credibility as elite leaders in

the sector. Furthermore, without addressing the role of androcentrism in the complex, wicked problems related to food production, distribution, and consumption globally, solutions will be incomplete, as patriarchal structures will continue to be reproduced and thus, women will continue to be marginalized.

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Chapter 4

Critical Feminist Hope: Women in agricultural leadership and the struggle for gender equality

Introduction

Within Canada's multibillion dollar agricultural sector, varying degrees of effort are being made to promote the importance and placement of women in leadership positions. Similarly, around the globe attempts are being made to foster the inclusion and participation of women, but compelling evidence exists for the gendered nature of leadership in almost every facet of agriculture (Alston, 2000; Pini, 2005). Although organizations may be formally committed to gender equality in their programs and policies, informal biased practices based on management's masculinist culture undercuts these processes (Coate & Howson, 2016). The Canadian agriculture industry also faces a multitude of other socio-economic and environmental challenges due to increasing industrialization, the erosion of consumer trust, and declining government support for rural communities. Given this context, it appears that there is little room for hope for a more sustainable, just, and equitable culture of agriculture in Canada.

The production of a persistent mood of hopelessness has also arisen within feminist scholarship in recent years, particularly around a generational model of progress which is widely imagined to have failed (Coleman & Ferreday, 2010). Feminism has been so successful in achieving particular equalities (for white, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgendered women) that, in general, women see it as irrelevant - or worse - as boring. Women, it is understood, can 'be anything' they want: the barriers for women have been removed (from the workplace, politics, sport etc.); feminism has completed its task of achieving equality between the sexes and is no longer necessary (McRobbie, 2009). On the contrary, a different version of feminism has gained extraordinary levels of popularity and luminosity in popular culture; "feminist" has emerged as a

desirable label and identity, and almost everything now "is a feminist issue" (McRobbie, 2015 p. 612). This version of feminism, however, has been identified as highly problematic by feminist critics suggesting that the influence of neoliberalism on feminism - now understood as 'post-feminism' - serves to recast questions of gender equality in personal, individualized terms, obscuring any political critique of social, cultural, and economic forces and structures (Rottenberg, 2014). Women, for example, are seen as underrepresented in leadership not because of institutional sexism and masculine managerial cultures, but because they are simply lacking in confidence and motivation to secure those top positions (Sandberg, 2013). Within a post-feminist work culture influenced by neoliberal rationalities, all individuals regardless of gender, class, race, sexuality or ability, are positioned as having equal opportunity to succeed if they work hard enough. Feminism, then, is either seen as irrelevant and boring, or so individualized and narrowly focused that the structural change required for equality, is nearly impossible.

In this chapter I address this debate by consciously taking a different, more hopeful perspective – seeking to deal with the simultaneity of hope (by exploring the ways in which discourse, policies, and practices are changing in favour of greater gender equality in the agriculture sector) and hopelessness (that the deep entrenchment of post-feminist sensibilities have effectively shut down the possibility for fundamental transformation). As Rachel Solnit observes, this hope is not a "sunny everything-is-getting-better narrative, though it may be a counter to the everything-is-getting-worse one. It is rather an account of complexities and uncertainties, with openings" (Solnit, 2016 para 2). This chapter accounts for some of those complexities, while also demonstrating the emergence of those 'openings'. These 'openings', while insufficient to forge claims around large scale, fundamental change within the industry, when read differently, create a somewhat different but still hopeful picture of an agriculture

industry that must increasingly listen to the voices of its women and respond accordingly. To do this I use a critical feminist hope framework, first developed by Wood and Litherland (2017). A critical feminist hope perspective enables a more nuanced analysis of the ways neoliberal, post-feminist rationalities interact within the agricultural sector, particularly among women in leadership. Critical feminist hope seeks possibilities for critique and transformation amidst powerful post-feminist rationalities, while simultaneously acknowledging what these rationalities preclude for women, without becoming complacent, uncritically positive, or losing the critical edge of feminism.

Literature Review

Post-feminism and Organizational Leadership

Post-feminism is a complex concept with multiple, contested interpretations. As the arguments for and against post-feminism have been discussed substantively in many other places (Gill, 2011), I will only highlight a few key arguments here. Broadly speaking, post-feminism is positioned as part of a contemporary neoliberal fashioning of femininity. The neoliberal feminist subject is feminist in the sense that she is distinctly aware of current inequalities between men and women. The same subject is, however, simultaneously neoliberal, not only because she disavows the social culture and economic forces producing this inequality, but also because she accepts full responsibility for her own well-being and self-care, which, according to Rottenberg (2014), is increasingly predicated on crafting a "felicitous work-family balance based on a cost-benefit calculus" (p.420). The neoliberal feminist subject is thus mobilized to convert continued gender inequality from a structural problem to an individual one (Rottenberg 2014). McRobbie (2009) has argued that popular culture of the 1990s and 2000s evidenced an undoing and dismantling of feminism as something "no longer needed" that "young women can do without"

(McRobbie, 2009 p.8). Such an undoing was achieved by taking into account notionally feminist values such as 'choice' and 'empowerment' while at the same time aligning them with neoliberal rationalities so as to reconfigure such notions as wholly individual, personal, apolitical endeavors (Wood & Litherland, 2018). Gill (2007) refers to this as "postfeminist sensibility"; it locates agency in the female body, finds 'empowerment' in making the right consumer choices, and emphasizes women's right to 'choose'. Feminist scholars argue that although post-feminism is framed as universally 'empowering', it primarily describes a white, economically successful, young (hetero)sexual female subject (Gill, 2011). Feminism, it has been noted, now has a new luminosity in popular culture, it acts as a 'cheer word', used to signify the vague celebration of women in a way that is unlikely to pose "any kind of challenge to existing social relations" (p. 619).

Feminist organizational scholars also examine the ways that post feminism tends to depoliticize many of the fundamental issues advanced by feminism because it is predicated on the erasure of the issues that concern the overwhelming majority of women across the globe (Rottenberg 2014). What does it mean, feminists are asking, that a movement once dedicated to women's liberation is now being framed in extremely individualistic terms, consequently ceasing to raise the spectre of social or collective justice? This depoliticized female subject translates well in popular responses to gender inequality in the workplace. A notable example is Facebook Chief Operating Officer, Sheryl Sandberg's bestseller *Lean In* (Sandberg, 2013). The catchphrase 'lean in' refers to women changing their positions in society by taking advantage of or 'leaning in' to opportunity, leadership and pursuit of professional careers (Nash & Moore, 2018). Rather than acknowledging and working to change hegemonic social structures, the neoliberal feminist subject is asked to change her attitude to work by gaining confidence, making

the right choices, and working harder. Feminists critique this approach because it asserts that women's lack of 'ambition' stands in for inequality (Rottenberg, 2014). For people like Sandberg (2013), 'working together' for women's individual empowerment is a way to circumvent the use of the word 'feminism'. This post-feminist reading of empowerment places the burden of responsibility for women's under-representation in leadership positions onto individual women rather than organizational inequality regimes (Nash & Moore 2018).

The effects of the entanglement of post-feminism and neoliberalism are wide ranging. Neoliberal organizational cultures are constructed as gender-neutral, logical, and meritocratic and employees are often promised that "talent, hard work and commitment will be identified and rewarded" (Morley, 2013 p. 124). Women (and other under-represented groups) are positioned as having equal opportunity to succeed within these inequality regimes, the existence of which is denied. Women's experiences are then cordoned off from the public spaces of the organization, thereby silencing their experiences of cultural sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism, and ageism (Gill 2011). Nash and Moore (2018) contend that within scientific organizations and departments, a post-feminist social climate which assumes gender equality, yet privileges men and an ethic of entrepreneurship, renders gender inequality 'unspeakable'. Women in the sciences, for example, disavow gendered inequalities to normalize themselves in a neoliberal environment in which inequalities are discursively erased through the ideology of meritocracy.

Feminism and Hope

On the other side of contemporary feminist political debate is the assertion that hope is central to marginal politics that speak of desires for equality, emancipation, or simply a better life. Feminism, then, can be characterized as a 'politics of hope' (R. Coleman & Ferreday, 2010) making possible a "vision of social change" (hooks, 2000 p.43). Despite this, as illustrated,

feminist scholarship sometimes presents a critical and fairly hopeless portrayal of progress and change, or even failure in an era of post-feminist repudiation and neoliberal co-optation (Coleman & Ferreday, 2010). Yet, as Wood and Litherland (2017) argue, feelings of frustration and failure need not preclude hopefulness. Hope facilitates actions that aim towards specific forms of social transformation, but it also acts as a source of motivation in the present, granting drive and energy to resist inequalities and fight for change (p 916). Taking a position of hope need not lead to complacency and vapid optimism (Coleman & Ferreday 2010). In a special edition journal publication, "Hope and Feminist Theory" (2010)[32], feminist scholars grapple with how hope figures and structures feminist theory as a movement directed towards achieving certain goals (of full equality, for example) and as a movement which is in itself inherently hopeful. The collection of essays in this special edition are all attempts to consider carefully what it might mean to theorize the affirmative, where, to theorize as such and/or to theorize affirmatively should not mean the loss of the critical edge of feminism.

For many of these scholars, hope, theory and everyday life and practice are intimately entwined. As Taussig (2002 p.44) explains, "a lot of intellectual activity, at least in the twentieth-century Western cultural orbit, correlates lack of hope with being smart, or lack of hope with profundity". To the contrary, feminist scholarship in this arena refuses to denigrate hope – hopes, dreams, optimism are taken and treated seriously. For these scholars, hope involves and is produced through the critical practice of reading post-feminist texts, encounters, discourses or media differently: that is, intentionally being alert to those instances that present "complexities, with openings" (Solnit 2014) regarding the potential for change. Reading differently is an acknowledgement of the tension between gains toward equality for women that exist alongside

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[32] Journal for Cultural Research, October 2010, Volume 14, Issue 4

that which precludes and limits that equality. Reading differently requires the reader to embrace that tension while continuously searching for those openings that have the potential to elicit hope. Feminist hope is linked to the definition of Utopia not as the final attainment of a complete and perfected state, but as a "willful and processual struggle" (Coleman and Ferreday 2010 p. 319-320).

