

THESIS

THE MALE DOMINATED FIELD: A STUDY ON THE GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE
FARMERS IN NORTHERN COLORADO

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

THE MALE DOMINATED FIELD: A STUDY ON THE GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE FARMERS IN NORTHERN COLORADO

This research seeks to understand the gendered experiences of female farm operators in Northern Colorado. Specifically, how do female farmers perceive their experiences through a gendered lens? Semi-structured interviews with sixteen women from Boulder, Larimer, and Weld Counties in the state of Colorado were conducted to explore these experiences. Additionally, a supplementary observation at an agriculture conference was completed to reinforce themes. Analysis revealed that female farmers face many of the challenges faced by women in other male-dominated industries. The data collected through over a dozen interviews revealed that women in agriculture cope with pressures inherent to other male-dominated workspaces, such as coping with tokenism, navigating the double bind, and balancing motherhood with their farmer roles. Additionally, women's work in agriculture often reflects an ethic of care through engagement with education, feeding others healthful food, and taking care of farmland and the environment.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Literature Review.....	3
<i>Agricultural Data</i>	4
<i>Women in Agriculture</i>	7
<i>Alternative Agriculture</i>	12
<i>Women and Work</i>	14
<i>Ethic of Care</i>	16
<i>Ecofeminism</i>	19
<i>Gaps in the Literature</i>	21
Chapter 2: Methods.....	23
<i>Epistemology</i>	23
<i>Research Questions</i>	24
<i>Positionality</i>	24
<i>Pilot Study</i>	26
<i>Sampling</i>	27
<i>Interview Sample Demographics</i>	30
<i>Data Collection: Interviews</i>	31
<i>Data Collection: Observation</i>	33
<i>Data Analysis</i>	35
Chapter 3: Results and Analysis.....	38
<i>“Good Ol’ Boys’ Club”—Navigating Masculine Agricultural Space</i>	39
<i>“A No-Win Situation”—The Double Bind</i>	43
<i>“I feel a responsibility to represent women”—Tokenism</i>	44
<i>“It’s almost like they can’t even see me”—Microaggressions</i>	47
<i>“Any moment that I’m not farming, I have to be a mom.”—Intensive Motherhood</i>	51
<i>The Ethic of Care</i>	54
<i>“The best place to start is in fourth grade”— Education</i>	56
<i>“I joke that I have a feeding disorder”—Human-to-Human Care</i>	61
<i>“I’d really rather be interfacing with the plants” Human-to-Nonhuman Care</i>	63
Chapter 4: Conclusion.....	69
<i>Potential Limitations</i>	71
<i>Suggestions for Future Research</i>	72
References.....	73
APPENDIX.....	79

Introduction

In 1983, rural sociologist Carolyn Sachs explored the lives of women in farming in her book, *The Invisible Farmers: Women in Agricultural Production*. This foundational work created a space where women's roles in agriculture could be studied more in-depth; Women on farms have often been ignored and made invisible or relegated to traditional gender roles as wife, homemaker, and mother (Brandth 2002, Braiser et. al. 2014). However, women are very important to the agricultural industry. The United States Department of Agriculture's most recent census, which in recent censuses began to report on secondary and tertiary operators in addition to primary operators, reports that when attributed as joint operators, thirty percent of all farm operators are female. Additionally, there is increasing growth in the number of female primary farm operators (USDA 2012).

Over the past decade, the greater visibility of women in agriculture has inspired countless articles with headlines such as "U.S. Sees More Female Farmers Cropping Up"(2011), "Old McDonald Might Be A Lady: More Women Take Up Farming" (2013), "Women's Work Is Never Done On The Farm, And Sometimes Never Counted"(2014), and "Women Farmers Band Together To Vent, Seek Support and Exchange Ideas"(2016). Along with these articles, campaigns such as FarmHer have popped up to advocate for women in agriculture. In addition to advocacy, FarmHer released a photography project showing women farmers working in an effort to reshape and disrupt the stereotypical image of the farmer as male. Books such as Lisa Kivirist's 2016 *Soil Sisters: A Toolkit for Women Farmers* act as a manual and support for women in the field. Temra Costa also engages with the work of female farm operators in her 2010 book, *Farmer Jane*, and focuses on the stories of thirty female farmers in alternative agriculture. Despite this widespread interest the

specific gendered experiences of Colorado women across the spectrum of the alternative/conventional agricultural paradigms has yet to be explored.

This thesis seeks to further explore the experiences of female farmers in regard to their gender. Many women in this study have been working in agriculture decades before this so-called trend emerged. Despite the increased attention to female farmers, they are still a minority of farm operators in the United States, and therefore face many of the challenges that women in other male-dominated industries experience. Being viewed as an outsider within the masculine agricultural sphere has allowed women to carve out a niche in their agricultural practices. Women have been engaging with alternative farming techniques, taking on more leadership roles, and prioritizing education about the food system. All of the women in this study discussed their love for farming, and the importance of the role they play within it.

The major guiding question of this thesis is: *How do female farm operators in Northern Colorado perceive their gendered experiences within the agricultural sphere?* The data collected through over a dozen interviews revealed that women in agriculture cope with pressures inherent to other male-dominated workspaces, such as coping with tokenism, navigating the double bind, and balancing motherhood with their farmer roles. Despite these pressures, women expressed their positivity for their space in agriculture, which is often expressed through an ethic of care related to education, feeding others “good food,” and engaging with care for the environment. The research herein will delve into the experiences expressed by female farm operators, both primary and partnered, and women in both alternative and conventional agricultural operations.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

In order to engage more deeply with my thesis topic, I addressed a variety of literatures. The 2007 and 2012 United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Censuses provided a breadth of quantitative data, which provided a strong base on which to build up qualitative work and theory. Additionally, work that engaged directly with rural sociology and food and agriculture studies helped to build the foundation of my research. The experiences of rural women in agriculture were addressed directly in this literature. Identity, gender theory, and women's pathways to agriculture are explored in these fields, and allow for specialized engagement with the population studied.

Foundational gender theory on hegemonic masculinity and femininity provides an in-depth understanding of how gender is (re)produced in society, and what gender performances are given respect in social spaces. Engagement with literature on alternative agriculture provides a closer look at how alternative agriculture functions within the wider agricultural system, and how it provides a niche market which women often fill.

Literature on the Ethic of Care is based in philosophical and social theory, and often takes a women-centered approach to ethics and the human imperative of relation-based interaction. Care for others, including nonhuman others, is central to many farming women's motivation to work in agriculture. The ethic of care is expressed similarly to those who engage with ecofeminism, so I examined both Care Theory and Ecofeminism. Literature related to gender and work was imperative to building a foundation for this thesis, as it provides a lens that takes on the issues of gender inequality in the workplace, especially when a career is male-dominated. The study of gender and work within agriculture has not been explored in depth, so this thesis also seeks to bolster this

perspective. This literature provides a strong theoretical and empirical base to develop and conduct my research.

Agricultural Data

According to the USDA’s Census of Agriculture two-operator farms account for 44 percent of all farms, with female secondary operators accounting for 67 percent of these farms (USDA Farm Demographics 2014). Women are 30 percent of all farm operators in the census (USDA Farm Women 2014). 91 percent of farms with a female principal operator are small, having less than fifty thousand dollars in annual sales and 82 percent of woman-operated farms have fewer than one hundred eighty acres.

	Woman-operated Farms	All Farms
Farm Size		
< 50 acres	54	39
50 to 179 acres	28	30
180 to 999 acres	15	23
1,000 acres or more	3	8
Total	100	100
Farm Sales		
Less than \$10,000	76	56
\$10,000 to \$49,999	15	19
\$50,000 to \$249,999	6	13
\$250,000 to \$999,999	2	8
\$1,000,000 or more	1	4
Total	100	100

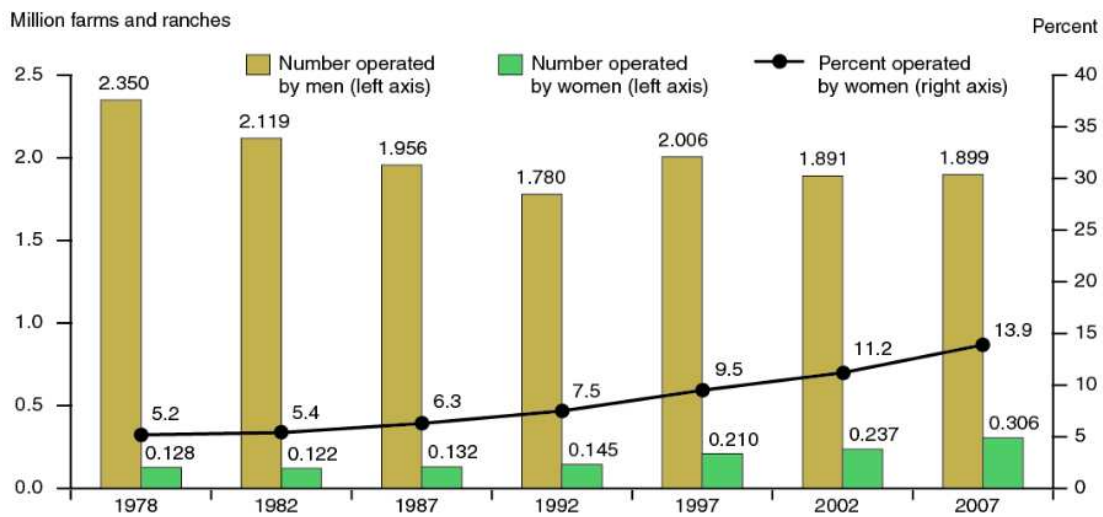
Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

Farms with Woman Principal Operator, by Farm Size and Sales, 2012
(percent)

Another report, specifically focused on female farmers, reported that women control 7 percent of the farmland in the United States, and account for 3 percent of sales. In 2012, 14 percent of the nation’s farms had a female principal operator (USDA Farm Demographics 2014). The table shows that many farms with a female principal operator are smaller operations, yielding lower profits per year. This could indicate that many

women choose to take on alternative farming practices, such as organic, direct-market, and community-supported agriculture models, which tend to be smaller in acreage and profitability (USDA Ag Census 2012).

Another report by the USDA titled, “Characteristics of Women Farm Operators and Their Farms”, found that women farm operators tend to be older, more highly-educated, and reliant on off-farm income than their male counterparts (Hoppe and Korb 2013). The USDA has also found that there was a small decrease in women operators between 2007 and 2012, but that in the twenty-five years between 1982 and 2007, women-operated farms more than doubled. Overall, demographic statistics about agriculture in the United States suggest that there is an increasing number of women-operated farms.



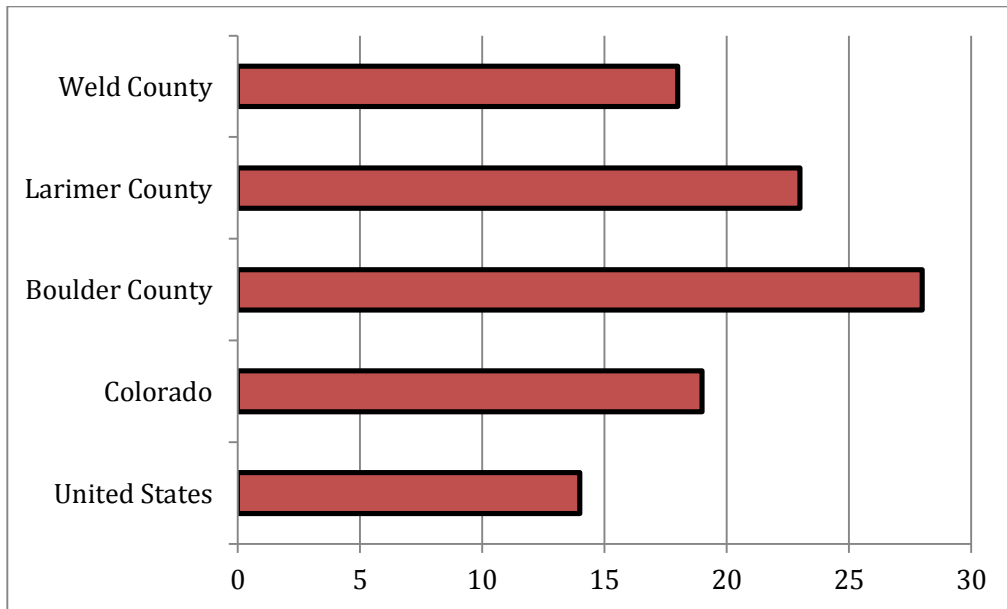
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, compiled from Census of Agriculture data, various years.