Wood and Litherland (2017), in their work on 'critical feminist hope', take up the call to both 'read differently' as a way to produce hope, but are also careful about denying or dissuading the validity of critical responses to post-feminism from feminist scholars. In their examination of a popular culture 'text' (the "WWE 24: Women's Evolution" documentary) they tread carefully between what popular post-feminism(s) in the media make possible in terms of structural, institutional critique, alongside what post-feminism(s) preclude. Critical feminist hope is, they argue, a productive and relevant framework for reading the encounter of feminism and neoliberalism in contemporary popular culture but it is a position that must be managed carefully (Wood and Litherland, 2018 p. 918). Importantly, they make the point that feminists must avoid foreclosing the elements of feminism that challenge sexist cultures of habit and be prepared for unpredictable results. Feminism remains potentially disruptive, it retains properties of interruption and noise-making, or, as McRobbie (2015) argues, feminism can still be a "discursive explosion" (p. 20) in contemporary capitalism.

Scholarship on women in leadership, particularly within the agricultural sector, has not attempted an analysis characterized by both hope and hopelessness, nor has it tried to grapple with the 'moments of possibility' for structural critique and change. Generally speaking, the agricultural sector has a long and problematic history regarding its treatment of women, both on and off the farm (Alston, 2000; Alston et al. 2018; Leckie, 1996; Liepins, 2000; Pini, 2005;

Sachs, 1983; Saugeres, 2002; Whatmore, 1991; Wiebe, 1996). Although representation and participation is changing, the sector can still be characterized as hegemonically masculine (Pini 2005) and now saturated in post-feminist sensibilities that has nearly disavowed any type of orthodox feminist politics.

In addition to the deliberate distancing of itself from any type of 'feminist' agenda (despite a myriad of programs and consultations that are designed to advance women in agricultural leadership), there are significant issues that the sector must deal with (greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, pollution, consumer trust, and generational tensions) that leave little room for hope for a more environmentally just future, let alone a socially just one. Despite this dismal portrayal of the Canadian agriculture sector, and women in leadership beyond agriculture, there are reasons to be hopeful. Through a reading of my encounters with women in agricultural leadership in Canada's Prairie Region via a critical feminist hope lens (Wood and Litherland 2017), I demonstrate how it is possible to uncover and subsequently highlight and explain those moments that make possible bell hooks' 'vision of social change' within the agriculture sector.

Methods

This is a feminist research project that furthers my belief that research should not just be on women, but for women, too (DeVault, 1991).[33] Feminist research is considered distinct because it begins from the premise that the nature of reality in Western society is that is unequal and hierarchical (Skeggs, 1997) and therefore is attentive to issues regarding power, social location, and identity. My research positioning also reflects a belief that skepticism and critique are not

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[33] The results from this study will be made available to the research participants, and the author intends to write several non-academic publications (i.e. blog posts, agricultural newspaper/magazine articles) presenting this research for a larger, popular audience.

the only ethical position for an intellectual to take, and that feminism is a politics of hope underpinned by a drive for full equality (Berlant, 2002).

For this research project, qualitative, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with over 70 women leaders from within provincial government, academia, industry, non-profit, and research and development organizations in the agricultural sector in the Canadian western provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Interviewees were recruited through both purposive and snowball sampling methods. For the purposes and parameters of this paper, data from only 40 interviews were analyzed as the remainder were not currently professionally employed as high-level, senior managers/administrators or as large agricultural business owners. For this research, the term 'leader' included women who hold positions of power and influence at the top of their organizational and institutional hierarchies. I also consider a leader to be a person of influence and driver of change. Research participants in this study hold, for example, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), Executive Director (ED), President, Senior Vice President (SVP), Manager / Senior Manager, University Dean, Minister and Deputy Minister positions within and related to agriculture in government. Also included were women who have founded their own businesses or non-profits in agriculture (with annual operating budgets over $5 million).

The interviews were guided by an exploratory set of questions around career development, significant professional accomplishments, impact and influence of being a woman in agriculture, advice and future opportunities for young women. The questions were intentionally broad. Names and revealing details about the interviewees have been changed, and each woman was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and anonymity. To identify respondents, I reference the position they hold (e.g. high level bureaucrat, owner, president etc.)

and the particular sector they represent (e.g. government, industry, commodity group etc.). For example, if a participant was a Chief Financial Officer of a major agricultural corporation the citation would read (CFO, industry).[34]

It should be noted that, while never naming it directly, most of the women I spoke with drew heavily upon the signifiers of popular feminism. Some outright rejected the label feminist or denied their participation in any sort of 'feminist agenda' but were keen to speak about the importance of empowerment, personal choice, strength, and self-improvement for women. Women, it was well understood, could be and do anything they wanted to in agriculture, the only barrier to their success was themselves (and maybe an occasional inappropriate comment from a man). It is from this observation that I draw my assumptions about the existence of post-feminism within the agricultural sector, even though no one ever explicitly identified themselves or their work, with feminism. In what follows I present the "complexities and uncertainties, with openings" [35] of the encounters I had with women in agriculture leadership; their stories of significant achievements, mentorship, injustice and sexism, hopes, dreams, and passion for agriculture. Through an ongoing process of reading those encounters differently, I weave together those interesting 'openings' contained therein to establish a basis for hope, while also acknowledging the not insignificant limitations post-feminism poses for women in agricultural leadership.

Findings

Hope amidst post-femininity: Calling out the (sexist) culture of agriculture

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[34] It should be noted that this position/sector delineation is very generic because of the desire to protect the identity of my participants. There are so few women in high level leadership/management positions in Canadian agriculture, it would be quite easy for someone to identify some of these women by their position description alone.

[35] https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jul/15/rebecca-solnit-hope-in-the-dark-new-essay-embrace-unknown

Women across the agriculture sector are beginning to recognize the need to vocalize and object to the mistreatment of women, especially around issues of sexual misconduct and inappropriate behavior. In a focus group with women in the agriculture sector, a CEO noted that she still heard concerns and anger that "men do not see us as equals…there are still sarcastic remarks being made as to gender and sexuality" (CEO, Agriculture Business Owner). These kinds of conversations are growing among women in the sector, and are particularly interesting given the larger socio-cultural transformation occurring within other industries that reflect the concerns of movements like Me Too.[36] Some of the most interesting voices are emerging from the provincial Women in Agriculture (WIA) groups. WIA groups consist of formal and informal networks aimed at providing "support, confidence and guidance" (Fries, 2017 para 2) for women who are moving into agricultural roles typically performed by men. These groups are popular, particularly in the Prairie region. Some groups now hold their own annual conferences, networking events, professional development training, and even sell merchandise (Fries 2017). While this development appears promising, I would also argue that WIA groups are a key example of the ways in which Canadian agriculture is infused with post-feminist rationalities. They share similar vision and mission statements, like that from the Saskatchewan WIA: "to empower, support, and connect women in the ag industry"[37] 'To empower' is a feminist value that has been fused with neoliberal logics to render it individual and apolitical (Wood & Litherland 2017). This was evident during my conversation with the co-founders of one of the

[36] The 'me too.' movement was founded in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls, and other young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing. For more information see https://metoomvmt.org/about/#history.

[37] https://www.womeninag.ca/our-story/)

larger WIA groups, as well as through following their events, social media accounts and media coverage. Their focus is on connecting people, providing skills training, and, most importantly, fostering confidence building to "bridge the gap" (Co-founder-1) between genders:

> …we can do all of these things, but until women really learn to value themselves for who they are and have the confidence to step up and do the things that we want…connecting is only a small piece of it. It's self-worth that's so important (Co-founder -1)

Sexism in this case, is understood as something that can be overcome through self-belief, individual hard work and changing attitudes (Gill, 2016). As Gill and Orgad (2015) contend, this "confidence imperative" (p.27) is a central trope of corporate feminist discourse, where women are incited to take up individualized strategies to improve their self-belief, neutralizing feminism's potential threat to the structure and cultures of corporations and economic systems. This is demonstrated in one of the co-founder's belief that the 'barriers' she encountered as a woman in agriculture – feeling alone and isolated, and often uncomfortable – were [?] was something she personally and individually had to overcome,

> I had some real hurdles to overcome when I was going on trips and taking these guys down to [Vegas] and staying in a house. I'm the only female [sales] rep[resentative], and I'm with eight, 45 + year old while males…but now I can say the relationships I've built with these individuals is irreplaceable (Co-founder-2)

Subsequently, she believes that the WIA should be a place where women have other women to call on and say, "I'm having an issue with this, and I need help with this" (Co-founder-2). These issues, she adds, are in reference to "sexual harassment things". Feminist organizational scholars have noted the cultural sexism embedded within masculinist cultures is comprised of routine, everyday practices that act as significant invisible, normalizing barrier to women's progression (Savigny, 2014). In some ways, the WIA group, much like contemporary feminism, could be interpreted as a vague celebration of women, with little depth or potential to challenge existing social relations (Wood & Litherland 2017),

It doesn't matter if I've experienced it, and it doesn't matter if you've experienced sexual harassment or if you've experienced gender inequality. The point is that somebody has. Just show compassion and kindness for somebody else's experience (Co-founder-1)

You don't even have to like someone to be compassionate towards them or to be kind to them. I think when people think kindness, they think, 'oh we're going to hold hands and we're going to sing'…that is not…that just means don't be an asshole (Co-founder-2)

These ideas are indicative of a larger ethos of individual responsibility – to gain confidence, 'step up', overcome difficult and uncomfortable circumstances – all while being kind to and supportive of one another. While this is not bad or harmful in and of itself, it is difficult to see how any substantive social and cultural change for women in agriculture might evolve from this.

And yet, in these instances of coming together to strengthen individualized strategies to deal with sexism and build up confidence and technical skills, both WIA co-founders are leveling some substantive critiques at widespread cultural sexism and inappropriate treatment of women within the industry.

…in terms of sexual harassment in the workplace…in agriculture everyone tries to downplay it and say it doesn't exist anymore, but it is a real issue…For people that might be experiencing sexual harassment or sexual assault in their workplace or industry, that closes the door to them speaking up, because they've literally been told their experience hasn't existed or isn't real. And we spend a lot of time dealing with this engrained sexual…just this culture we have in agriculture where it's okay and it's a joke. It's almost like people do it for fun, or like its entertainment. If we want to get to a place where Women in Ag doesn't [have to] exist, we have to tackle that. That is a foundational issue. We can do other work on top of it, but if we don't tackle that, it's not going to make the difference. (Co-founder -1)

We put up with sexual harassment and sexual assault – it's literally out of obligation to our jobs. It's out of obligation because we want so badly to be part of this industry, when it should be the other way around. Our workplaces, our industries should be making this a place that we want to be a part of, that we never feel that we have to put up with that stuff to be a part of it. (Co-founder-1)

They also articulate some of the structural forces at work, particularly for women who are seeking recourse for being treated inappropriately within the agricultural sector, "I still experience it [sexual harassment] and don't know what the route is. I have had HR conversations before that have not proved to be supportive whatsoever. So you're in this position of, 'where do you go; what do you even do next?' I went the HR route and didn't get what I wanted" (Co-founder 1).

There is, amidst the entanglements of neoliberal ideologies and post-feminist rationalities, a different kind of narrative buried within the larger, post-feminist one; there is a questioning and re-evaluation of the culture and corresponding practices of agriculture and a call for cultural transformation. Broaching this and other difficult subjects around women in agriculture has put the WIA group (and these women) in the spotlight, both in local and national media, and the response has not always been positive, particularly within the agriculture community.[38]

When speaking about the factors that contributed to the success in their own careers, and within the organization, individualism and meritocracy intertwined with post-feminism was evident throughout. Both co-founders believed their success was predicated on "using every experience as an opportunity to learn", going "over and above" to ensure preparedness, insisting that "there's no such thing as *not* getting it [the job] done" (Co-founder 1). And, as a follow up observation,

> Yes, there is a gender difference, but we're not here complaining about it by any means. I look at it as 'you better make sure that you earn that seat'. We don't want an industry where boards have 50% women and 50% men. That's just not what we want. We want

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[38] A controversial article in Saskatchewan's largest newspaper garnered a lot of attention and response regarding the issue of women in agriculture, both in terms of Letters to the Editor and on social media ://thestarphoenix.com/opinion/columnists/hursh-women-in-agriculture-can-be-a-dicey-topic/amp

the right person sitting there, *but we want women to have just as good a chance as men.* (Co-founder 1, italics added)

Further, "there isn't a lot of access to those positions given how those positions are situated, marketed and filled" (Co-founder-2). This points to a larger, institutional problem of advertising and problematic hiring practices, and not just women's lack of competency. To illustrate this point further, one co-founder speaks about how something like sexual harassment impacts women, and their inability to "hit their numbers" (in sales) when they are "dealing with this shit in the background" (Co-founder 2).

Throughout the testimonies of the co-founders, and the activities of the WIA group there exists a complex mix of faith in meritocracy and hard work which is heavily influenced by neoliberal, post-feminist sensibilities; and yet, there is also an understanding that more is going on than just a lack of competency and motivation. Amidst the serious limitations of a post-feminist outlook on women's experiences, there exist the beginnings of a systematic critique of the practices and processes of agriculture more broadly. Both examples used above, around sexual misconduct and prohibitive institutional practices allow for the illumination of a larger pattern in which women are routinely mistreated, obstructed, and undervalued throughout the sector – it is a cultural problem, not an individual one. Inequality and sexism are seen, in some ways, as the result of cultural practices and institutional processes contained within 'the industry' and are judged as damaging and unfair. While this identification and criticism of an organizational culture falls short of the kind of structural and political critique feminists might call for, the grammar of neoliberalized feminism upon which the co-founders draw, does enable something more than a purely individualized and apolitical critique of women themselves (Wood & Litherland 2017).

Amidst their desire to empower women, increase self-worth, and teach technical skills, the co-founders make the important acknowledgement that women's inclusion and achievement is predicated on more than just their own devices and attitudes. Rather, it points to the structuring of an organizational culture which needs to change, and there are more and more women who are willing to talk about that change. This may seem like a small, unconvincing basis for establishing hope. I argue, however, that these conversations and very public criticisms of the agriculture industry, coming from *within* the agriculture industry, are monumental, particularly given the strong influence of patriarchal gender relations and post feminism on the industry. These co-founders were the only women out of seventy interviews that were articulate, confident, and eager to talk about these issues. Countless women during the course of my research alluded to problems around sexual harassment, but none (other than these two women) critiqued the cultures within agriculture that perpetuated inappropriate sexual behavior towards women. The WIA group that these co-founders represent is hugely popular in the Prairies, has grown in membership, and has been used as model for other provincial WIA groups. The influence and recognition of these co-founders in the agriculture sector is remarkable, and their work is highly regarded by women and men alike. These women are leaders that inspire hope.

"There is no cookie cutter household anymore": Hope in parenting policies for everyone

Using a critical feminist hope framework does not always create easily decipherable categories of post-feminism, neoliberalism, or hopeful development. Speaking to the CEO of a 'certified woman-owned business' in the retail food sector was, at times, equally as perplexing as it was informative. A millennial president proudly spoke of her company's ability to be "ahead of the curve" in the sector, while maintaining their viability and growth as a company. Her first response to any questions related to being a female CEO in a male-dominated sector was, "I kind

147

of hate talking about gender…I hate this". Throughout the interview, the CEO was evasive in

talking about her experiences and observations of being a female CEO in the food and

agriculture sector, citing the problem of talking about gender inequality is that "there are no

satisfying solutions…it becomes fragmented really quickly by something you just can't

measure". The complexity, for her, was around the choices women make: around family, work-

life balance, and desire to lead. There was no mention of larger, structural obstacles, or sexism

that may impede a woman's ability to be a leader in the sector. It was not as though she was not

aware of the lack of women, however "we know that women run better boards, larger companies

run by women typically perform better. So why am I walking into a room that's full of men in

suits? I don't know." Kelan (2013) describes this as 'gender fatigue' where women are tired of

seeing gender discrimination and prefer to see a world that is gender egalitarian. Further, in a

post-feminist climate it seems to be more progressive to be gender blind (Kelan, 2009). Reilly,

Jones, Rey Vasquez, & Krisjanous (2016) also note that there are risks to women who challenge

gender inequality. Individuals who are positioned as the 'organizational other' must manage their

otherness in order to succeed, by minimizing difference or assimilating (Morley, 2013 p. 12).

This was certainly evident in the CEO's approach to her own professional development; she

decided early on in her company's development that she would try and surround herself with and

emulate "men in suits".

> One of the rules I made for myself was to hang out with men in suits. Which is not
> necessarily about the man part…but the point was to hang out amongst people who knew
> how to run a business and had done that. And so my mentors have typically been men in
> suits.

Further, she was quick to highlight all the positive advantages she encountered as a woman in the

sector, "being a little different is sometimes an advantage, and so being the only woman in a

room can actually be a really good thing. It makes you memorable". Consistent with Kelan's

(2009) insights about 'gender fatigue' and minimizing difference, she was judicious about her

critique of the 'men in suits' citing she did not want to "dog them too much".

And yet, despite her dislike of even talking about gender, her concerted attempts to

assimilate, and her view that it was the complexities of women's choices that precluded them

from high level corporate leadership, there was evidence of a critical shift within her own

thinking and subsequently the work culture she strives to create,

> But I think one of the things that hit me maybe a year ago when there was a particularly large amount of parenthood happening on the team, was even my own assumptions on how to manage that and how to embed that into the team. Like a set of values around, basically parenthood. I guess the point is that the values weren't about the women versus the men; but how do support parenthood so you can also support them within the business…It was this realization that if I wanted…the women on the team to be successful, then they needed husbands who were going to support them through that. And I can't touch that. It was the inverse recognition that by treating the men on my team with the same sort of honoring of parenthood and respect, and actually trying to shift the dialogue and expectation around that, like 'I expect you to be a good parent, and these are some of the ways I want to support that…and I don't want you feeling guilty about that'. Only then was I making sense of the challenge with, sort of, the women on the team, who I needed their husbands to like, pick it up and pitch in…I think its an ongoing project because I'm not very articulate about it.

She then describes several examples of the ways in which she has tried to support and embed the

values of parenthood within her company, using a poignant example around personal family

issues among her staff.[39] While there are strong echoes of the *Lean In* (Sandberg 2003*)* principle

that gender equity is desirable because it is profitable (Wood & Litherland 2017) there are also

interesting possibilities for meaningful change. Reading differently allows for the

acknowledgement of hopeful change under the leadership of this woman, while recognizing the

incompleteness of this approach and how her work can be built upon. This possibility arises

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[39] The participant asked me directly not to mention any details around this personal family issue because of its sensitive nature.

because of the recognition that supporting values around social reproduction within workplace culture is important and should not only be focused on women. The recognition that women's 'choices' are not just purely personal, and that their desire and ability to work hard and "put the hours in" is tied to their domestic obligations warrants a reason for hope, even if it is entangled with the desire to maintain profit maximization. While outwardly the CEO is hesitant to be seen as outspoken about gender inequality and is eager to assimilate (and perhaps motivated by profit maximization or the ability to keep her small company afloat), a shift has occurred within her company and the way she chooses to run it; she strives to support both fathers and mothers in parenthood, not only in policy, but workplace culture, too.

This CEO was not alone in her approach to her work. I spoke with several other female leaders (many of whom had children of their own) who would speak directly to their employees, vocalizing their support and willingness to "make things work" (Dean, Academia) regarding the navigation of work and home commitments. For one woman, this support was subtle, quiet, but direct,

> …so there's two things: number one, we set the tone. So within our own office, within [the] immediate sphere of influence you can make sure that family and those kinds of values are given solid respect. And you take the rules and make sure they are applied,- and if the rules are stupid - you ignore them. Because you can, right? I can change those rules, you know.