U.S. farms and ranches by gender of the principal operator, 1978-2007 censuses

The share of farms and ranches operated by women has grown to 14 percent

Colorado is among the top 50 percent of agricultural producing states in the United States (USDA ERS), and in the top ten states for sales from livestock production (USDA NASS). Colorado also has more female primary farm operators than the national average, which positions Colorado as an important case to study. According to the 2012 Colorado

Agricultural Census data, 19 percent of farms have a woman as the principal operator, while the national average is 14 percent of farms (USDA Women Farmers Fact Sheet). When examining county data in the region of interest to this study, it shows the following percentages for farms with a female principal operator: 23 percent in Larimer County, 28 percent in Boulder County and 18 percent in Weld County (USDA Ag Census 2012).



Female Primary Operators (Percent)

Of the three, Boulder County has the fewest farms overall and Weld County has the most farms. The average farm size for operations run by women in these counties varied. Boulder County's average farm size is 54 acres, Larimer County's average farm size is 233 acres, and Weld County's average farm size is 217 acres. The average market value of farm products from woman-operated farms was \$7,203 for Boulder County, \$14,439 for Larimer County, and \$99,289 for Weld County. All of the counties included in the study region have a higher than average proportion of female farmers, with Boulder County having double the national average of female farm operators.

Women in Agriculture

With more female farm operators, it is important to continue to study their experiences. Jennifer A. Ball's study (2014) about women in farming has found that the increase in female farmers is linked to a demand for niche production, such as organic, local, or sustainable products, a decrease in the average farm size, and greater societal acceptance of female farmers. Nevertheless, agriculture in the United States is male-dominated, especially in the conventional production sector (Trauger 2004, USDA); this can lead to the reproduction of patriarchal models that bar or limit women's ability to enter the occupation. Traditionally, land is passed down from father to son or to a widow from her husband (Brandth 2002, Pilgeram and Amos 2015), which perpetuates the male-dominated nature of agriculture. Novice women farmers may face several barriers when trying to access land. Socioeconomic and cultural factors play into female farmers' abilities to grow their business (Pilgeram and Amos 2015). If a woman owns land, it is likely because she was able to inherit it from a male family member, or marry a farmer. Otherwise, women may need to grow on leased land or in an alternative way, such as through backyard or community farms (Pilgeram and Amos 2015). Women who are already entrenched in the agricultural world through family or community connections tend to fare better when it comes to land access and claiming their farmer identity (Keller 2014, Pilgeram and Amos 2015).

Farm women have multiple and shifting identities, and define themselves by a variety of roles including farm operator, farm entrepreneur, business partner, worker-apprentice, bookkeeper, domestic partner, or worker-professional (Braisier et. al. 2014). While many women balance these multiple roles at once, some women identify with some

identities more than others (Braiser et. al 2014). Women will often find salience with certain roles depending on their perception of what defines a farmer (Keller 2014, Trauger 2004); for some, providing meaningful farm contributions such as marketing or accounting is deserving of the farmer title (Keller 2014, Trauger 2004). Farm women's identities also vary in relationship to men. In a 2013 study, farming men who work with female partners, often their wives, portray them not as helpers, but as a critical part of farm operations (USDA). To these men, agricultural contributions of women are not taken for granted, and women often serve a decision-making role for the farm (Beach 2013, Braiser et. al 2014). Men reported feeling a sense of pride when working with their wives or daughters on the farm (Beach 2013). However, support from men does not solve many other challenges faced by female farmers.

For women in agriculture, they are often up against the industry's patriarchal conventions; this will create roadblocks despite interpersonal harmony. For example, farmland is often passed down from father to son or another male family member. The role of *farmer* is still coded as masculine, and women often have their identities questioned and face frustration when working to reaffirm their place in the agricultural sector (Brandth 2002, Keller 2014). Similarly, rural space and place are often coded in a masculine way (Campbell and Bell 2000, Trauger 2004). In her forward to *Country Boys: Masculinity and Rural Life*, Carolyn Sachs discusses this male assumption:

A common and celebrated icon of the rural masculine is that of the farmer struggling to survive against all odds, heroically staving off the bankers and the weather through plowing, planting, and harvesting for days on end without sleep...embedded beneath the surface of these narratives are also the stories of the family members who must live with this version of farming masculinity, and who accommodate and support this lonely drama on the prairies. It is the man who typically claims the title 'farmer,' even on a family farm where the 'farm wife' and 'farm kids' labor both in

the fields and in the home on tasks essential to the farm enterprise...nonetheless, every farm typically has only one 'farmer' (Campbell et. al. 2006: 5).

Rural masculinity often adheres to hegemonic ideas of masculinity, which then leads to a traditional hegemonic femininity in rural spaces (Campbell and Bell 2000, Shortall 2001, Brandth 2002). Hegemonic masculinity is a concept initially coined by R. W. Connell, and further demystified by Mike Donaldson. It is defined as

A culturally idealized form, it is both a personal and a collective project, and is the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent. It is pseudo-natural, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich, and socially sustained. While centrally connected with the institutions of male dominance, not all men practice it, though most benefit from it (Donaldson 1993: 645).

Mimi Schippers offers a definition of hegemonic femininity, rooting it as an identity in compliance with hegemonic masculinity. When she mentions *womanly* characteristics, she is referencing characteristics that are deviant within masculinity, as well as those that serve the needs of hegemonic masculinity. She defines it as follows:

Hegemonic femininity consists of the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Schippers 2007: 94).

These *womanly* traits that the author refers to may include essentialist ideas such as nurturing behavior, agreeableness, or cooperation. Conversely, when women take on masculine-coded traits, they are embodying pariah femininities. Pariah femininities emerge when women practice hegemonic masculinity:

"[Pariah femininities challenge] the hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity...[masculine] characteristics, when embodied by women, are stigmatized and sanctioned. Hegemonic femininity is ascendant in relation to, what I suggest we call pariah femininities...they are deemed, not so much inferior, as

contaminating to the relationship between masculinity and femininity” (Schippers 2007:95).

When women enter the agricultural sphere as farmers, especially as primary operators, they are engaging with pariah femininities. This leaves their identities open to criticism and subordination by the dominant masculine paradigm under which agriculture exists.

Under this paradigm, traditional gender ideals play out within many formal agricultural organizations (Shortall 2001). Women-dominant committees in these organizations are often considered to be family-centric groups (Shortall 2001). These groups have a role to care-take, support vibrant rural communities, advocate, and educate others about agriculture (Shortall 2001). Women’s committees within farming organizations are often not centered on women themselves, and instead are externally focused on families, health, and community. This leads to the development of women’s farming organizations in order to address concerns of women themselves, especially farmers (Shortall 2001, Wells 1998).

Women in agriculture often work in feminine-coded positions such as bookkeeping, marketing, or community-work (Brandth 2002). Additionally, traditional divisions of labor often relegate rural farm women to housework and childcare responsibilities, which is unpaid, invisible labor (Hochschild and Machung 2012, Brandth 2002). This masculine coding of the farming profession leads to frustration for some women when their farmer identities need to be reinforced in the face of occupational gender stereotypes (Keller 2014). Women farmers often need to remind people that they are farmers, not gardeners, especially when they run small-scale farming operations (Keller 2014). Other women, in order to reinforce their farmer identity may engage in masculine gender performativity in order to gain respect among male peers (Pilgeram 2007). These women can have issues

asserting their identity of *farmer*, especially in communities shaped by gendered ideas of *farmer* and *farmer's wife* (Keller 2014). This frustration can create a resistance to the trope of *farm wife* (Keller 2014, Pilgeram 2007). This resistance may include positioning farmer identity in opposition to other rural women, stressing that they are critical to food production “unlike farm wives” (Keller 2014). Some women may even reconceptualize their femininity to align better with agricultural aims (Brandth 2006). Female farmers who work in partnerships often feel that their contributions are not recognized by the greater public; people direct questions to their male partners and perceive them as farm wives rather than their ascribed farmer identity (Trauger 2004). These interactions resemble microaggressions that many women face in male-dominated spaces (Sue 2010). For example, women will pride themselves on their skills with machinery or physical strength, but do so in a way that acknowledges that doing these masculine-coded jobs in their own way is a brand of powerful or alternative femininity (Brandth 2006).

Frustrations due to rigid gender ideals can negatively affect women across the agricultural spectrum. Looking at the traditional rural family farm, Brandth (2002) suggests “if women in farming are uncomfortable with the subject position offered them by the dominant discourse, they may leave the system, protest, or continue to be compliant” (183). Leaving the system or protesting it is subversion, and this subversion of traditional agricultural ideal types can occur through the creation of exclusive women’s farming organizations (Trauger 2004, Wells 1998) or entering the alternative agriculture system, as it can allow for more flexibility in gender roles (Trauger 2004).

Alternative Agriculture

Alternative agriculture is defined by the USDA Alternative Farming Systems Information Center as:

[A]n integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term: satisfy human food and fiber needs; enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends; make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls; sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole (Gold 2007).

This type of alternative agriculture movement is not masculine-coded (Chiappe and Flora 1998, Trauger 2004). The alternative paradigm provides a different path and “in communities still dominated by the conventional male paradigm and conventional sources of male identity, the initial articulation of these [alternative] elements is left to female discourse” (Chiappe and Flora 1998:391). Women are up to three times more likely to operate an alternative farm (Trauger 2004). Scholars posit that the alternative model creates a space for empowerment of women, while conventional models create a space of marginalization (Trauger 2004). Alternative agriculture operations tend to be smaller in size and product yields as compared to conventional farms (Chiappe and Flora 1998). Research supports the USDA statistics on women’s farm size and profit by reporting that women tend to run small, sustainable, and diversified farms rather than conventional monoculture farms (Ball 2014). The alternative paradigm is linked to community, social justice, caretaking, and providing (Chiappe and Flora 1998, Curry 2002, Jarosz 2011, Trauger et. al 2009, Trauger 2004, Wells and Gradwell 2001). Women’s pathways to alternative agriculture are varied. Some women gain knowledge and access from being

married to farming men, others come to farming late in life, citing the desire for a life change, and other female farmers cite the importance of connection with their communities, providing healthy food, care for the environment, and self-sufficiency as reasons for entering into alternative agriculture. (Chiappe and Flora 1998, Jarosz 2011, Trauger et. al. 2009, Wells and Gradwell 2001, Sachs 1992, Pilgeram and Amos 2015).

Chiappe and Flora's (1998) study explores why women engage with the alternative paradigm. In their research, the authors found that women sought alternative agricultural practices due to valuing self-reliance, a view of the complete food system, hyperawareness of chemicals in agriculture, connection to family, connection to the land, and the importance of community (Chiappe and Flora 1998). The researchers argue that self-reliance is borne out of the traditionally feminine role of ruling the domestic sphere. The management of "expense-reducing, as opposed to income-generating, activities" is a feminine agricultural role that then extends to managing the farm itself.

The view of the complete food system relates to another female-role of being the one who purchases and prepares food (Allen and Sachs 2007). Hyperawareness of chemicals also relates to the family management role most often held by women in the household; a wife and mother must protect her family from sickness, which often translates to protection from chemicals. Women have historically been the ones who have worked to connect family and community, as it has been constructed as their feminine duty.

The alternative paradigm often includes engagement with direct marketing practices, which allow for greater involvement and connection with the local community. Direct marketing practices include Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations, sales at farmers' markets, and sales through farm stands. Ideas historically based in

hegemonic femininity often map onto the sustainable practices used within the alternative paradigm, which may lead to a higher proportion of women within it.

Women and Work

Joan Acker's 1990 study, "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations" critiques the idea that work organizations are gender-neutral entities. Acker argues that organizations are built around a masculine framework. Due to this, the worker identity is rooted in a masculine identity. Since the ideal worker is a man, and in the case of this study, the ideal farmer is a man, women workers and farmers must mitigate male-dominated systems to gain respect in their fields. The perception of gender-neutral organizations occurs because "gender is difficult to see when only the masculine is present. Since men in organizations take their behavior and perspectives to represent the human, organizational structures and processes are theorized as gender neutral" (Acker 1990:142). This creates a structure that is biased against women and feminine qualities. With the masculine being lauded as the ideal, "[w]omen's bodies, female sexuality, their ability to procreate and their pregnancy, breastfeeding, and child care, menstruation, and mythic 'emotionality' are suspect, stigmatized, and used as grounds for control and exclusion" (Acker 1990: 152). Much of the discrimination is tacitly reproduced within the patriarchal structure of organizations, although some women face overt control such as "sexual harassment, relegating childbearing women to lower-level mobility tracks, and penalizing (or rewarding) their emotion management" (Acker 1990: 152).

Farms and agricultural organizations, like other occupational organizations, are not gender-neutral. The role of farmer is perceived as masculine, and the women in this study face many of the issues that women in other male-dominated spaces experience. Women in

agriculture may be seen as transgressive due to the gendered coding of farm work (Haugen and Brandth 1994). Even when women's work in the male-dominant sphere is comparable to men's work, it is reported that those women still retain the household responsibilities inherent to traditional gender roles (Haugen and Brandth 1994). Literature on entrepreneurship similarly reports this traditional household role for couples that work in business together (Yang and Aldrich 2014). With the majority of secondary farm operators being the spouse of the farmer (USDA 2012) and 70% of mixed sex entrepreneurial partners being married, it is important to explore the complex interpersonal relationship between entrepreneurs who are romantically partnered. Mixed-sex entrepreneurial teams become complicated when the role of family and home become embedded within the career space; the report shows that in married entrepreneurial couples, gender is most salient and creates a challenge for breaking away from gender roles at work (Yang and Aldrich 2014). Even women who are the sole proprietors of their businesses face issues of gender inequality in their homes (Haugen and Brandth 1994, Shelton 2006). Due to traditional gender roles of childcare and housework, female entrepreneurs often face role conflict when trying to balance their multiple conflicting identities of entrepreneur, spouse, and mother (Haugen and Brandth 1994, Shelton 2006, Yang and Aldrich 2014). The strategies used to mitigate this conflict include role elimination, role reduction, or role sharing (Shelton 2006). Role sharing is painted as the least internally contentious choice, since it allows female entrepreneurs to outsource traditional feminine roles to others (Shelton 2006). The idea of a work-life balance may seem almost impossible to some female farmers, but outsourcing feminine roles and cutting back on agricultural responsibilities in order to achieve role harmony may be necessary.

Feminist theory often navigates gender dichotomies; are women and men the same, or are they different but equal (Haugen and Brandth 1994)? The former links to the idea of equal rights, and asserts that men and women have the ability to do the same things in the same way. The latter asserts a women-centered ideology and standpoint theory; women are different, but those differences must be respected and not seen as inferior to men's skills (Haugen and Brandth 1994). For example, care theory is born out of a women-centered ideology that believes women are better suited to the development of moral and ethical imperatives (Gilligan: 1977). However, dichotomies oversimplify a gendered world that is much more complex. Many women hold both of these approaches to be true to their lives. In order to succeed within a currently male-centric system, many women take on an approach that heralds equal rights feminism as the best theory to use in mixed-gender groups in order to neutralize any vitriol and create a "politically correct" space. Women who use this approach also acknowledge the women-centered theory as a "true" and personal value, which is often deployed in women-centered spaces. Especially within male-dominated spaces, women must often be strategic with their expressions of femininity and of feminism in order to succeed.

Ethic of Care

The ethic of care, also known as care theory, is a social theory stipulating that the relational interactions between humans and also between humans and nonhuman entities are a basic moral imperative (Curry 2002, Engster 2005, Gilligan 1977, Noddings 2012, Swanson 2015, Tronto 1987). Care ethics, which is based in feminist thought, is "a justice theory that designates caring for others in a caring manner as the most fundamental human value" (Engster 2005:70). The origin of care theory comes from Carol Gilligan's "In a

Different Voice” which seeks to develop a moral ethic that differs from the ethic of justice (Gilligan 1977). She believes that women are uniquely situated to develop a morality based in care and relational interaction, and that many ethical imperatives in social thought exclude women’s voices when developing moral theory (Gilligan 1977). Her work during the Second Wave Feminist Movement focuses on privileging women’s voices (Gilligan 1977), a gendered foundation of care ethics acknowledged by other scholars as well (Noddings 2012).

One of the originators of care theory, Joan C. Tronto, defines care as “a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web” (Tronto 1993:103). Additionally, Tronto (1987) believes that care theory must be contextualized within a feminist framework in order to avoid patriarchal domination through exploitation of an ethic of care. She criticizes Gilligan for positioning care ethics as a uniquely female perspective; all genders must engage with this. Without cross-gender engagement, it cannot be fully formalized and may likely be seen as a simple deviation from existing moral ethics (Tronto 1987). Care theory is not based in one-on-one intimate relationships between people, but instead based on the social idea that the very nature of human beings is relational (Curry 2002, Engster 2005, Noddings 2012). This relational aspect can be extended to communities, institutions, and other nonhuman actors such as nature, nonhuman animals, and communities (Curry 2002).

When extended to nonhuman entities, care theory allows for an analysis of human, especially feminine, interactions with nature and community (Curry 2002). Female farmers

in both alternative and conventional agricultural settings engage with the ethic of care. Women in agriculture engage in caring behavior when working toward vibrant, healthy communities, when working to shift to a sustainable earth and food system, and when working to provide others with food (Allen and Sachs 2007, Ball 2014, Bellows et. al 2010, Chiappe and Flora 1998, Curry 2002, Engster 2005, Haugen and Brandth 1994, Jarosz 2011, Little et. al. 2009, Sachs 1992, Shortall 2001, Swanson 2015, Trauger et. al 2009, Weber 2007, Wells and Gradwell 2001, Wells 1998).

A key component of care ethics is based in providing for the basic needs of others, which includes the need for adequate, healthy food (Engster 2005). Female farmers occupy an interesting space where they may be a food provider at all stages, from growing to cooking and serving. As others have shown, producing food allows female farmers to engage with all parts of the food chain since women also predominate in domestic food work (Allen and Sachs 2007, Bellows et. al. 2010, Little et. al. 2009). When women's identities intersect with motherhood, their maternal role may enhance their role as a food provider. Since women by-and-large do childcare work, motherhood may enhance the desire to seek out a food system perceived as healthy and sustainable (Bellows et. al. 2010, Chiappe and Flora 1998, Haugen and Brandth 1994, Hochschild and Machung 2012, Jarosz 2011, Little et. al 2009, Wells and Gradwell 2001).

When women enter agriculture, they often farm differently from men, “demonstrating an ethic of care and a rationality of responsibility; need orientation, and other-directedness are central” (Haugen and Brandth 1994:208). They are “expected to steer their activity in a more caring direction” (226). The motivations of female farmers, especially those who run Community Supported Agriculture, are “expressive of an ethics of

care that defines their work as centered upon nourishing themselves and others” (Jarosz 2011: 307). This nourishment is found within self-care and other-directed caring behavior (Jarosz 2011). Embedded within the ethic of care is the idea of human-nature relations (Curry 2002, Swanson 2015). This relationship links nicely to the concept of ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a concept integrating the environmental and women’s movements that compares the domination of the earth and the domination of women (Sachs 1992). Karen J. Warren states “ecological feminism is the position that there are important connections—historical, experiential, symbolic, theoretical—between the domination of women and the domination of nature”(1990:126). Ecofeminist praxis blends theory and social activism (Mallory 2012).

Some scholars of ecofeminism explore differences between masculine and feminine relationships with the land; men seek to conquer and control, women seek to interact and cultivate (Wells and Gradwell 2001). Warren further contrasts the masculine and feminine approaches to nature, respectively aligning each with a conquering and caring perspective. A caring ecofeminist perspective is connected with the concept of “loving perception”(Warren 1990:138). Loving perception acknowledges the nonhuman natural world as “independent, different...even indifferent to humans” and that a loving perception of the world “acknowledges and respects difference,” and is only limited by one’s “ability to respond lovingly (or with appropriate care, trust, or friendship)—whether it is to other humans or to the nonhuman world and elements of it “(Warren 1990:138). Kheel also described a holistic ecofeminism to incorporate a “consciousness of

love”(1991:70). Acts of love and care for the Earth contribute to an ecological feminist approach, and while not limited as an exclusively female approach, are borne out of a feminine and feminist approach to the world.

Pairing ecofeminism with the ethic of care produces a social lens in which “humanity, Earth resources, and sociopolitical forces are seen as interdependent, with care being implicit in thoughts and actions” (Swanson 2015:1997). This intersectional perspective “analyzes the ways that gendered and environmental oppressions stem from similar conceptual and material roots” (Mallory 2012:176), which can foster a social space to advance equality for human and nonhuman entities alike (Mallory 2012, Sachs 1992, Swanson 2015). However, Christine J. Cuomo expresses concern about the connection of ecofeminism to an ethic of care: “unexamined attraction to a care ethic is related to a general veneration of ‘feminine values’ that informs much ecofeminist thought, and that such veneration promotes, rather than dismantles, a logic of domination” (Cuomo 1992:352). Cuomo questions if engagement with the ethic of care reifies a subordinate position of women. Therefore, the cared-for actors, such as the environment, must be clarified in order to subvert the historical and patriarchal oppression of “female caring and compassion for oppressors” (Cuomo 1992:355). Although an ecological ethic of care is a feminine ethic, scholars must “not romanticize the connections between women and nature. Many human females have been conceived...as dominators...[and] have contributed to the oppression of the nonhuman world”(Cuomo 1992: 356).

However, some ecofeminist scholars argue that women may be more often aligned with the perspective through differential socialization. Women’s self-identity “is not bound up with the urge to negate one’s dependence on the natural world”(Kheel 1991: 69). This

leads some women to individually link their womanhood to their acts of care and connectedness to the natural world. A holistic ecofeminism, as described by Kheel (1991), “is an appeal to attend to nature in order to detect, not what we might want from her, but rather what she might want from us” (70).

Women’s engagement with agriculture is a potential form of ecofeminist praxis and care, depending on their aims. For example, the alternative agriculture movement works to take care of the environment, the soil, and the food system in an ecologically and socially sustainable manner (Chiappe and Flora 1998, Haugen and Brandth 1994, Sachs 1992, Swanson 2015, Wells and Gradwell 2001). The perspective of nature as a relational actor with humans allows for farmers to work with the ecology of their land, rather than work against and conquer it with pesticides and other destructive technologies (Sachs 1992, Wells and Gradwell 2001). When individual women in the study conceptualize their caring agricultural practices, they often link this care to their gender.

Gaps in the Literature

There has not been in depth research combining the sociology of work, the sociology of gender, and research on farmers. This study seeks to fill this gap by studying the experiences of female farmers through a lens of gendered organization theory (Acker 1990). Additionally, this study fills a gap on research done on female farmers. Often, agricultural research with a gender focus tends to center on women who farm using alternative models. This project seeks to understand the lives of female farmers in both the alternative and conventional paradigms of farming. Additionally, a comparison between women’s agricultural experiences in the alterative paradigm and the conventional

paradigm may lead to a greater understanding of how gender dynamics affect different types of agriculture.

Chapter 2: Methods

This chapter will explore the methods used to complete my study. The methodology within this research is based in feminist standpoint epistemology, which seeks to privilege the experiences of the women who participated in the study. I used a variety of sampling methods in order to access my population. After the selection of my sample, I began data collection. In order to better understand how gender shaped the lives of my respondents, I chose to engage with semi-structured interviews, as well as a supplementary observation. The observation provided supplemental data to reify themes found in my primary data from interviews. I acknowledge my positionality, and share how I personally became interested in the lives of female farmers.