She goes on to say that

> …when we're looking to hire faculty, we don't ask in the formal interview anything about family status, but I will find a way in an informal moment to say, 'we have these supports if you have a family'" (Dean, Academia)

Similarly, in speaking with a Senior VP of a large, multi-national Life Science Corporation, many of the same sentiments and ideas were expressed. "You're better off to actually put

policies in place to allow dads to be dads. And what that encourages is then - that enables the moms…too." She goes on to note,

> I've become more and more a firm believer of… it is an enabling policy? positive policy? …because then you have a policy that is targeted directly at the group of interest, And when it's an enabling policy, like the one I gave you for example-on being able to [have] flexible work schedules right? To allow that too, right? Those are the types of things, in my mind, that will positively promote a lot of the change.

Ultimately, she observes that "society itself needs to get more comfortable with the fact that there is no cookie cutter household anymore" and the more supportive and holistic the policies, the more opportunities there will be for women to step into leadership roles. While the trend to change policies to better support working parents is not new or innovative per se, it does present a reason to be hopeful because it does not put the responsibility solely on the individual to 'lean in' or 'make the right choices' with regards to career advancement and opportunities. The encounter of neoliberalism and feminism presented in these examples, manifest in ways that are less than ideal, but that lead to moments of opportunity for feminist politics and larger (albeit slow) structural change.

Talk is (not) cheap: Changing language, naming power, and the hope of something different

Many of the conversations I had with participants traversed a common terrain, most often imbued with post-feminist sensibilities: the inevitability of making difficult choices between work and family, explicit references to Sandberg's 'lean in' principles, the importance of women earning their seat at the board table (versus inheriting it because they're female), the importance of self-regulation for success and the need for technical skill building and empowerment for women. Among these oft-repeated refrains, however, conversations and insights about the importance of language from participants that spanned the political spectrum were particularly striking. Several of them made links between language, power, and the "ideology about how

agriculture has to be done" (Past president, Non Profit, Farmer). As one farmer and well-known

leader in the national agriculture community notes,

> I think language matters. The best we can do is change the discourse and make it part of the public discourse and part of the public consciousness that we're [women] equal partners, that we need to be respected, that we need to be safe, that our ideas matter, that our work matters, that it's valuable, that who we are is respected as women, as participants; as women with scarves on our heads, with women with coloured faces, as women with dirty hands, as women holding babies, all those, like all those things we do - that this sort of white dominant, often angry and kind of cruel man ideology of how the world has to be organized and how agriculture has to be done and what has to happen. But let's unravel and what you have underneath…[is] a much more diverse and life giving and organic, complex functioning, joyful society.

Another high-profile leader in agricultural media made similar observations based on her own

experiences both nationally and internationally,

> I keep saying the language that we use determines the discussion that we have…I think from a male perspective, food is about power, right? And I think from a male-dominated industry, the focus has shifted away from one of nourishing and stewardship to one of production.

Later in the conversation, she again comes back to language,

> I think that again it comes down to the language we use to describe what we're doing. And we tend to talk about leadership in terms of power and authority. What I'm feeling is we have to move more to a language of inclusion and influence as opposed to power and authority. When you change that, you change the discussion and you open doors for people to aspire to that kind of thing.

Both women touch on key themes in agrarian feminist scholarship – power, masculinity and

domination – in agriculture (Brandth, 1995), but that are rarely mentioned in public discourse

particularly as it pertains to women's leadership in the sector. Coleman and Ferreday (2010) note

that the critical appraisal of language is central to many feminist projects because they create

new community possibilities and political positions.

From the individual to the collective: hope in unlikely collaborations and new partnerships

During my research, nearly all the women I spoke with were aware of the national conversation amidst farmers and agricultural professionals about the lack of women in agricultural leadership, and the kinds of controversial conversations this evoked. Not all women agreed about the severity or importance of the issue, but the majority agreed that there ought to be more women working and leading in the sector.[40] What was consistent, however, was that this process should reflect McDonald's (2000) argument to "provide minimal disruptions to the masculine hegemony" (Mcdonald, 2000 p 301).

With some women, there was even an adamant, outright rejection of the label or necessity of feminism. One popular and influential public speaker even went so far as talk about how she actively resisted the "groundswell of women" in agriculture, "when it first started coming up, I dug my heels. I was intentionally not going to be part of the movement, I thought. My advice to women would be that it's counter-productive. You need to be at the meetings that are here right now…we don't need to come together. Why do we need to have one voice?" (Farmer and Public Speaker, Non-Profit). Similarly, a high level, long time provincial civil servant noted "Frankly, I'm not a feminist, I'm not all about 'I need this, I deserve this because I'm a woman'". These examples highlight the very individualistic approach and resistance to any type of collective action or agenda often present among these leaders. She goes on,

> You can be a victim, you can argue and fight for your rights…what I'm saying is you can make a choice. You've come to your career with making a choice, 'am I just gonna power through this and be resilient and find a way to prove that I have what it takes and not be a victim, or am I going to stand on my ground and say that 'I have the right to be

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[40] Not all women agreed on this point. There were several that disagreed that there should be more women working in agriculture, and instead that jobs should be populated by the best candidates, regardless of gender.

here'? Well, I chose not being a victim, I chose powering through (Senior level civil servant, Government).

Another influential leader in Canadian agriculture notes,

> I never used a 'female card', period. I would always assimilate myself to be, to live in that male culture and work in that male culture. And not make a big deal of it…You see two paths, you see one where…you chose not to do that and you are the outsider, right? Or you can chose to be part of the pack and just recognize…you're not going to grow in your career...if you didn't assimilate yourself into that environment (Senior VP -1, Industry).

Assimilating herself meant laughing at inappropriate sexual jokes, being a "bitch" to other women, and generally leading with an abrupt authoritative manner (Senior VP-1, Industry).

When asked about the factors related to their own success and what advice they would give to young women who wanted a career in agriculture, the response was generally: "show up" (Senior manager, Ag Banking), "deliver relentlessly on what's in front of you and execute on it well" (Senior VP -2, Industry), "become the person that no one can do without" (National Director, Industry) "be persistent and be confident" (Director, Agriculture College Research Center), "make time to network with the boys club" (President, Commodity Association), "recognize it's all about choices and tradeoffs" (Senior VP -1, Industry), "you can do all things, you just can't do them at the same time" (Senior level civil servant, Government). Other responses included "don't whine...have some thick skin…networking with the boys club you're going to have to listen to some crap" (President, Commodity Association), "don't be a sexpot" (Dean, Academia), "just be yourself" (CEO, Farm Retail). One participant went so far as to say,

> don't take 'no' because there will be people that are going to tell you no, or that you can't do it, and if it's something you generally want, you have to overcome that. *And if you don't, then you don't want it enough* (Entrepreneur / Farmer)

The primary goal of McRobbie's (2015) neoliberalized feminist subject represented here is ever more individualized effective self-regulation, working on confidence and ambition, making the right choices, and managing an effective balance of home and work.

And yet, amidst the dominant narrative of the responsibility of each individual woman to personally take on challenges by themselves within the industry, there were also many examples of women pursuing and leading collaborative initiatives. I call these activities 'unlikely collaborations' because they are initiatives, conversations, formal and informal events that are bringing together disparate stakeholders and viewpoints to address the complex issues facing the agricultural industry. While 'unlikely collaborations' are not always explicitly related to gender equality within agriculture or the workplace, they are representative of a collective approach to addressing significant issues facing Canadian agriculture today (climate change, sustainability, consumer mistrust). The most inspiring part of these 'unlikely collaborations' is that they were developed and lead by women, often against the grain of a neoliberal, individualized, post-feminist culture.

These activities range in scope and influence but have a common thread of unlikely collaboration. The executive director of an organic not-for-profit organization has been working hard at building connections between conventional and organic farmers. This is not an easy task because of the tension and animosity that generally has existed between these two ideologically divergent groups and their approach to agriculture (Gertler, Jaffe, & Beckie, 2018),

> …a few years ago… there was more friction between the organics and the conventional; now we're starting to see that break down on its own because organics has gotten to the stage that it is at, but also we're reaching out and having the 'elephant in the room' conversation… we know this tension has existed but we respect farmers because we're farmers and there's something beyond this tension we can work on and build those bridges. And we have a lot to learn from you and you have a lot to learn from us, so let's work together (Executive Director, Non Profit).

On a much larger scale, the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at one university lead efforts to build the 'National Center for Livestock and Environment' (NCLE). NCLE is a university-based research community that engages in multi-disciplinary, multi-agency research partnerships. The goal is to further the long term economic and environmental sustainability of integrated livestock and crop production systems.[41] She recognized that

> the real issues were related to some of these social issues—for example, animal health and welfare, use of antibiotics—and, in my mind, a lot of environmental issues… we had not been thinking about how we integrate with the landscape; how does cropping and livestock production work together as opposed to two separate entities…[We were] trying to ensure good animal welfare with environmental impacts and food safety impact—and of course there's an economic layer.

For her, the development of an NCLE has established the concept of multidisciplinary research within her faculty. Today they are incorporating researchers from the human nutritional sciences and next on their agenda is the social sciences (Dean -1, Academia). In doing so, they are expanding and diversifying the voices, opinions, ideological and disciplinary backgrounds of those who sit around the table and make decisions, do research, and solve problems. As these tables (and opportunities) grow, more and more women become included in the conversation.

In a different province, the Dean of Agriculture has worked extensively to build and support the Kanawayihetaytan Askiy ("Let us take care of the land") certificate program over the last decade. The program examines basic environmental, legal and economic aspects of land and resource management in First Nations communities. One of her priorities, before it was common or accepted as best practice, was extensive consultation and collaboration with First Nations communities in the development and expansion of this program. One of her goals before the end of her term as dean is,

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[41] http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/afs/ncle/what_is_ncle/what_is_ncle.html

I want that Indigenous piece solid and grounded and continuing to evolve because it will have to, I won't presume to get it right the first time. So those, I really want that Indigenous piece to be real by the time I'm done (Dean -2, Academia).

There were many other smaller examples of the collective efforts women were making to address problems through a much more dynamic and diverse set of viewpoints. Women, for example, were chairing all the inaugural National Roundtables on Sustainable Crops and Beef, and many within the beef industry are working hard on making the entire supply chain more transparent and traceable, despite the resistance they are facing from (male) producers.