Epistemology

The methodology for this research study is based in standpoint epistemology, which is defined as “an approach that argues that knowledge is and should be situated in people’s diverse social locations” (Mann and Kelley 1997). Standpoint epistemology lies within a feminist framework. Feminist epistemologies are born out of the work of Patricia Hill Collins and Dorothy Smith, which privileges the experiences of research participants over the expertise of the researcher. For example, some women in the study worried that what they were saying sounded stereotypical or not academic; I reassured them by letting them know that their perception of their own experiences was valid and extremely important. Feminist epistemology is rooted in the idea that people are the experts of their own experiences (Ravitch and Carl 2016). By letting standpoint epistemology guide me, I

allowed my research questions to be fairly open-ended and left room for various themes to emerge.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided my project was: *How do female farm operators in Northern Colorado perceive their gendered experiences within the agricultural sphere?* I further expanded on the question to include the following sub-questions:

- *How do female farmers begin their agricultural careers?*
- *When and how do female farmers learn how to farm?*
- *What are the experiences of female farmers in the marketplace?*
- *What are female farmers' experiences in organizations?*

These sub-questions were developed out of reviewing the literature to discover common issues and experiences faced by women in agriculture, such as their pathways to agriculture, and their experiences within formal agricultural spaces such as organizations, boards, markets, or with wholesale contractors. Using a feminist epistemology to guide my research allowed me to further develop themes that were repeated often in interviews. For example, several women mentioned their struggle of balancing farming and motherhood, so I made sure to explore this as my data collection progressed.

Positionality

Especially within feminist epistemological frameworks, it is important for researchers to acknowledge their positionality; in qualitative research, the key instrument is the researcher herself (Ravitch and Carol 2016). Like any good sociologist, I needed to consider the strengths and weaknesses of my research instrument. This required self-reflection. I am a white, middle-class female from the Rust Belt region of the United States.

I am from a suburban/urban area, and have very little experience with agriculture. I am passionate about food and gender research, and I am a strong feminist. The identities I share with my sample population are my race, gender, and at times, my age. My position made me an outsider in many respects.

It was important for me to remain a neutral party while conducting research with the farmers. I did not want to position myself in opposition with my respondents if they did not agree with my progressive feminist views. Avishai et. al. (2012) addresses the challenges of when a feminist researcher enters a conservative setting, namely the tension between two imperatives within feminist research: “a political commitment to advance progressive social change through research and a methodological commitment to prioritize our subjects’ voices”(Avishai et. al 2012). Reflexivity allows the researcher to consider her social position and its potential impact on research (Avishai et. al 2012, Ravitch and Carl 2016). Since standpoint epistemology was a key framework used in this project, I prioritize my methodological commitment. There were only a few instances when this tension presented itself during the research. For example, one woman bristled when I asked a question about feminism, referring to the concept as “garbage,” and then demanded that I explain to her what feminism was. I approached this by answering her question, and actively avoiding discrediting her dissenting opinion on the matter.

During my primary data collection stage of interviewing, I positioned myself as an outsider and took on an interviewer role of *respectful student*. Social researcher Robert S. Weiss suggests that taking on the *respectful student* role is a good way to approach interviews in which others are an expert, and the interviewer must be “awaiting instruction” and “ready to admire [participants’] knowledge and authority” (Weiss 1994:

66). This approach bode well for me, and since I have interest in food systems and women's experiences, my admiration was real, not performed.

I believe my personal characteristics as a female student from a land grant institution allowed me to have clout and access to the networks to key stakeholders. As a white female, I was able to relate to my participants on the level of race and gender. I did not grow up in an agricultural environment, so I was an outsider in that respect. This allowed me to learn more about my population without making assumptions.

Pilot Study

My interest in studying female farmers began in a "Hunger, Food, and Culture" graduate course in the Anthropology department at Colorado State University. I was struck by Patricia Allen and Carolyn Sachs' article "Women and Food Chains" (2007) and wanted to explore women's involvement in food's sociocultural and material domains (Allen and Sachs 2007). Allen and Sachs' article states that women have a historic, intimate link to food based in a nearly universal cultural idea of women being in charge of care and sustenance (Allen and Sachs 2007). The authors call upon social scientists to explore women's connection to the food system more deeply, and I wanted to respond to the call.

My final project for the course became a pilot study for this thesis. The research sought to understand women's farming networks through use of secondary statistics and content analysis of the mission statements, articles, and websites of female farmer organizations. My content analysis resembled Altheide's (1987) ethnographic content analysis (ECA) approach. ECA is "used to document and understand the communication of meaning as well as to verify theoretical relationships. Its distinctive characteristic is the reflexive and highly-interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection, and

analysis” (68). My approach to these cultural artifacts allowed me to better understand how women in agriculture conceptualize their experiences. The pilot research sparked my desire to collect primary data and find out more information from the women in Northern Colorado.

Sampling

In order to reach my population effectively, my sampling process was multi-faceted. After reviewing USDA Agricultural Census Statistics at the national and state level, I developed a sampling frame. My population was women who self-identified as farmers in Weld, Larimer, and Boulder counties. I sought out a variety of farming operations, spanning from small-scale Community Supported Agriculture operations to dairy farms to Coors barley farmers. I sampled women who were the sole proprietors of their farming operations, and also women who ran farms with a partner. Every woman identified herself as a farmer in her own right.

The key characteristics for participation in the study were people who self-identified as women and as farmers. Another criterion was their location; they needed to farm in Larimer, Boulder, or Weld County. The counties were chosen due to their location on or near the Front Range, and the potential for each county to represent a different agricultural setting. Boulder County represents the alternative paradigm, and Weld County represents the conventional paradigm (Chiappe and Flora 1998). Larimer County represents the meeting of the two (Northern Colorado Regional Food Assessment 2011). I wanted to have a balance of participants for each county, so I interviewed four to six farm women from each location.

Purposive sampling of both participants and stakeholders were used to initially sample the population (Curtis et. al 2000, Wigfal et. al 2013). Another, more fruitful method of sampling was chain-referral (snowball) sampling. This sampling method is often used when accessing stigmatized or vulnerable populations, as well as populations with low visibility (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). While female farmers are not a vulnerable population, they can be hard to access due to time constraints, their lower prominence as an operator because of the perceived leadership role of their male partner, and lack of information to reach them. My technique for accessing my sample was to contact key stakeholders in the agricultural world, and access their networks to engage with women farmers for my sample. Consult the following table to see a breakdown of the respondents and their qualities.

Farmer	Status	Farm Type	County	Age	Education	Sample Method
Amber	Partner	Conventional	Weld	44	Associate's	Farm Bureau
Angie*	Partner	Alternative	Boulder	49	Bachelor's	CSU Professor
Anne	Primary	Alternative	Boulder	40	Bachelor's	CSU Professor
Catherine	Primary	Alternative	Boulder	65	Bachelor's	Snowball
Doris	Primary	Conventional	Weld	86	Some College	Snowball
Erin	Partner	Alternative	Boulder	42	Bachelor's	Farmer's Market
Gail	Primary	Alternative	Weld	72	Master's	Snowball
Gina*	Partner	Alternative	Larimer	34	Master's	CSU Professor
Janyce	Primary	Conventional	Weld	63	Associate's	Farm Bureau
Jean	Partner	Alternative	Weld	Did not share	Master's	CSU Professor
Jenna	Primary	Conventional	Weld	27	Bachelor's	Farm Bureau
KayAnn	Partner	Alternative	Boulder	57	PhD	Snowball
Lane*	Partner	Alternative	Larimer	34	Bachelor's	Snowball
Sara	Primary	Alternative	Larimer	26	Bachelor's	CSU Extension
Shannon*	Primary	Conventional	Larimer	45	Bachelor's	Farmer's Market
Taber	Primary	Alternative	Boulder	35	Law Degree (JD)	Snowball
*=name changed				Median Age: 44		

Participants

Stakeholders included the following: a Professor of Plant Sciences, Farm Bureau representatives, a Farmers' Market manager, Agricultural Extension agents, and other farmers. The stakeholders were informed about the project goals, and the rights and responsibilities of sampled participants. The stakeholders' understanding of the project was verified to ensure ethical sampling of my population. Some of these stakeholders sampled for me directly, but others provided contact information for female farm operators, or in the case of the market manager, pointed me in the right direction of whom I should talk with at the market. A potential limitation of this sampling method is that my sample may be homogenous depending on my stakeholders' networks (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). I mitigated this by accessing a variety of people who knew farmers across the alternative-conventional spectrum. Once I gained information, I made initial contact in person, over the phone, and by email when telephoning respondents was an issue (such as a number being disconnected or a full voice mailbox). My interview recruitment began in November 2015 after the approval of my Institutional Review Board protocol. Due to practical time constraints and the satisfaction of my purposive sampling criteria, recruitment for this study ended in January 2016.

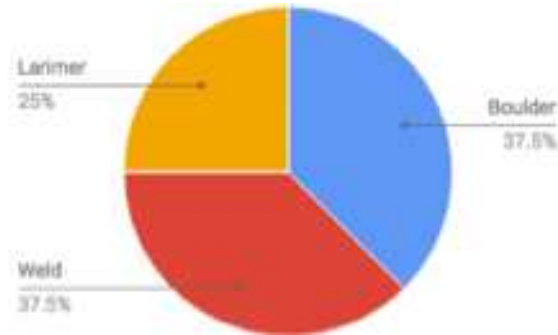
When planning the observation as a supplementary method of data collection, I sought out a case that would be relevant to my research. In January and February 2016, I researched panels and roundtables and purposively selected the Governor's Agricultural Forum and its accompanying "Women in Agriculture" breakout session to observe. This observation provided supplementary data in order to compare themes and gain knowledge on the state of women in agriculture as perceived by female agricultural professionals themselves.

Interview Sample Demographics

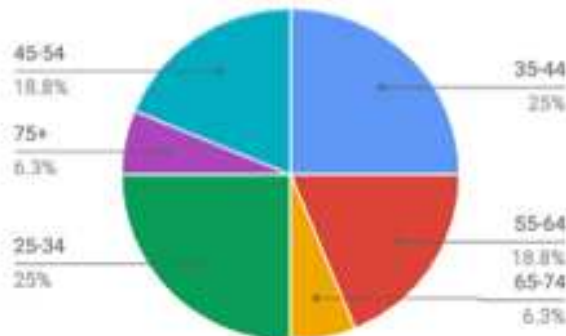
My sample includes sixteen interview participants. A quarter of my sample was from Larimer County, and the remaining three-quarters were split evenly between Weld and Boulder counties. The ages of my participants ranged from 26-86, and the median age of respondents was 44 years old. Of my respondents, half were partnered operators, and half were primary operators. Politically, a plurality of women identified as Moderate at 43.8 percent, followed by Liberal at 37.5 percent, and Conservative at 18.8 percent. A majority of women practiced alternative agriculture methods at 68.8 percent. The women in my study were highly educated, with 81.3 percent holding at least a bachelor's degree, and 31.3 percent of those women with education beyond a bachelor's degree.



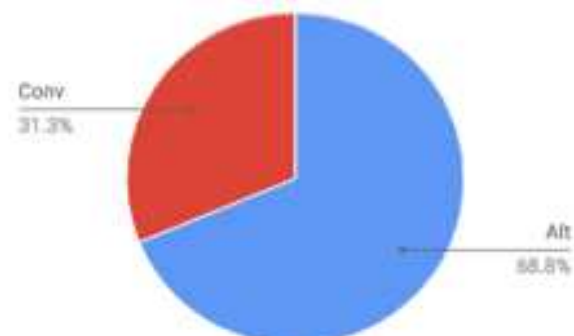
Level of Education



County



Age



Farming Paradigm

Data Collection: Interviews

I used a semi-structured interview guide. Semi-structured interviewing using open-ended questions allows for deviations, probing, and further development of themes. The interviews ranged in time from approximately 41 minutes to 2 hours, 33 minutes. The average interview length was about an hour. My research questions guided the creation of my interview guide, but as I became more entrenched in the data collection process, I found that adjustments needed to be made. For example, women began discussing similar themes unprompted. Several women discussed the difficulties of balancing motherhood and their agricultural work. I decided to officially explore this in later interviews, which produced a question of motherhood, and other questions that needed addressed:

- *If you have children, how do you feel that motherhood has affected your agricultural career?*
- *Do you think there is a distinction between a female farmer and a farm wife? If so, what is that distinction?*
- *In what ways do you think men and women farm/ranch differently?*

These questions were once deviations from my interview guide, and due to their repeated mention, became part of my official script. I allowed for other deviations, as long as it remained relevant to women discussing their agricultural experiences through a gendered lens (Weiss 1994).