[We're] really trying to figure out where the beef industry's at, really partnering and collaborating with all aspects of the beef industry…[to] just get a really solid understanding, and helping teach them what we're all about too at the same time. So, it's been a two-way street (CEO, Beef Industry)

This work on transparency and sustainability is being driven by women in the industry. Women in leadership in Canadian agriculture are increasingly at the forefront of fostering and facilitating these efforts. As one senior editor observes,

…if you look at the research that's taking place on natural systems approaches like cover crops and things, whether or not it's totally organic research or just research into how things work in a natural system and how farmers can harness that as opposed to some of the traditional approaches that we've seen in the last hundred years, a lot of the research into that area is being led by women.

Women are working hard to bridge the gap between the consumer demand for a more sustainable, humane, and transparent livestock (and increasingly crop) industry and the producers, ranchers, and processors who are often resistant to large scale change. Many women spoke of their desire to bring different, often unlikely or dissimilar people together to address challenges or plan for the future. "I like trying to bring people together… trying to make sure that everybody [is] working together… I just really like working with different diverse groups" (President -2, Commodity Group). These concerns around sustainability, marketing, consumer trust, and "storying" the work

of agriculture are opening up many new leadership opportunities for women in the industry – many women reflected on the tremendous opportunity they felt they had as a result of the changing needs of an industry previously left alone by the public.

While these efforts may seem minor and are often buried beneath the larger narrative of post-feminist career success and strategy – they do contribute to a more hopeful narrative. In addition to creating new opportunities to lead (and be heard), these collaborations have the dual effect of also challenging the 'business-as-usual' problem solving approach, characterized by the singular, white, heterosexual male voice that dominates agriculture. "All these different dynamics and creating an environment that drives diversity into that space [agriculture leadership] will drive future success, too" (Senior VP, Industry). The more efforts that are being made to collectively address these problems, beyond the individualized 'voting with your dollars', the better chance there is of a balanced, equitable, and sustainable path forward.

Focusing on these unlikely collaborations illustrates where hope can be found within the sector. This is not to preclude the significant limitations that neoliberalized, post-feminism presents for women; some of the ones who are leading these collaborations also are ardent advocates of an individualized, corporate, apolitical feminism. Rather, this analysis squarely addresses the complex and contradictory character of those women who comprise leadership within agriculture, but with a critically hopeful lens. Women are actively seeking to include more voices, more diversity, and a range of opinions as they address the big issues that agriculture faces; this, in turn, is opening up more opportunities for women to lead, and to be heard. It also addresses Rottenberg's (2014) suggestion that the neoliberal feminist subject is most often turned inward, required to monitor and manage her own quest for success to such a degree that it is "divested of any orientation toward the common good" (p.428). The common good in this example may not

explicitly be an industry free from structural sexism and inequality, but it is a common good in terms of social and environmental sustainability and solid efforts to include and elevate the perspectives of others.

Discussion

These observations, while small in scope, taken together and situated within some of the larger developments taking place both within and external to agriculture, give reason to pause and be cautiously hopeful. This paper considers the small and large instances of critique and transformation that are enabled by feminism's visibility in these contexts (granted, not always clearly and often tenuously) individually but also as a whole. By refusing to draw conclusions that emphasize feminism's hopeless co-optation, which can serve to 'shut down' what might be hopeful about these kinds of examples, researchers might consider the ways in which new forms of representation, re-evaluation, and transformation are opened up amidst the complexity that surrounds women in agricultural leadership.

In the case of the WIA group talking about sexual misconduct and larger institutional cultures of habit, there are arguably echoes of the international 'Me too' movement.[42] In the last two years, because of the viral #metoo hashtag, a dynamic conversation about sexual violence has been thrust into the public imagination and these conversations have expanded to highlight the impact of sexual harassment and violence worldwide.[43] These are the kinds of conversations (and action items) that the leaders of the WIA group are working to promote. While the WIA does not explicitly identify itself as a 'feminist' organization, it has many of the trappings of one,

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[42] The 'me too.' movement was founded in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls, and other young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing. For more information see https://metoomvmt.org/about/#history.

[43] (https://metoomvmt.org/about/#history).

particularly in its critique and protest of institutional cultures of habit around the mistreatment of women who work in the industry. This conversation is not limited to just the WIA; within the last year, agricultural companies like Syngenta have started to work with nationally recognized female leaders on larger structural issues for women in the industry, including sexual misconduct (CTC, 2017). Further, the Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council (CAHRC) and the Agri-Food Council of Alberta (AFCA) have both undertaken different types of research to learn about the issues women in agriculture face when it comes to workplace culture, building their businesses, and advancing in their careers. As a result, various programs and policy recommendations were developed specifically to address these issues.[44] There are certainly efforts being made to address larger structural issues that reduce women's advancement potential (and work satisfaction) within agriculture even though they are entangled with the less-than-ideal post-feminist sensibilities that work against efforts to promote gender equality.

One of the manifestations of these larger conversations within the industry is the trend toward changing workplace policy and, in some cases, workplace culture around these policies. This is not unique to organizations within agriculture, but arguably does give reason for hope. As it is now commonplace for both parents to be working full time, it is generally understood that working-time flexibility contributes to positive work outcomes, while shorter work hours and career breaks for childcare facilitate combining work and family life (Lott & Klenner, 2018). However, there is also ample research to indicate that unless there is an underlying institutional culture that supports and prioritizes flexible and part time work arrangements and parental leave

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[44] See for example, the Success for Women in Agriculture Program (https://www.agfoodcouncil.com/s4wag/); the CAHRC focus on women in agriculture (https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/programs/agridiversity/agriwomen/agriwomen-profiles); and the annual national 'Advancing Women in Agriculture' conferences (https://www.advancingwomenconference.ca/)

for males, such policies remain underutilized and ineffective (Mun & Brinton, 2015; Munn & Greer, 2015). While it is difficult to know what the organizational culture truly is around working parents without spending a significant amount of time observing and talking to the staff under the leadership of the women I interviewed, it was evident that some female leaders were moving beyond formal policy to create a workplace culture that supports the demands of parenting, recognizing that success for women goes beyond balancing choices and hard work. Two women, in a truly first-of-its-kind in the Canadian prairie agriculture sector, job-shared a position in a commodity organization during their early childhood parenting years (over 25 years ago). Women leaders reported the various ways they built in flexibility for the staff that had younger children, although it was not as clear about how those arrangements were made for the young fathers on staff. There is a recognition that if policies are going to be effectively utilized, there needs to be strong support from leadership, manifested in a variety of formal and informal practices. Particularly hopeful is the recognition of the "multiple criss-crossings of fluid and constantly shifting boundaries for women [and increasingly men] between their public and private lives" (DeVault 1991 p 6). There are no 'cookie cutter households' anymore, and policy and practice is slowly starting to reflect that.

Another step towards enabling critique and structural transformation involves changing discourse, incorporating an intersectional lens, and naming the ways in which power is held within the agricultural industry. On a global scale, the international peasant farmer's movement, La Via Campesina[45], has made this a central tenet of their work, noting that "a non-negotiable element of food sovereignty"[46] is women's rights. In order for a democratic conversation about

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[45] https://viacampesina.org/en/
[46] Food sovereignty is defined as the right of communities to define their own food and agriculture policy (Patel, 2012)

food and agriculture policy to happen, women need to be able to participate in the discussions as freely as men (Patel, 2012). Further, Patel (2012) notes that the link between gender and food is best understood through an understanding of control in the food system, pointing out the disempowerment of women and power inequality between women and men at the micro, meso and macroeconomic levels of the food systems. In Canada, inspired by the La Via Campesina, movement, farmwomen from across the country participated in a national research project regarding Canadian agriculture policy based on a concern that "there has been no explicit effort to identify farm women's policy needs or their vision of an inclusive Canadian agricultural policy" (Roppel et al., 2006). The National Farmers Union (NFU), a long-time, voluntary, Canadian family farm organization also advocates for the active participation and equal representation of women in farm policy and politics.[47] There are important conversations and political campaigns going on all over the world that seek to address large scale, systematic and structural inequalities between genders (and racialization and ethnicity) and their implications for the sustainability of agriculture, food security, food sovereignty, and leadership. Agrarian feminist scholarship has also long advocated for the recognition of the hegemonically masculine culture pervasive in agriculture and its effects on women (and other minorities) such as inequality and marginalization (Pini 2005; Wiebe 1995; Sachs 1983; Whatmore1991; Alston 2000). Interestingly, feminist political ecologists (Graddy-Lovelace, 2017) are also starting to examine the links between popular feminist activism with applied intersectional visioning (like the Women's March[48]) and the work of agrarian feminism within the collaborative partnership of

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[47] For more information, see https://www.nfu.ca/about/

[48] The Women's March took place on January 21st 2017 (the day after the inauguration of the bitterly contested presidential election of the 45th U.S. President) where nearly 5 million women and men marched and protested in 673 places across the globe, under the banner of the Women's March (Women's March's 2017). At the epicenter of the political crisis – and resistance – was

the World March of Women and La Via Campesina.[49] Graddy-Lovelace (2017) notes that in ongoing contests over neoliberal globalization, feminists are increasingly forging alliances with non-feminist others around common struggles, both locally and transnationally.

The idea that there may be hope (rooted in the discourse of feminist politics) in the unlikely collaborations found in the Canadian agriculture system is a more difficult argument to engage. On the one hand, the trend (over the past 25 years) has been towards interdisciplinary, collaborative research and other initiatives dealing with the complex and interrelated issues such as climate change and agricultural sustainability: thus, collaborative efforts in agriculture are not unique. On the other hand, the collaborative research and sustainability focused initiatives in agriculture are, for the most part, being pioneered and led by women (Slepian & Jones, 2013) and are increasingly including discussions around social sustainability (and, on occasion, gender). This may be due in part to the fact that, in Canadian agricultural colleges, female graduates now outnumber males (Gilmour 2014), the proportion of women farm owner/ operators continues to rise, and there has been an explosion of professional development opportunities available for women in agriculture, both on and off the farm. As mentioned earlier, the programs, projects and research being led by women are not specific to an orthodox feminist agenda. However, as Prugl (2015) cautions, the potential for nostalgic longing for a socialist feminist structural analysis might overlook the fact that global structures have themselves

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the Women's March on Washington DC, where officials estimate nearly 500,000 participated, though the act of counting exceeded logistical capacity: quite possibly the largest single day of protest in the history of the country (Garrett Graddy-Lovelace 2018).

[49] World March of Women is an international feminist movement that works to eliminate the root causes of poverty and violence against women and struggles against all forms of inequality and discrimination directed at women (Grassroots International 2017). In 2007 they partnered with La Via Campesina to make "common goods, food sovereignty and access to resources" as one of its four global fields of action (Conway, 2018 p. 189).

changed in ways that might call for new forms of political critique and organization. Perhaps this new form of critique and organization might not begin with an explicitly feminist agenda, but rather becomes an unintended byproduct or consequence of other forms of organizing, much like the politics and activism of La Via Campesina, or the more locally focused WIA groups (who are explicitly not feminist organizations but now want to have direct and concerted conversations about sexual misconduct and discriminatory hiring practices, for example).

There is indeed a reason to be cautiously optimistic and hopeful about the developments, conversations, initiatives, and trends emerging within the Canadian agricultural sector and its progress towards gender equality. In and of themselves, they perhaps do not yet constitute a major trend due to their disparate nature and localized impact. However, taken together, and located within the larger national and global agricultural context, they do present a different, more hopeful scenario. That being said, there is still much work to be done; women are still underrepresented in agricultural leadership, and there is evidence of 'hegemonic postfeminist sensibilities' (Gill, 2016 p. 606) that render structural inequality and cultural sexism unspeakable, particularly in a sector that prides itself on its meritocracy, work ethic and gender-neutrality (Nash & Moore 2017). By focusing on the complex and contradictory nature of women in agricultural leadership, their sector, and the work that they do, this analysis presents a more nuanced, and even potentially hopeful picture of the kinds of achievements and incremental change that exists in a hegemonically masculine sector in Canada.

Conclusion

In this chapter I make a deliberate choice to analyze and understand my research participants and their accounts of leadership in agriculture differently, by using a critical, hopeful, feminist framework. While acknowledging the many significant limitations of post-feminist sensibilities

164

expressed throughout my research, this analysis ultimately includes and highlights the moments of possibility and hope that exist simultaneously alongside the limitations and harm. By refusing to only draw conclusions that emphasize feminism's co-optation and outright rejection, I have instead opted to 'read differently' with the intent of providing a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the Canadian agriculture sector and its women leaders, and its connection to the national and international agricultural communities. I have done this by highlighting the ways in which women are challenging institutional cultures of habit, particularly around sexual misconduct in the agriculture industry; how women are formally and informally supporting workplace culture that supports the needs of working parents; by drawing out and foregrounding those observations related to how language shapes gender relations in agriculture; and finally by celebrating and acknowledging the difficult collaborative work being led by women that elevates the importance of sustainability and collective approaches to problem solving, despite the overwhelming push toward individualized strategies for career advancement.

These types of analyses are crucial, especially as more and more women are seeking to build their careers (and lives) in the Canadian agriculture sector. These normalized post-feminist discourses structure the way women understand the issues they face as a minority within agriculture and will continue to limit their full participation and advancement if they go unnamed and unchecked. This is a vital component of a critical feminist hope analysis: the acknowledgement and analysis of cultural and structural barriers that have become 'naturalized truths' (Liepens 1998) among women. The other equally important (but not always permitted) side of a critical feminist hope analysis is the commitment to openness for new possibilities towards change, acknowledging the hopeful parts that already exist, and not completely dismissing the gains that have already been made for women (and others) in this context. A

critical feminist hope stance is one that embraces the complexity, contradiction, and frustration that is inevitably part of the struggle for change, but one that recognizes that the struggle is worth it. By refusing to disregard the existence of hope and accounting for the complex nature of women in agriculture leadership, my hope is that it may become easier for women to articulate criticism of and resistance to gender inequalities, sexist institutions and structures, not only within agriculture but everywhere that it exists.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion: Looking Back and Looking Forward for Women in Agriculture

Agriculture in the Canadian prairie region has undergone vast transformations since the early

homesteading days of the immigrant settlers, to the co-operative and collectivist politics of the

agrarian movement, to the more recent and widespread impacts of neoliberal policies and

programs on family farms and rural communities. The restructuring of agriculture in the 1980s

and 1990s brought with it significant change in the Prairies. This change remains ongoing;

advances in crop and machinery technology, big data analysis, new marketing techniques and

opportunities, and the research and development behind 'sustainable intensification'[50] all

contribute to a rapidly evolving sector designed to continually increase productivity in order to

be competitive in the global market place while also purporting to feed the world's rapidly

growing population. This is not all that has changed: the gendered ideals inherent in traditional[51]

agrarian ideology and culture – that tough men farm, and own land while women care and

nurture (Liepens 1998) – are slowly fading away. The hegemonic and managerial masculinity

style characteristic of agricultural leadership, along with an entirely male-dominated leadership

roster is also experiencing a facelift as more and more women are occupying seats at the table.

As noted earlier, women now outnumber their male counterparts in agricultural college

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[50] For a full description of sustainable intensification see:
http://www.futureoffood.ox.ac.uk/sustainable-intensification

[51] Descriptors like 'traditional' tend to mask the dynamism present in the gender relations between men and women during the Prairie Agrarian Movement, where women were quite active and involved in the politics, economics, and culture of agriculture both on and off-farm (see for example: Knutila, M and Sterling, B (2007). *The Prairie Agrarian Movement Revisited.* Regina: University of Regina Press.). For the purposes of this paper, terms like 'traditional' or 'older' (and not just in Canadian agriculture) refer to a time when rural sociologists theorized on-farm gender relations as highly unequal and where women's labour and contributions were often unaccounted for, and when they had little to no property rights, despite being equal contributors to the farm operation.

classrooms (Gilmour 2014), generally have higher levels of leadership and professional development certification in agriculture than men in the sector (CAHRC 2016) and are continually increasing their proportion of farm ownership (Statistics Canada 2016).

While these developments are indeed promising for the advancement and inclusion of women in agriculture, there still remains an uneasy and uncomfortable disconnect between women's advancement and contributions to agriculture, and the ways in which traditional gender roles and the patrimonial ideal foster the unequal treatment of women. As my research demonstrates, despite increasing corporatization and 'gender neutral' neoliberal influences, the complex gender work necessary to flourish in agriculture remains and is rooted in the agrarianism of the past. Nettie Wiebe (2017), an important agrarian feminist activist and scholar in Canada, observes that "the women's movements articulating and fighting for women's rights in other sectors and the larger cultural norms favouring the equality of women permeate rural cultures also" (Wiebe 2017 para 11). This is certainly evident in the uptake of women involved in agriculture and farming; however, the permeation Wiebe describes has been slow, uneven, and not always straightforward.

Similarly, social and political changes occurring outside of the agriculture now have direct implications for how things are done within the sector. The Canadian public is asking tough questions about the sustainability, transparency, and legitimacy of how food is grown, transported, and sold throughout the globe. Equally difficult questions are being raised about the presence and scope of women in leadership positions, not only in the agriculture sector, but across politics, economics, education, entertainment, and sport, to name a few. As a result of all of these changes, both internally and externally, the balance of power is slowly starting to shift from being all-white and all-male to one that now at least includes more (white) women.

This dissertation examines the influence and experience of those women who are now holding positions of power in the agricultural sector. I have done this in two ways: by presenting a nuanced look at the changing terrain within agriculture in Canada and how women in leadership are being influenced by this change; and by documenting and analyzing the challenges women in agricultural leadership face as they navigate a sector that is still characterized by the lingering authority of traditional rural hegemonic masculinity and patrimonial, agrarian ideologies.

Through this research, it became apparent that women who are now working in professional jobs in agriculture business and government seem to be situated somewhere between the legacy and imprint of past agrarian traditions and ideologies, and the present cultural norms that support equality for women. In the first chapter, I looked at the ways in which women see themselves contributing to the agricultural sector within their various positions of leadership. Some of the opportunities women saw for themselves were the ways in which they might change negative public perceptions around conventional agriculture to more positive ones, thereby increasing and restoring legitimacy, while also underscoring the importance of faith in the science and technology of conventional agricultural practices. By publicly sharing or giving those 'mother-to-mother type pitches' of their own personal food work practices, women felt as though they were distinctly positioned to connect the ignorant 'millennial mom' to the average, hardworking, trustworthy farmer and the food he produced. Women, in this sense, are acting as bridge builders between the new realities and public expectations around agriculture and food, and the old. Not only is this evident in the accounts women provided during my research, but also in activities they are heavily involved in, like chairing national roundtables on sustainability

initiatives, developing curriculum, working with companies on traceability and transparency, and organizing community agriculture events.

New challenges around public trust and legitimacy, safety and transparency are forcing farmers and agriculture businesses to re-think their business-as-usual approach to food production, but more substantially how they communicate the 'what' and the 'why' of these processes. Part of the national strategy has been to apply a 'new' narrative to the face of agriculture, and this 'new' face (and corresponding narrative) is one of a woman, a mother, a farmer, and a feeder of children. Amidst these 'new' opportunities and challenges, an archaic trope well documented in the earliest literary[52] and scholarly[53] work on farm women is being deployed: women are those who feed their children, and women, through hard work and self-sacrifice, are key to saving the family.

There is an uneasiness just below the surface of this approach. Aside from the highly gendered activities being deployed in this communication strategy, and the kinds of problematic assumptions it is based on, it also represents a short-sighted and incomplete understanding of public concerns. The types of concerns consumers are raising are not just about the safety of genetically modified and engineered food and the use of agrochemicals; there are questions around gender, race, class, labour standards, social and environmental sustainability, climate change, health, and politics. Getting a 'trustworthy mother' to try and assuage the concerns around the untrustworthy status quo will not be sufficient. Old and duplicitous tactics of

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[52] See for example: Lewis, Sinclair (1996) *Main Street 1920.* New York: Bantam Books; Hornbostel, Julia (1988). "This Country's Hard on Women and Oxen: A Study of the Images of Farm Women in American Fiction" *Women and Farming*. Ed. Wava Haney and Jane Knowles. Boulder: Westview Pennsylvania

[53] See for example: Sachs, Carolyn (1983) *The Invisible Farmers.* Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld.