Interviews were conducted at a location of my participants' choice—most often their homes. My interviewees were excited to discuss their farms and how they started in agriculture; they were a little more hesitant to discuss how gender affected their work, or answer questions related to finances. However, through probing I was able to discover more data. I found that by asking informational questions, and then probing for gendered

nuance, I was able to get important data. Since I interviewed women in three different counties and across the alternative/conventional agriculture spectrum, as well as women with different political attitudes, there were a range of attitudes regarding gendered experiences.

Interviewing through a feminist epistemological lens was especially important for this project since I was learning about women's experiences. Shulamit Reinharz (1992) states:

“Interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women”(19).

Centering women's responses was my top priority as a feminist researcher, and an acknowledgement that “all knowledge is affected by the social location and the social biography of the observer and the observed” (Mann and Kelley 1997:392). With these epistemological imperatives in mind, I worked to construct a welcoming environment for my participants. Through my encouragement of women to select the most comfortable setting for them, I was able to give my participants greater control over the interview space. Additionally, I made sure to send women the project's consent form prior to the interview, which allowed them to read over the document, which may feel intimidating when given on the spot.

During interviews, I took memos in my notebook and if I was in a home setting, observed my surroundings in order to contextualize my participants even more (Weiss 1994). Interviews were recorded using QuickTime software on my MacBook Air. After conversion of audio files, transcription was done on Express Scribe software. The

interviewing and transcription process happened in tandem. Memos were taken during the transcription process to track thematic similarities and potential topics to explore. These notes were incredibly helpful when composing my literature review and engaged in the coding process.

Data Collection: Observation

I also used the data collection method of observation. I conducted a field observation at a statewide agricultural conference in Denver, Colorado after looking into local conferences and events I could attend that would be relevant to my thesis research. My observation took place at a panel that centered on women in agriculture. The session was called *The Changing Landscape of Women in Agriculture*, which was approximately an hour long. This event helped me compare findings from my interviews. My sociological research questions for observing the panel were as follows:

- *Do women in agriculture subscribe to modern or traditional ideas regarding gender?*
- *Is the panel remaining women-centric by prioritizing women's experiences?*
- *How do the demographics of the panel audience compare to the whole conference?*

I also considered how the construction of gender discussed in the panel matched up to the gender discussions I had found in my interviews. In short, does this panel help to validate my findings? I ended up being able to make many connections to my interview findings, such as gender performance, essentialist ideas of gender, women's roles, passion for agriculture, and a sentiment of farm-to-table: women being part of the entire food chain from farm to store to kitchen (Allen and Sachs 2012).

I attempted to remain a neutral observer in the bulk of my field notes. I was able to avoid the anxiety and potential awkwardness felt by many researchers (Lareau 1996)

because I could blend into the setting without brokering negotiation. Since the setting was so structured, it was similar to a focus group (Morgan 1996). Admittedly, this panel was not set up or driven by me, the researcher, but it was a group discussion, and with my observation and ability to participate as a question-asker, it could be analyzed using some components of focus group analysis.

The panel was set up with guiding questions and the women were key informants (Ravitch and Carl 2016) in agribusiness. The panel was all female; two women were producers, two were in agribusiness, and one was a student teacher in agriculture education. The demographic makeup of the panel was all female, the age range was early twenties to early sixties, and most women appeared white although no one explicitly stated their ethno-racial identity.

My role as researcher in this setting was unnoticed. I was perceived as any other audience member in attendance. The only thing out of the ordinary may have been my audio recording of the panel, but nobody commented on this. I also took notes of things that may have seemed out of the ordinary in addition to notes that could not be audio-recorded, such as the set-up of the room, and the demographics of the people. I interacted with the other actors in my setting as an audience member, and posed a question to the panel during the question and answer section of the session. I felt like I fit the role as a complete member researcher (Adler and Adler 1987). I was at this conference as both an attendant and a researcher—the topics covered interested me beyond that of social researcher. The setting and culture was not exclusively agribusiness members, but those in academia who study agriculture, so in many ways, I *was* a member.

Data Analysis

My coding was completed using Nvivo software. Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis software program that allows the researcher to upload data, and then organize and analyze data in one file. This software aids in the organization of codes, as it stores data from each code within its own module. This allows for researchers to streamline identification of patterns and visualize connections of overlapping codes, thus allowing for the construction and discovery of common conceptual and thematic frameworks within the data. I uploaded my interviews and field notes from my observation, and coded the data.

I conducted two rounds of coding. In my first cycle of the coding process, I engaged with simultaneous, structural, and descriptive coding as well as subcoding schemes, which are nested under primary codes, and assigned after the primary code to detail or enrich entry (Saldaña 2013: 77). Simultaneous coding refers to the application of two or more different codes to a single qualitative datum (Saldaña 2013: 80). I used this method in order to find out how different codes overlapped with one another, which aided the development of my second cycle codes and conceptual framework. Structural coding refers to codes that are content-based or representing the topic of inquiry (84). These codes are developed out of the interview guide, and include topics such as *farm goals*, which refers to how respondents' answered an interview question asking them to describe the goals of their farming operation. Descriptive coding summarizes in a noun the topic of the passage of data (Saldaña 2013: 88). Within first cycle coding, developing a variety of codes provides a broad foundation from which a researcher can analyze and build to second cycle coding, and eventually develop themes and a solid conceptual framework.

Since coding is an iterative process, as I worked through several interview transcripts, I was able to go back and modify codes. The first cycle of coding yielded approximately forty codes, some were descriptive, such as *acreage*, others were more abstract, such as *advocacy*, *male-dominated*, and *community* (Saldaña 2013). Another important aspect of my coding process was the identification of standout statements, which later contributed to the development of my conceptual framework

My second cycle coding (see appendix) allowed for further distillation of my data. I was able to combine several codes, determine less fruitful codes, and focus in my coding for better data analysis. Memoing my thoughts about which codes to keep, which to combine, and which to remove from my second round of analysis allowed me to better interrogate my data. I discovered which codes had great overlap and considered potential melding of the codes; the codes of *tokenism*, *sexism*, and *need to work harder* came together as a new code—*challenges*. This code referred specifically to challenges faced by women working in male-dominated spaces. My codes were further narrowed down by frequency and relevance to my research. For example, *technical ag knowledge* was referenced frequently, but had little importance to the analysis of my concepts, so it was not analyzed in my second round of coding.

My second cycle of analysis also engaged with theoretical coding. Theoretical coding covers and accounts for all other codes with a concept or theory (Saldaña 2013: 223). My between-cycle-coding memos fostered the development of theoretical codes such as *community* and *challenges*. The concepts developed from my data analysis were the result of focusing strategies such as a “top ten list” (Saldaña 2013: 247), which requires engagement with the top ten quotes or passages within data, and requires the researcher to

“reflect on the content of these 10 items [and]...discover different ways of structuring or outlining the write-up...by arranging and rearranging the most salient ideas from the data corpus” (Saldaña 2013: 247). Through this process, salient ideas were organized and coded, and then conceptualized under themes including *Entrepreneurship and Work*, *Patriarchy and its Responses*, *Care Ethics* and *The Earth*. After further engagement with the data through focusing strategies, the concepts of *Navigating a Masculine Agricultural Space* and *Ethic of Care* were selected for in-depth analysis.

Chapter 3: Results and Analysis

In this chapter, I will discuss the two overarching themes that emerged from the analysis of my interviews and field notes. These overarching themes are the *navigation of masculine space* and the *ethic of care*. The *navigation of masculine space* explores the multiple challenges experienced by female farmers within the masculine-coded world of agriculture. This *navigation of masculine space* theme engages with gender theory and the sociology of work. Challenges experienced by women in the male-dominated space of agriculture include the double bind, experience of microaggressions, tokenism, sexual harassment, the additional stress of domestic labor, and both internal and external factors that create an exclusionary space. I compare multiple factors that may affect this navigation including agricultural paradigms, whether or not a participant is a primary or partnered operator, and the participants' overall perceptions of the agricultural sphere. Additionally, I explore how female farmers perceive these challenges as they navigate them.

Within masculine spaces, many women approach work differently than their male peers. Due to feminine socialization, women are likely to embrace a more caring framework within a masculine industry, which takes on a variety of forms in the agricultural sphere. The *ethic of care* engages with feminist theory on relational interaction. Within care ethics, connections occur between women and other people, as well as between women and nonhuman entities such as animals, nature, and community. This section explores the multiple and contrasting ways female farmers express the care ethic, and how it compares across the conventional/alternative agriculture spectrum. This section also engages with the concept of *ecofeminism*; some branches of ecofeminism focus on a feminine approach to

relating to nature, one that is not exploitive or harmful to the earth. This school of thought examines the overlap of environmental and feminist ethics and how they relate.

“Good Ol’ Boys’ Club”—Navigating Masculine Agricultural Space

Agriculture in the United States is a male-dominated industry, which can reproduce a masculine and exclusionary environment. When women are a numerical minority in traditionally masculine occupations, it creates “a structural barrier that activates gender stereotypes and thereby poses a social identity threat. Some women resolve this imbalance by accepting that they are not skilled and do not belong” (Richman et. al. 2011: 494). Jean, an assertive women who runs the marketing arm of her successful organic family farm expressed, “a lot of women don’t wanna be in ag because it’s all men...You know? That’s hard for me...Of course my office assistant is a woman, but who do I work with? All men. All men. All the time. All men.”

Much of this gendered tension exists within the agricultural sphere due to the construction of rural masculinity and femininity. Rural masculinity is entwined with hegemonic masculinity, and the concept of a *good farmer* is rooted in being “tough and strong, able to endure long hours, arduous labor and extreme weather”(Little 2002:665). Additionally, this rural masculine identity is linked to control over nature and the elements, which aligns with the conventional agricultural paradigm (Little 2002, Chiappe and Flora 1998). Historically, the identity of *farmer* has had an assumed gender of male (Brandth 2002). Rural femininity has shifted over time, creating space for expanded farm roles, but is still entwined with traditional roles and linked to hegemonic femininity, which ultimately subordinates women under a dominant masculine paradigm (Morris and Evans 2001, Schippers 2007, Connell 1987). Women who wish to own the farmer identity must navigate

or redefine rural femininity, which is nested within a nurturing or helping discourse (Keller 2014, Little 2002). This navigation can be difficult, since masculinities are defined through their opposition to the feminine, and women who perform masculinity become linked to pariah femininities, which are viewed negatively by society (Connell 1987, Schippers 2007). Rural femininities have been created within a family farm discourse, positioning a woman within the traditional role of farmer's wife rather than as a farmer in her own right (Brandth 2002). It has historically been linked to homemaker tasks, and exists in conjunction with the marital role. When the women in this study take on the role of *farmer*, either as a primary or partnered operator, they are subverting the traditional rural femininity that many expect of them, that is, a pariah femininity. Therefore, women who take on a *farmer* role often function within a hegemonic masculine role, transcending the idealized roles of a male *farmer* and female *farm wife* (Keller 2014). With such complex and limiting sets of gender roles, mitigating the sphere of masculine-coded agriculture can cause these tensions to emerge in a variety of ways.

As Acker (1990) notes, many organizational and institutional spaces privilege masculine traits over feminine ones (Acker 1990). Agriculture is no exception—with rural masculinity aligning closely with hegemonic masculinity, women in agriculture must take on a space that is not built for them. Much like when people consider the abstract farmer a man, “[t]he abstract worker is actually a man, and it is the man's body, its sexuality, minimal responsibility in procreation, and conventional control of emotions that pervades work and organizational processes” (Acker 1990: 152). Since men are considered the default, women's mere existence in male-dominated spaces challenges and subverts masculine power, especially when they hold traditionally masculine positions.