'rebranding' will not hold sway in this new territory of powerful and interconnected social movements whose proponents have unfettered access to information at any time and any place. Further, concerns around the future of food on a planet that is heating up, with water sources that are polluted or drying up and contamination of soil from human activities, will not be going away any time soon. On the surface, the 'new' opportunities for women to be the face and voice of agriculture to the public seems like a hopeful development for women, but upon deeper analysis – it may just be setting them up for failure.

Another manifestation of this 'in-between' positioning of women in agricultural leadership is the complex, day-to-day decisions, activities, and gender presentations women must enact in an organizational environment dominated by men. Conceptualizations developed around respectable farm femininity illuminate the subtle ways in which particular historic naturalized 'truths' present in on-farm theorizations of gender and agriculture have consequences for women leaders. Further, respectable farm femininity complicates the idea that privilege is straightforward and granted on a meritocratic basis when in fact, it is not that simple. Rural, agrarian, patrimonial culture still shapes expectations for women in uneven ways in contemporary work environments, despite increasing corporatization and presumed meritocratic work environments. As women strive to achieve credibility, they are judged against a standard that resides in the past; a past that has not been inclusive or welcoming of them. This is a difficult position to be caught in. On the one hand, women are reaping the benefits of a more professionalized, corporatized sector that has things like proper Human Resource policies and legalized standards for workplace conduct, as well as mandates to train and promote women (and other minorities) to leadership. But on the other hand there still remains, especially early on in women's careers, this adherence to 'true' legitimacy being based on farm experience, and

alignment with certain 'rural' values (i.e. hardworking, authentic, sense of commonality and community with rural folk, and the belief that rural life is morally superior to an urban one) (Pini 2004). There are a handful of women working hard to debunk these expectations and assumptions, but it remains cemented into the minds and hearts of those who currently grant legitimacy in the sector. It is difficult to predict how this will evolve, given its strength and tenacity amidst all the other changes agriculture has undergone.

Granted, there is evidence to suggest that these practices are gradually changing as more young women (and men) enter the sector less locked into the ways of the past; contemporary scholarship notes that on-farm gender relations among younger farmers are more egalitarian, and new expectations around parenting and 'flex-time' work arrangements support the demands of working parents in a more holistic way. Surprisingly, several of the women I interviewed noted that up-and-coming women leaders just simply need to wait until the old boys club simply 'dies off', so that things can change in more fundamental ways. What emerges here are the ways in which the deeply held values of the past are colliding with the new realities of a changing industry; these changes are not just technological, they are social in nature, as well. Questions remain about how embedded the old ways will remain, and how much longer they will have so much power and influence.

This power and influence are compounded by some of the 'newer' post-feminist, neoliberal rationalities that permeate the sector. Traditional, hegemonically masculine and patriarchal ideologies of agriculture, in some ways, align with and reinforce modern, post-feminist sensibilities, adding more layers of messiness and difficulty for women in leadership. The ideals of both paradigms reinforce and support one another; in a post-feminist environment it is elements like gender-neutral, hard work, skill and merit-based advancement that resonate. In

a traditional rural paradigm it is the same thing, but perhaps with dirtier hands in inclement weather, and while driving a large truck. It is not difficult to understand why post-feminism has found such resonance in agriculture: it echoes many of the same underlying principles of the past, and these principles are often to the continued detriment of women, especially those in leadership or who want to be in leadership. There are trade-offs to becoming more professional and corporate, the influence of post-feminism chief among them.

I would be remiss if I failed to talk about – in a more deliberate and sustained way – the reasons why it is also important to remain hopeful. In my third and final chapter, I present a careful and deliberate re-reading of my research data, as a way to challenge the straightforward representation of women in agricultural leadership from the first two chapters. "Critical Feminist Hope" is a by-product of an internal, reflexive struggle to authentically represent a more complete, heterogeneous picture of women in agricultural leadership in Canada. While the list of problematic and unhelpful processes, practices, and discourses for women in leadership within agriculture is long and difficult to sort out, that is not the sole characterization of my research participants or the sector that they work in. Instead, this chapter is a deliberate attempt to struggle with and account for the "complexities and uncertainties, with openings" (Solnit, 2016 para 2) that exist alongside the very obvious, post-feminist rationalities present in the sector. These openings, while insufficient to forge claims around large scale, fundamental, structural change within the industry, when read differently, create a somewhat different, but still hopeful picture of an agriculture industry that must increasingly listen and respond to the growing chorus of women who expect better.

Ultimately this research examines the messy ways in which larger societal interests and trends are being taken up and reflected back within the agricultural context. It is not just

questions around environmental sustainability and greater transparency in the food system that are important, but concerns around the unfair treatment of women and lack of women in leadership, too. What is fascinating to me are the ways in which the agricultural community in the Canadian Prairies is responding. On one hand there is a recognition that more women are needed in leadership with a corresponding marked push to support, train, and prepare them for high-ranking positions. On the other hand, however, there is a pervasive and strongly held anti-affirmative action stance from both women and actors within the sector that insist only 'the right person for the right job' is hired. There are now large, well-attended 'Advancing Women in Agriculture' conferences throughout Canada but the topics featured at these conferences are often highly gendered, including things like: the importance of maintaining a healthy weight and mental load, how to deal with difficult male colleagues, how to effectively network, how to remain positive and "focus on the 90%" (of good things in your life) (Lang 2018, Opening Remarks), or how to use social media. These and other training and networking opportunities are favourably regarded and promoted among women leaders (and men) within the industry, but do not address things like: reporting sexually inappropriate behaviour; developing a culture of inclusion and diversity; or crafting HR policies that support the demands of parenting and work. There remains an uneasy tension between an adherence to traditional gender roles and representation (as demonstrated in theorizations around respectable farm femininity or maternal foodwork narratives), but also a desire to enhance the participation of women in leadership, in a gender-neutral, meritocratic or post-feminist way. Questions remain: will the pressure to include and promote more women in agricultural leadership hold; will the sector continue on this trajectory of talking about, supporting, and embracing women in leadership until it is no longer an issue? More importantly, though: are women able to fully and truly participate and contribute

to the sector in meaningful ways in spite of all the challenges, both seen and unseen, they encounter? That is a much more difficult question to answer, and one that may never be entirely clear.

Contribution to Research and Scholarship

This research expands the agrarian feminist and rural sociological literature in the Canadian context, and more specifically in the Canadian Prairie region. Research in Canada, up until this point, mainly focuses on the effect of rural restructuring and agricultural policy on the health and well-being of women on the farm, or those who are located in rural communities. The agriculture sector is wide-ranging, however, and is no longer only represented by rural, prairie farms and communities. Women are now working in almost every sub-sector of agriculture, from organic farming and certification all the way to international corporate leadership, but their experiences and contributions are not well researched. This trend of increasing numbers of women in agricultural leadership is expected to continue. Agriculture is distinct from other male-dominated sectors like Energy or Information Technology in that it remains firmly connected to and rooted in the rich traditions and practices of farmers and rural communities that grow the food. The number of women in agricultural leadership also continues to grow (though slowly and unevenly) in the Canadian Prairies, and so understanding the experiences and context that women work within is critical, especially if there continues to be a public push to increase their presence and contributions both within the sector and outside of it.

More generally, this research engages with scholarship on women in agricultural leadership in places like Australia, Norway, and other European contexts, but adds some gradation and depth because it incorporates some of the contemporary challenges (like consumer distrust and post-feminism) into its analysis and understanding. I attempt to move beyond the

traditionally understood challenges faced by women in agriculture – of tokenism, rigid categories of gender enactment, and marginalization – to a more complex and nuanced picture that accounts for both the changing context and larger cultural forces (like women's equality) that influence gender relations and opportunities for women in the sector. As such, this work notes the ways in which things change, and also how they stay the same.

Finally, I argue that my work extends the literature on women in leadership, because it considers an entirely different context – that of agriculture and the diverse array of leadership positions therein (from national commodity organizations to high level grain commissioners and top academic posts in agriculture). I present new conceptualizations on *respectable farm femininity* that incorporate the established contemporary theorizations on women in leadership, layered with the unique challenges and expectations women in *agricultural* leadership must also navigate. Lastly, my work also represents an attempt to grapple with feminist theory and its critique of neoliberal, post-feminist organizational cultures and the desire to also remain hopeful (in both theory and practice) of the incremental, though undeniable, attempts to change the larger structural issues within agriculture. My last chapter in particular, is an attempt to deal with complexity and uncertainty in the very practical experiences of women in agricultural leadership today.

Due to the limited research and education focused on the sociology of agriculture in Western Canada and the significant changes taking place, both in terms of women's visibility and growing pressure on the agriculture sector, more robust research is needed that focuses on women in agriculture. For example, research could be undertaken to investigate the significant resurgence of participation in Women in Agriculture (WIA) groups in the Canadian prairies. I think it is both timely and important to deeply understand the history, vision and mission, make

up, and effectiveness of WIA groups for women in the agricultural sector. Which women are joining and actively participating in these groups; how do they maintain and grow their support; have they been effective in delivering the support they claim to offer; are there more women in agriculture and agriculture leadership as a result of their efforts? Relatedly, examining the internal dynamics of these groups is needed; are there variations in ideology, beliefs, and practices regarding the position and advancement of women in agriculture; how are these differences dealt with; and how do women in these groups negotiate the competing discourses of merit-based advancement/problematic underrepresentation of women/post-feminist rationalities/and rural, patriarchal culture? Moreover, what do these WIA groups mean for agricultural communities and the increasing isolation felt among women who live remotely on their farms?

More research is needed on the existence and potential of 'unlikely collaborations' across ideologically opposed agriculture and farming groups, mainly those in the local, organic sector and those within big agriculture and conventional farming. There is a growing interest among people in these groups to work together, or alongside one another, or to implement certain practices across groups. Groups like the Young Agrarians[54] in British Columbia and Alberta have shown interest in a more collaborative, integrative approach to agriculture, though such efforts remain highly political. Where exactly are these collaborations (or potential collaborations) taking place; who is leading them; what are the motivations (on both sides) to be working together; what difference might this approach make; is there any research to suggest a way forward that fosters a more collaborative and inclusive model to agriculture, one that might

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[54]See for example: https://youngagrarians.org/

lead to greater sustainability and equity? Where are women positioned in these initiatives; what are the biggest social challenges of these activities?