Within a male-dominated space, basic structures are built for men. For example, one participant, Gina¹ expressed that many agricultural tools are not created for the average woman: “Everything we buy is like, giant...I’m amazed at how many tools I have to retrofit for myself if I’m gonna be using them a lot...It has got to be efficient for me.” This lack of resources for something as simple as ordinary tools is emblematic of the male-coded nature of agriculture. Gina runs a CSA with her husband, and many of her tools are hand tools; during the interview she also expressed that her farm’s tractor cannot be adjusted to her average female height. This creates a structural obstacle for her, and makes her ability to farm more difficult.

Given that women are not the numerical norm in agriculture, their identities are rarely accepted right away. Several women expressed needing to prove themselves as farmers, or correcting people who viewed them as the farmer’s wife and not a farmer in their own right. Amber, a passionate and involved conventional farmer in a partnered operation expressed, “we have to open our own doors; we have to blaze our own trail. It’s not given to us...[W]ith men I think it’s kind of an assumption. ‘Oh, you’re in agriculture, okay.’...They just fully accept you [if you’re a man].” This corroborates Keller’s (2014) research on women dairy farmers. In Keller’s study, women dairy farmers encountered barriers “at the institutional, interactional, and symbolic levels of the gender system as they attempted to be recognized as farmers” (Keller 2014: 77). For example, agricultural boards historically are made up of men, and men most often nominate new board appointments; this creates a cycle of female exclusion (Alston 1998). Shannon², a cheery primary operator at a dairy is the first woman on a state dairy board. Her late father nominated her for the

¹ Name changed for confidentiality

² Name changed for confidentiality

position when she took over the family farm. She believes her experience has been positive, but also expresses, “I think I get tossed aside a little bit, but I think the more years that I’m on [the board]—and I’m the first woman to be on the board in Colorado. So it comes with a lot of—I mean, that’s gonna take a while.” Shannon recognizes that change is often incremental, and that her presence on the board may require a shift in the board’s culture.

Yet, Shannon was able to begin shifting the board’s culture regarding sexual harassment. In traditionally male-dominated workplaces, women tend to experience sexual harassment more often than women in other workplaces (LaFontaine and Tredeau 1986).

Shannon recounted the experience to me:

I had one problem with a gentleman [on the board] but more because he couldn’t keep his hands to himself...it’s funny how your brain plays because you don’t wanna be “that woman” where it’s like “oh she gets on here and gets so-and-so kicked out” and so I talked to some females that worked at the office and they had some issues and there was a young girl where I could see her come in and look for where he was, because she wanted to make sure she could sit where he was gonna leave her alone, and I thought “this is wrong, this is ridiculous, I’ve got two little girls” so I went to them and said “this has to stop! And if you don’t get rid of him, I’m gonna step down and I won’t be quiet.

Shannon told me that the perpetrator of the harassment was removed from the board. It was the experience of the younger women that made her take a stand. She knew that on the board she had power, and even though that power was initially second-guessed, she was able to create a better environment for the women who worked with this man. Her presence on the board subverted a male-dominant power dynamic. When women gain positions of power, change and work toward gender parity in agriculture can begin to take place.

Although most participants in this study feel positive about working as farmers, nearly all of them have experienced discrimination to varying degrees. Feelings of

positivity or empowerment may be related to the fact that agriculture allows for autonomy. Women in other gendered organizations often work in a shared space day-in and day-out, whereas farmers are able to practice agency and run their own business. However, farming women still experience pressures faced by women in other traditionally male spheres when they interact with others in the agricultural sector such as those on boards, salespeople, customers, and a society that still perceives agriculture as masculine.

“A No-Win Situation”—The Double Bind

The double bind is originally defined in a study by Bateson et al. as “a situation in which no matter what a person does, he ‘can’t win” (Bateson et. al 1956:251). The women in masculine-coded spheres experience the double bind more specifically where “they are required both to assume male patterns of behavior and to preserve their distinctively female characteristics”(Gherardi and Poggio 2001:257). Amber describes this pressure:

I think sometimes, it’s almost—it almost can be a no-win situation. Because if we sit back and accept the role that we’re supposed to have, then we’re not making waves, then we’re okay. But if we’re trying to blaze a trail, then we’re seen as bossy, or pushy...So it’s kind of a double-edged sword, you know? It’s very—you gotta be careful on how you step.

Amber’s frustration over this “no-win situation” refers to the double bind. Women are limited by the ideas of emphasized femininity that are so pervasive in rural gender understandings, and gender politics in traditionally male settings. However, emphasized femininity is not rewarded in male-coded workspaces. When women work in traditionally male industries, they are “held accountable to conflicting expectations for a feminine presentation of self and a masculine way of doing the work”(Denissen 2010:6). If a woman acts feminine, she is not taken seriously, but if she performs masculinity, she’s criticized for

not acting like a lady and performing pariah femininity (Schipper 2007). Shannon expressed the pressure of this double bind:

It's really hard to be a woman in a male-dominated business, and act like a lady. It's really difficult, so I see all kinds [of women] where they come and they're very forceful, very in-your-face, which doesn't—it makes you come across as a little...too masculine, you know what I mean...Or you see the other way where they're all foofy and they're flipping their hair...So that's been a struggle, to say, you know, I can either be this person or this person but to be a lady with manners and still hold your femininity is different.

Issues arise for female farmers, because performing femininity can subvert their farmer identity, as the role is masculine-coded (Keller 2014, Pilgeram 2007, Brandth 2002).

However, women performing masculinity is off-putting for many men (Denissen 2010:6).

Shannon shared “I've heard from other men ‘why does she act like that?’ or ‘That drives me crazy when they try to act like men!’ or I hear little comments that they're making about so-and-so who's ‘too girly’”. When women navigate a primarily masculine sphere, they often have greater struggles with the double bind. Due to greater gender disparity, in this study, the double bind affected women within conventional operations more than those in alternative operations.

“I feel a responsibility to represent women”—Tokenism

Women in large agricultural operations often felt the pressure of tokenism, especially if they were primary operators or often worked with large groups of men. Kanter (1977) considers numerical minorities within group settings as tokens, and notes that “they are often treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals” (966). Tokenism most negatively affects non-dominant social groups (Yoder 1991), such as women in traditionally masculine occupations. Tokenism creates an environment in which women feel they are representing women as a whole. They may feel

they are under a microscope, and feel as if they need to work harder in order to achieve respect for their work. Tokens often aim for perfection; any misstep could discredit not only the token, but all others within the group. One woman expressed:

I think being a woman gives those critics a reason to say, "Well, yeah, she's a woman, of course she's not gonna..." and that's more professionally than with my family. I want to get more milk or just as much milk. I wanna milk just as many cows. I want my employees to respect and like me. I think I have to go so much higher and harder than most men.

While some women dread the tokenism pressure on their performance, other women take pride in their representative role. They believe their confidence and expertise allows them to promote other women in agriculture. For example, Jean, a deeply confident partner operator for a large alternative farm, identified herself as a feminist and seemed to view her representative role as an act of promoting women in agriculture:

I represent women, and I want that to be positive. I want it to be a really good thing. When I leave a room, I want the men to look at each other and go, "God it was great working with that woman. I look forward to working with women more in the future." ...I feel a responsibility to represent women in a really positive way. The best sides of us: our brightness, our intelligence, our abilities, who we are...I've had guys say this to me, "God when I saw that there was a woman in this group I thought blah blah blah but after working with you I see it's a really positive thing, thank you Jean, next time I will not be so quick to judge." ...And you see that, is success for me. That is success in every sense of the word.

While Jean's experience is positive, it still demonstrates the representative nature of being a female token within a male-dominated space. Women with confidence and support are likely to succeed under this microscope, but women who are more ambivalent about their representative role internalize the pressure and blame themselves for feeling their token stress:

I have put more pressure on myself. I don't really wanna say that people outside did. I think being a female in a male-dominated [industry], I have to do that much better,

work that much harder. My kids have to be the best at everything. My farm has to be the best at everything.

Many women expressed the feeling that they needed to work harder to earn respect. Sara, a young woman independently running a free-range egg operation said, “I work harder because I kinda wanna show people what’s going on.” For Sara, “what’s going on” is running an alternative egg operation on her own in her twenties. She wants to show her worth and be respected. At the Colorado Governor’s Forum on Agriculture, women within a breakout session about women in agriculture expressed their token minority status and the need to work harder as well. A woman expressed that while employer-wide, women were the majority, but senior-level management was by-and-large made up of men. Several women expressed the reality of needing to work harder “day in and day out.” One woman felt that she was driven to get her PhD due to feeling not “good enough” for agribusiness.

The women who most acutely felt the pressures of tokenism were ones who sold products wholesale. Direct-market farmers did not express pressures of tokenism that women in larger operations shared during interviews. The difference likely lies in the fact that women who engage with direct marketing are often part of the alternative paradigm, within which women farmers and consumers are the majority. The alternative agriculture paradigm is much more feminine-coded, and therefore women within it are unlikely to be regarded as tokens of their gender (Chiappe and Flora 1998, Kanter 1977). When women are working one-on-one with their largely female customer-base, they are not encountering traditional ideas of gender that is often encountered by farmers who operate large-scale farms or sell wholesale, where the producer and consumer base is overwhelmingly male. Since proportionally more women are running alternative operations, an alternative female farm operator is unlikely to be tasked as the

representative of women in her industry, whereas conventional farm operators may feel greater responsibility to represent women in a positive light.

“It’s almost like they can’t even see me”—Microaggressions

Although heretofore in this thesis the challenges of navigating the male-dominated agriculture industry have focused more on women working on conventional operations, the following sections affect women across the alternative/conventional spectrum. Nearly every woman interviewed in the study had experienced microaggressions related to their agricultural work. Microaggressions are defined as:

The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership” (Sue 2010).

Microaggressions produce and reproduce marginality of a group by tacitly supporting stereotypical or harmful assumptions that undermine success for the criticized group.

Within this research, women experienced microaggressions in the form of jokes, come-ons, misidentification of roles, and sexist ideas. One woman told a story of how her father would joke with peers that he was a “three-time loser” because he had three daughters and zero sons. This reinforced the idea that women are less valuable than men, specifically that his own daughters were not as valuable as they would have been as sons. This example is related to the patrilineal nature of farming, where fathers tend to pass down their farms to sons (Pilgeram and Amos 2015). By stating that his three daughters were represented as a loss, he also reproduced the idea that a farmer should not pass down a farm to his daughter. Despite this joke, the father was otherwise supportive of his daughter’s desire to take over the farm later in life.

Women who either run a farm in tandem with their husbands, or women who are primary operators and have a male partner encountered microaggressions implying that they could not possibly be a farmer. Anne, a primary operator of a CSA said “a lot of times [my husband and I] go to places where they just assume that he’s the main lead on the farm...And he’ll put his hands up and say, “You’re talking to the farmer’s husband! I have no idea what you’re talking about”. Anne also discussed a slight she often experiences when equipment dealers cold call her farm:

There’s those phone calls when I answer the phone “[Farm Name], this is Anne” “Hi, could I speak to the owner please?” “This is her.” “Could I speak to your husband please?” “Are you selling tools?” And inevitably that’s what they’re doing and it’s a great easy out. Like, “He’s not available right now” like “oh if you only knew.” He’s never gonna buy it. He doesn’t wanna buy that. You’d have better luck with me, but “No he’s not available right now.”

Anne told me she hates sales calls, and finds them bothersome, so she finds it easy to dismiss the person at the other end of the line. Similarly, Jean, the large-scale alternative operator had a similar experience dealing with agribusiness solicitations: “I get a lot of *Dear Sirs*. ‘Dear Sir, I would be interested in...’ right? And then I just delete those emails. I just decide I can’t even speak with those guys.” Jean navigates microaggressions by refusing to engage with people who assume that because she’s in charge of the marketing arm of a successful farm, that she must be a man.