Finally, as an extension of my current research, I would like to get a more accurate picture of the actual amount of federal and provincial dollars being granted for 'public trust' in agriculture initiatives and programs in the country. To what extent are public funds helping to fund private agendas like public trust and social license to operate; and is there any movement to regulate and address the concerns of the general public (i.e. water use, harsh chemical input use, labour standards etc.); is there a balance between the two competing objectives, or is one more heavily funded than the other? What are the differences in the way that 'building public trust' programs and 'strengthening the organic sector and local food economy' programs are conceived, deployed and funded? Building upon that, the effectiveness of these 'public trust' initiatives needs to be examined – is there any evidence to suggest that both public and private efforts are building strength and legitimacy back into the conventional agriculture sector? What would renewed public trust look like; and how would it incorporate the concerns of people like 'the millennial mom' or the 'ignorant urban consumer'? What impact do these things have on women, as both primary executors and recipients of these programs?

The confluence of issues related to food production, efficacy and sustainability alongside sustained public interest in women in leadership (among other things) has created a rich and exciting time for research into these areas. As more and more questions continue to emerge around the future of food on a planet that continues to warm, as well as concerns around the fair and equitable treatment of women, research that integrates both, remains important.

I am most grateful to have had the opportunity to meet, interact, and learn from so many intelligent, passionate, and friendly women who work in positions of agricultural leadership in

the Prairies. The research was as equally rewarding as it was frustrating as I learned about the complicated milieu of agricultural leadership for women. There is much work that remains to be done to support and advance women in the field. Women in agricultural leadership face a complicated set of (gendered) expectations and pre-requisites that make their path to leadership more difficult and convoluted than their male counterparts. That being said, I do believe that enough evidence exists to remain hopeful for the future. New and different kinds of leaders are emerging, tough questions are being asked, and more support continues to emerge for women at all levels of the industry. As questions continue to mount around the social, environmental and economic sustainability of agriculture in Canada, diverse voices and perspectives are essential. Without addressing the role and effects of androcentrism, solutions will remain incomplete, as patriarchal structures will continue to be reproduced, and thus, women will continue to be marginalized. Much progress has already been made, but we are far from completion in our recognition that women are, in so many ways, integral to agriculture.

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Interview Guide for Participants

1. Background – Professional/Farming
   - tell me about your past and current role in agriculture (organization/agency; on farm (if relevant).

2. Career Trajectory
   - describe your journey from farm (or previous ag career) to your current position (if relevant)
   - main reasons/drivers of your choice to take this position? (e.g. interest/aptitude; desire to see change [policy/legislation]; advocacy; by "accident")

3. Contributions of Women to Agriculture
   - Describe your biggest career/professional accomplishments and associated impacts
   - Are there any projects that you undertook but were unsuccessful? Reasons for failure?
   - Other future goals for your work?
   - Factors contributing to your success (circumstance, partner, mentor, personal determination, past experience, relationships, organizational support etc.)

4. Navigating the Workplace
   - How would you say gender dynamics impact your work?
     (illustrative stories of your experiences; experiences/insights are unique? similar to other women in the sector? How?)
   - Have you had any difficulty as a woman in your line of work? (illustrative stories)
   - Are there any positive impacts (strong female mentor, supportive female community etc)

5. Changes in sector
   - Have work conditions changed for women in your role? Have you personally seen this transformation?
   - What work remains to be done for women in agriculture? Is this important for you?

6. Other
   - do you feel a responsibility or calling to mentor other women in your area of work?
   - Is this something that is important to you?
   - Do you consider yourself a leader? Have you always felt this way?
   - Any tips/strategies/advice you would give you young women wishing to work their way up, and be leaders in the sector?

Appendix B

Data Analysis Procedure

The qualitative, empirical material that comprises my data was derived from in-depth, semi-structured interviews, as well as observations made from participation in various agriculture conferences and community events. In addition to the formal interviews undertaken for this research, I participated in many informal discussions about women in agricultural leadership throughout my fieldwork. I created a Twitter account so that I could follow the prolific voices on current topics and receive general information about agricultural events in the country. I also followed several Women in Agriculture groups via their Facebook pages, and I purchased a membership to one of the largest Women in Agriculture groups in Canada. The data generated through the different methods provided a detailed picture of gender relations, and the larger context of women in agriculture in the Prairies at that particular moment in time. I maintained an ongoing field journal in which I recorded observations, events, feelings, and thoughts about the things I was learning and experiencing during the fieldwork.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were guided by an exploratory set of questions around career development, significant professional accomplishments, impact and influence of gender, and future opportunities for women in the field. The research questions were broad and underpinned by the literature related to the deeply embedded patriarchal terrain of agriculture, women's exclusion, their professional experiences around gender in agriculture, as well as scholarship on women in leadership more broadly. Immediately following each interview, I would find a quiet location to sit and reflect on how the interview went (rapport, tone,

responsiveness, reactions, body language, my own ability to navigate the interview) and record this in my field journal.

During the times I was doing fieldwork and observation at agriculture conferences and community events, I would take detailed notes of my physical surroundings, interactions I had, and other interesting pieces of information. I also collected as much visual data as I could at these events: brochures, pamphlets, flyers, and swag from participating organizations.

The data analysis was done in an iterative fashion. Themes and interesting insights were documented in the field journal (even before the interviews were completely transcribed) and then literature examined to try and conceptualize the findings. For example, the theme of 'gender and public trust' was established early and consistently in my data, so literature searches were done to find any type of theorizations or analysis of the use of gender in either corporate social responsibility campaigns, or social license to operate programs.

Interviews and transcription were done simultaneously. For the purposes of expediency and efficiency I did not transcribe all 70 interviews. I ranked each interview and decided which ones were worth transcribing and those that were not. The very best interviews were transcribed by myself (those that included articulate insightful comments and stories, those that presented substantially different findings than what was previously established). The interviews that were ranked good/important were done by professional transcribers, and those that were deemed 'outside the scope of the research questions' or that were simply poor interviews were not transcribed. Interviews that were not transcribed were listened to carefully and notes were taken. These notes were guided by key themes identified in the data and in the literature.

Interviews that were transcribed were first hand coded based on themes derived from the literature (i.e. gender performance of masculinity/femininity; motherhood/family;

hegemonic/rural masculinity; post-feminism/corporate feminism; career path) as well as themes that were emergent (i.e. unlikely collaborations; public trust; hope/positive contributions; sustainability; advice to young women). After I was able to purchase NVivo 11 Software, I imported all interview transcripts and coded again, using sub-codes within the larger codes that were already established. The sub-codes were much more detailed (see Figure 1 for an example below).
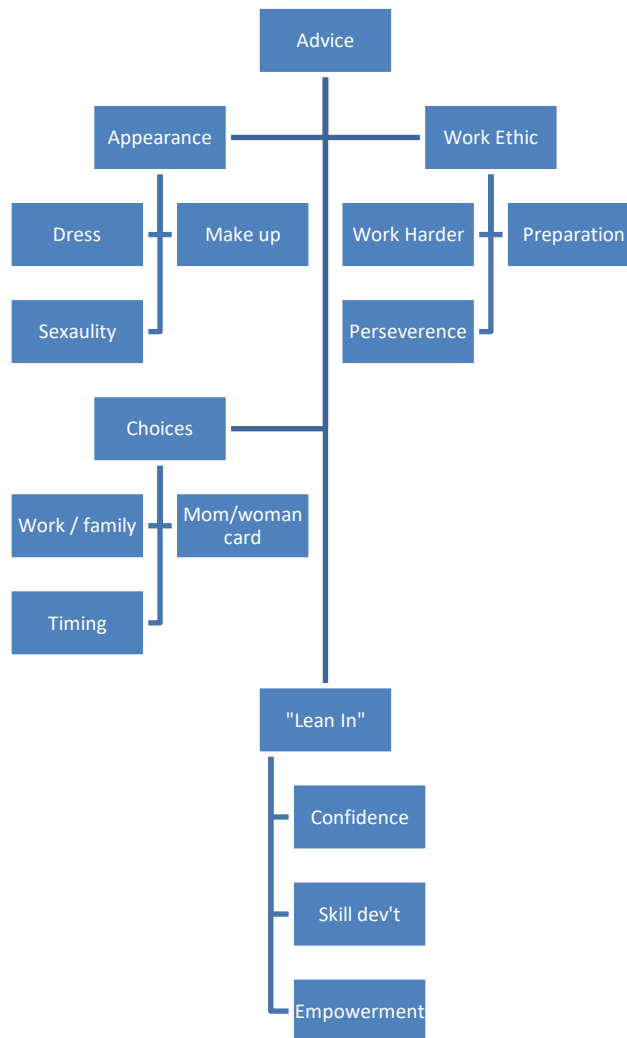
Figure 1 Example coding matrix

After the coding matrix appeared to be exhaustive, and data saturation was reached (no new insights were generated), the data was then reviewed again to reformulate larger and overarching themes. These larger themes and ideas made up the substantive portion of the dissertation papers.

During the process of coding and sub-coding, I would also review what was written in my field notes about certain interviews and observations I made, to cross-reference as well as triangulate the data to ensure rigor in the coding scheme and accuracy in the data presentation. With some of the unexpected emergent themes, I also went back to the literature to try and see if more insight could be gleaned. For example, after women kept mentioning or quoting Sheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In*, I went and read the book itself, while also scanning the feminist organizational literature on corporate feminism &/or specific references to Sandberg's work.

Throughout the duration of the fieldwork and analysis phase I was actively following agriculture professionals and organizations on Twitter and Facebook, so in addition to the interview transcripts and spoken words of the interview participants, I was able to contextualize and corroborate my findings with images, news articles, blogs, and public events. These were not coded (although they could have been), but were used to help broaden and deepen my understanding of agriculture in the Canadian Prairies.