One woman in the study directly challenges microaggressions. Catherine, an urban floriculturist and primary operator discusses how she is constantly reaffirming her farmer identity:

If [my husband] is here, [people] address him with something and think that it’s his [farm] and his family...You do have to work a little harder to make people realize— oh, I am actually the one that’s out there doing things and correct them, and get

them to focus and think that I might actually know something about a tractor or something, so there's a lot of that that what people view—tend to view as a more male role of particularly mechanical things, that sometimes you have to work on that.

Catherine does not ignore the misidentification of her role. She wants people to “focus and think” about the role she holds as the primary farm operator. Her farm has been in her family for nearly a century; her connection to her farmer role runs deep. She expresses frustration when people misidentify her: “[A woman] came here and I was out working in the field. I walked up to her car, I'm in my usual jeans and dirt and my straw hat. And she said, “Why, you look like the farmer's wife!”[...] And I said, kinda quietly—although I think she heard—and I said, ‘Or the farmer.”

Women who farm as part of a coupled operation tend to face similar microaggressions. KayAnn, a retired professor and seasoned Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmer shares her experience:

Occasionally when we are at ag things, you know, for the state or the county and there'll be older men—farmers, old farmers. And they'll come up to [my husband] John and to me and they'll just talk to John, and they'll just look in John's eyes. They'll only address him, and John will do his best to try to direct their eyes over to me or he'll address me and they'll just go right back to addressing him...It's almost funny though—it's almost like they can't even see me.

KayAnn decides to interpret these slights as comical. She sees the behavior of the older men as generational, and shared that her CSA members do not challenge her farmer identity.

Gina, another woman who runs a CSA with her husband, shares a similar experience: “People interact with [my husband] differently than they do with me. You know, when we're together they talk to him...for a while it would really bug me.” Gina and her husband are young farmers, and their CSA is fewer than ten years old, so she talked

about experiencing more frequent microaggressions than someone like KayAnn does. She shared with me a time when she and her husband were nominated to win an agricultural award, and her experience at the ceremony went as such:

We sat at this table and there was a lot of people who were of my grandparents' generation and we sat at the table and one of the gentleman was like, "Oh you must be our farmer! And you must be the farmer's wife." And I was like (inhale) "yup!" It's way easier to just be like "yep!" and of course my husband automatically jumps to my rescue and is like, "No, no, she does more stuff! She's the farmer!" He has to sort of do that.

Gina expressed that sometimes accepting a slight is much easier than going through the process of correcting other people and claiming her farmer identity. Her husband's response is more proactive—he does the correcting. This is not uncommon among farm couples. Earlier examples provided by Anne and KayAnn also illustrate the insistence of female farmers' husbands to correct the misidentification of their wives' role of farmer.

Jenna, a conventional farmer who runs her own crop and cattle business under her family's operation finds that people are surprised about her farmer role. Her husband upholds her farmer role within social spaces as well.

My husband will say, when people say, "What does your wife do?" and he'll say, "She farms with us and she runs a cattle business and she..." and they're like "Oh? Really?" I mean I get that a lot! Like "Really?" or "What are you doing on a farm?" "What do you mean? What do you mean you raise cows for beef?"

The confusion over her farmer role does not seem to bother Jenna. She expresses that people typically express shock or surprise that she runs her agricultural operations, but growing up in agriculture, she feels confident in her role as farmer.

Other microaggressions shared during interviews were of a more hostile or derogatory nature. Sara, the young egg farmer, shared her experience of being hit on at her farmers' market stand: "So you're a chicken farmer huh? You sure know how to raise a—

yeah...People making cock jokes, and I'm like, 'Not cool. That's not cool.'" Sara seemed to be able to brush off these interactions fairly easily. This was due to the power she had to dismiss the inappropriate behavior and not interact with the perpetrators. She compared her market experience with her college job as a barista, and felt that in contrast, when running her own business she could tell unwelcome patrons to keep moving. Within these dynamics, she's able to maintain her power and female farmer identity.

Doris, a tough-as-nails primary operator of a conventional ranch has experienced varying degrees of sexism over her many decades in agriculture. When selling horses, Doris used to break them in for customers, teaching the horse to wear a halter and saddle before leaving her ranch. She was discouraged from doing this practice: "I had some cowboys ask me why I was doing that. And I said, 'Because I enjoy doing it' and he says, 'Stop!' and I said, 'Really?' He said, 'There's too many guys don't want a woman-broke horse'." After that, Doris still broke horses, but was selective about which horses she broke. She did not want her business to suffer due to sexist ideas of potential customers.

Women across this study face microaggressions from customers, fellow farmers, and people in the community. While women managed these microaggressions differently, both alternative and conventional farmers experienced them. This suggests that regardless of farm type, people within and outside the agriculture industry still expect agricultural operations to be run by men, and associate the role of farmer with men.

"Any moment that I'm not farming, I have to be a mom."—Intensive Motherhood

Running a farm and raising a family are similar. At least Erin, who runs a direct-market farm with her husband, feels that way:

As soon as I think I have routine down, the farm just up and changes. You know? As soon as I think I got the kids doing something, they start doing their own thing...It requires a similar amount of care, flexibility, time, spontaneity—it's just wild. Just like parenting is wild. Running a farm is just wild. And you love every minute of it, and you know it's so important, and your soul is engaged, but it always feels like you can't keep up or you're not doing it quite right.

Erin is not the only woman to consider how the wild nature of motherhood coincides with the needs of running a farm. Several women in the study were balancing multiple demanding roles—the roles of farmer and mother.

“They're both full time jobs,” says Anne. “Any moment that I'm not farming, I have to be a mom...and I feel like people don't talk a lot about that, and I think that's a big issue with women in agriculture—is being a mother.” Anne shares childcare roles with her husband, and she lauds him for being a great partner and father, but also stresses that her husband cannot take on a maternal role—he can only be a father.

But what exactly is the role of a mother in American society? In contemporary culture, one of the dominant motherhood paradigms is that of intensive motherhood. Sharon Hays (1996) coined this paradigm, and defined it as “a gendered model that advises mothers to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children” and “the dominant ideology of socially appropriate child rearing in the contemporary United States”(Hays 1996: 9). Intensive mothering requires women to position their children as the most important aspect of their lives. For female farmers, this can create role conflict, since their farmer role also requires a great deal of time, energy, and money. The female farmers who described motherhood as a salient identity had to mitigate the idealized intensive mothering paradigm like many working mothers do: through embracing the primary parenting role, role sharing, or the outsourcing of domestic work (Hochschild and Machung 2012).

In many cases, mothers are expected to be the dominant parent within heterosexual couples. When a woman is trying to raise her farm and her children, stressors arise. Her success is measured not only by her own professional endeavors, but also by her children's place in the world. Shannon expressed this struggle:

You're trying to prove yourself in your business and show that you can do it so you work really hard at that. Then you also have kids that are depending on you that you wanna give a good full life to and a home to keep and husband to take care of...it probably puts more stress on me because the kids are first, but the business needs to succeed...And if either fails, then I fail, you know?

There's a lot of pressure trying to be an ideal mother and a successful farmer. Shannon's children are teenagers, and she states that she is responsible for the parenting in her relationship. She believes this is fairly standard for other middle-aged women she knows.

Some women attempt to share childcare roles with their partners, and describe these arrangements as such. Erin described the division of labor to me:

[My husband] and I kind of have to divide roles and when it comes to the kids, I just—that's me 95 percent of the time. Just because somebody has to be able to always—even if we're in the middle of a project, I gotta go, the kid still needs picked up, the program just ended, or she's gotta get to her ballet class...That leaves [my husband] to be able to see through the project or whatever. I mean, sometimes that's hard because sometimes I wanna be able to see through the project.

During the interview, Erin insisted that this role divide was a shared-parenting model, and that the primary caretaker role is something she loves about parenting. However, she states that ninety-five percent of childcare is her job while her husband takes over other responsibilities such as running the family's side-business. This divide is emblematic of the intensive motherhood paradigm. When one parent must take on a primary childcare role, it is almost always the mother.

Some women mitigate the intensive motherhood paradigm by outsourcing childcare duties to another person (Hochschild and Machung 2012). In the case of Gina, she was

initially overwhelmed by motherhood, and once her son was old enough to be away from her, she and her husband shared their parenting roles with a nanny:

I went from working 60 hours a week to sitting at home staring at this thing I didn't know anything about. I was like, "I don't know if I can do this." It was really a transition, and you know, integrating [our son] into our life and trying to—as he's gotten older it's been easier for [my husband] to take care of him. He's more directive; he's not as needy. With the [winter] season our workload is a little bit lighter so it's easier to be available at different times so right now he's watching our son. But we did have to bring a nanny on because otherwise we can't get anything done.

In the interview, Gina stressed that equity is a cornerstone to the relationship with her husband, so it was important for her to be out on the farm as much as he was. This was solved by outsourcing domestic work to another woman so she could balance her farmer and mother role.

The intensive mothering paradigm is linked to the idea that women are by nature more nurturing and built for care work. Sociologists posit that traditional gender roles are produced and reproduced by continued socialization, not inherent biological bias.

However, due to this socialization, women by-and-large are more likely to cultivate caring behaviors and engage with work that is rooted in the ethic of care.

The Ethic of Care

The ethic of care is based on the idea of the human capacity to relate to and care for others. Many theorists that subscribe to the ethic of care examine its intersection with a women-centered feminist approach. The ethic of care extends beyond care for people with whom a person shares intimacy, and includes the care of humans outside of immediate social relationships and of nonhuman entities as well. The ethic of care "designates caring for others in a caring manner as the most fundamental human value" (Engster 2005: 70).

Care theorists have engaged with what constitutes these “others;” as the theory has developed, the other in question has extended beyond the human to include nonhuman entities and relations.

Academics have criticized and reconsidered the scope of care theory, and have extended it to become more robust. For instance, an ethic of care, “claims that the relational sense of self, the willingness to empathetically enter the world of others and care for them, can be expanded and developed as part of a political agenda so that it may include those outside the already established circle of caring for” (Curtin 1991:66). The farmers interviewed in this study work to ensure that agriculture and the environment are within the circle of caring through independent care-work, and within work that is rooted in education.

Female farmers in this study, both within the conventional and alternative paradigms, engage with the ethic of care. They demonstrated the ethic of care through agricultural education, care for fellow humans, and care for the nonhuman. This caring behavior is often seen as a feminine ethic. I find that women refer to their abilities, their passion, and their womanhood, as guiding principles for their caring behavior.

Although it privileges femininity, it is important to note that much of the ethic of care can fall into an essentialist framework. Gender essentialism divides behavior as either feminine or masculine, and promotes a belief that women and men are inherently different and therefore the division of skills and labor is natural. For example, the idea that women are natural caretakers and therefore should take on the lion’s share of parenting, as well as less respected work such as education and caretaking. An issue with an ethic of care is that

much of it requires a woman to engage with traditionally feminine, and unfortunately less respected work in order to carve out a niche for herself.

Another perspective of the ethic of care is that while it is based in women taking on traditionally feminine roles, it also allows them to mitigate patriarchal structures in agriculture and create space for themselves. The work, while still not adequately valued at all levels, can allow for growth and strengthening of women's farms and agriculture itself. Within the study, alternative farmers' efforts to educate communities and provide healthful food are regarded with respect, while conventional farmers' efforts to educate children are less respected, with men regarding it as "beneath them." This difference between the paradigms is perhaps a reflection of the greater gender disparity within the conventional paradigm.

"The best place to start is in fourth grade"— Education

In Vogt's (2002) article, "A Caring Teacher: explorations into primary school teachers' professional identity and ethic of care," she explores how education fits into the ethic of care. Vogt reports that the nature of education, especially of children, "demands and fosters an ethical orientation towards care"(2002: 262). She finds that caring behaviors span a continuum that includes commitment and roles resembling parenting.

When female farmers engage in education of agriculture and the food system, they demonstrate a commitment to the people with whom they engage. Additionally, they engage with a commitment to the nonhuman entities they hope to support. For conventional farmers, these entities include communities, crops and livestock, and the institution of agriculture. For alternative farmers, these entities also include community, but additionally encompass the environment and an alternative food system. By promoting

these entities through education, both conventional and alternative women farmers are engaging with an ethic of care for the causes they are passionate about.

Conventional female farmers tended to do agricultural education in a more formal and organizational context. For example, the Colorado Farm Bureau has the Women's Leadership Committee. Multiple women expressed that this committee's main duties included education, especially of children. I asked Janyce, a kind-hearted partner operator on a conventional farm about the Women's Committee's core mission. Janyce said:

[The committee's] main focus is education...That's what we do with the stock show, is try to educate...We make connections there with teachers and we try to give out whatever people need—you know, like, the Farm Bureau actually has a lot of teachers' guides and a lot of teaching stuff.

Doris echoed this importance of educating children: "The best place to start is in fourth grade and I love it...I did a program on brands and branding because I have a branding iron collection." Doris has been a part of several organizations over the course of her agricultural experience, and has cited education as one of the key responsibilities of each one. One of her responsibilities with the Colorado Cattlemen was educating people about red meat at agricultural events: "Our thing was to educate people about beef—red meat, and how to use red meat. I was kind of a drive behind getting a booth at the Colorado Farm Show, which is a three-day stint...we just had brochures and we talked to people."

Another formal organization that engages with education activities is the USDA Soil Conservation Office. Jenna, the young conventional farmer has been involved with an educational program for some time.

We do a program called "From our Lands to Your Hands." So we do two to three day events every—twice a year to teach fourth graders and sometimes...3rd to 5th graders primarily all about ag. Anywhere from sitting in a tractor, to learning about how organic crops are grown, to learning about how water works.

Like many female farmers, Jenna has a passion for educating others about agricultural issues. She believes taking on a teacher role is an important part of her work. In addition to working with the Soil Conservation Office, she is a 4-H leader. 4-H is a youth development organization that “focuses on a variety of self-chosen learning experiences and activities. Examples include photography, robotics, gardening, animal science, ecology, rocketry, textiles, and cooking” (4-H). Many 4-H clubs focus on animal science, where children are encouraged to do animal husbandry projects. Within 4-H, Jenna sees both male and female leaders, but in her education work for soil conservation, there is not such a balance: “I’d say probably 80 percent of our quote-unquote ‘staff’ for ‘From Our Lands to Your Hands’ is women...and I don’t know if that’s more ‘cause you’re working with kids and it’s kind of the planning and getting it all put together.” Jenna posits that maybe women do more educating due to interaction with kids and necessary attention to organization and detail. Several participants in this study expressed that women tend to be more detail-oriented when describing their workers or themselves.

Amber also believes education and advocacy is a feminine skill. When discussing her involvement within the Farm Bureau’s Women’s Leadership Committee, she told me why women are best suited for it:

[The Farm Bureau does] a lot of training on communications and how to talk to your legislator and these bigger issues—and one of the things that kind of helped with that is I was told in some sort of communications or speech kind of training that women in agriculture are the secret weapon. Because we’re more relatable, we’re more approachable...so if we are, then we should utilize that.

Amber sees social skills as a female advantage, which supports an idea within the ethic of care that women may be best aligned for caring roles such as education. The issue is that like many feminine-coded activities, agriculture education does not always receive respect.

Amber expressed her frustration with this idea; she acknowledges that although some men perceive education to be “beneath them,” she is confident in its importance:

It seems like [women] are pigeonholed; “here, you take care of ag education” and for some of the men, ag education is beneath them. My view is even with [my] four-year-old, I’m still making a difference...That’s just as important as policy development.

Women within the alternative agriculture paradigm also cited education as an important role they filled in agriculture. However, alternative farming women tended to perform their educator role within an informal framework. Since many of these women engage with direct-marketing practices such as CSA shares, farm stands, and farmers’ markets, their education was often directly with customers. Much of the education performed within the alternative paradigm is described as a response to the conventional paradigm. Many women believed that conventional agriculture has distanced people from their food systems and created issues such as environmental degradation and health issues. This holistic approach to the ethic of care is more health-related, and connects to the greater food system. Advocates for alternative practices believe that an intensive agricultural shift is needed to create healthy citizens in a healthy community. Gail, a primary operator of an alternative farm expressed her passion for education.

I’m one of those people that loves to educate people and teach them, because people don’t know...If they really understood, they could have better health. And that’s actually why I’m doing what I’m doing. A lot of people go “why are you doing this? You don’t have to do this.” And no I don’t have to do this, however I love educating people and helping them to better themselves.

Gail believes that alternative agriculture has the power to better consumers’ health and wellness. While conventional farmers want people to understand the food system, alternative farmers tend to want to promote a particular food system.

One of the ways alternative farmers fill an educational role is through on-farm experiences. This is done through visit-days, summer camps, and on-farm education. Taber, the primary operator of an alternative nonprofit goat dairy considers education as one of the products on her farm. “In terms of what do we produce in addition to dairy—we produce a lot of educational opportunities for the community...We do about seven to eight weeks of summer camp every summer for kids 6-11.”

Some women shared that a future goal of their farms was to create a community education space; an agricultural hub to connect people to the food system. Catherine, whose farm is just a few minutes from Downtown Boulder, believes she’s in a prime spot for this sort of hub.

I do see a future of our farm being more of this educational laboratory sort of thing...so a lot of the people that come and either take classes or intern or whatever with either of the nonprofits [on the farm], they hopefully can take those skills out, so I hope it’s kind of a catalyst for getting people back into whether it’s just growing some of their own food in their own yard, or maybe getting into some kind of career that has to do with agriculture, or just having more of an appreciation for it.

Sara, the alternative egg farmer expressed a future goal of having an educational farm. She already works with local elementary schools to do egg and chick projects for kindergarten classes. Like many farmers, Sara wants people to understand and reconnect to the food system. She tells me, “I’d like to have an educational farm...expand some livestock and then make it more available to people, like for classes and things. I feel like there’s a huge lack of connection of where your food actually comes from.”

In this study, women from different farming backgrounds expressed the importance of educating youth and community about agriculture and the food system. In addition to education work, the female farmers in this study engaged in an ethic of care based on human-to-human care, as well as human-to-nonhuman care. The ethic of care differed

between women involved in conventional and alternative agriculture paradigms. Women who ran conventional farms tended to have the most concern for education about the agriculture industry; fostering understanding, especially among young people was a key tenet of being a woman in the agricultural sphere. The ethic of care practiced by conventional female farmers was linked to an idea of nurturing and teaching—feminine-coded activities. This aligns well with the concept of rural femininity, where care-work and nurturing, especially nurturing children is integral to being female (Morris and Evans 2001, Little 2002, Schippers 2007).

“I joke that I have a feeding disorder”—Human-to-Human Care

The ethic of care is typically understood to refer to humanity’s inherent relational abilities, especially to other humans. Conventional farmers in this study expressed human-human care as an important aspect of their family farms. This positioned their ethic of care within a framework of personal relationships. However, alternative farmers in this study were more likely to express the importance of human-human care regarding feeding others, specifically feeding others *good food*.

Many women expressed their connection to their customers and community as linked to the act of feeding others. Allen and Sachs explore the gendered connection to feeding others in “Women and Food Chains: The Gendered Politics of Food” (2007). Their article states that women have a historic, intimate link to food based in a nearly universal cultural idea of women being in charge of care and sustenance (Allen and Sachs 2007). Female farmers take on an additional role, as they have a hand in food from production to consumption, or as the phrase goes, farm to table.

A 2011 study by Lucy Jarosz found that direct-market farmers cite “feeding others” as a primary motivation for their work:

The motivation to nourish oneself through a change in lifestyle and profession is linked to a love of growing food and feeding people. [...] Farmers enjoy seeing and knowing their customers. [...] Their motivations come from producing good food for other people – not just for their immediate families (Jarosz 2011: 314).

Angie³ is a direct-market farmer who runs an operation with her husband, and she links her pathway to agriculture to a desire to grow food: “I grew up around an avid gardener [...] and I was just an avid sort of farmer’s market shopper and loved growing things and it just resonated with me. It’s just what I wanted to do; I just wanted to grow food.”

Biodynamic farmer Erin expressed a similar desire to grow food, and links the goal of feeding her customers as linked to her motherhood role:

Being a mom, it’s all about feeding your kids. And that’s really kind of the root of everything that I’m doing here. I wanna feed my kids the best food, so then I just take that to “I want to feed everybody.” I really love that. I love that idea of feeding people. I joke that I have a feeding disorder. I’m a food pusher, and I’m the police when it comes to people: “Did you finish your CSA share last week?” “Why didn’t you eat that?” As soon as someone tells me they don’t like a vegetable, it’s my personal goal to figure out how to help them love that vegetable.[...] So, just something about that I feel like is kinda based in my yin aspect of being a woman.[...] And that’s so much about what agriculture is. It’s not commodity crops—or I don’t want it to be that. I want it to be feeding people and people having that connection to their food.

By referring to her belief that feeding “is kinda based in my yin aspect of being a woman,” Erin links her goal to feed her customers the best food as a feminine imperative.

Additionally, Erin expresses her idea of what agriculture should be—“not commodity crops” and instead it should be focused on the feeding aspect, especially feeding good food like vegetables.

Several women expressed the importance of growing food rather than commodity

³ Name changed for confidentiality

crops, a key notion of what they consider to be good food. The human-consumption aspect of growing food seemed to be of utmost importance for the alternative farmers in the study. Gina, who runs an alternative farm with her husband, believes growing food is really important work.

Our main goal was to see if we could grow food for our community—we were receptive towards it [...] we feel like that's a main goal of the farm. [...] And we feel like on principle, it should be something people should do full-time because it's a really important job (Gina)

KayAnn, a woman who runs a CSA with her husband also expressed the importance of feeding her community:

It's important to me to feed people. I think that's just really, just a very basic thing that we need to do for people. [...] So we feed our members, we also contribute every week, even in the winter we have stored vegetables to contribute to the food pantry in Lyons. [...] We give to the Longmont Food Pantry, so we try to think about how can we grow food for as many people as possible, organically.

Providing food to the community is an imperative KayAnn expands beyond her customer base. She makes an effort to donate produce to local food pantries, which allows her farm to engage with feeding the community even more intensely. The act of feeding others is intrinsically linked to an ethic of care, and even more specifically to a feminine ethic of care (Allen and Sachs 2007). Feeding others a specific type of food is linked to this care ethic as well. Women with direct-market farms express their pride in providing their customers and community with fresh produce, and facilitating healthy lives for them. This particular feeding practice is holistic—linked not only to sustenance but to overall health.

“I'd really rather be interfacing with the plants” Human-to-Nonhuman Care

Many women in the study expressed care for the natural world. The connection between women and nature is often studied by ecofeminists. Ecofeminists explore how

historically, a masculine approach to nature and science has resulted in rigid and disconnected understandings of the non-human world (Goldman and Schurman 2000). Ecofeminists, argue that “society-nature relations are patterned by gender, and gender relations are fundamental to understanding resource access, use, and degradation” (Goldman and Schurman 2000). Ecofeminist ideas often intersect with the ethic of care; both have a link to “reciprocity...[and an] emphasis on relatedness or relationship” but have some variation on what actors can be cared for (Swanson 2015: 93). Swanson states, “[A]n ecofeminist ethic of care is about the mutual interdependence of all life on Earth” (Swanson 2015: 96). In the case of this research, this interdependence extends to nonhuman entities such as the Earth and community. A caring and ““loving perception”(Warren 1990:138) of the Earth is central to many ecofeminists. An individual’s “ability to respond lovingly” to nature (Warren 1990:138) is an ecological act of care. Women are often uniquely situated and connected with nature due to differential socialization and identity development. Women are socialized to care rather than conquer nature, to work cooperatively rather than through acts of domination (Kheel 1991). It’s important to note that womanhood is not a guaranteed connection to nature (Cuomo 1992), but several women in the study link their femaleness to their care of the natural world.

Gail, an alternative producer, engaged with this idea of a feminine care ethic: “[My womanhood] has to do with my love for people and my love for animals and my love for the Earth and taking good care of the soil. [...] I’m the go-to for a lot of people with that kind of stuff.” Gail believes that her female identity shapes her care and love for the agricultural world. She connects not only to humans and animals, but also to the Earth. This ethic of

care for Earth and the environment was a common theme expressed by women in this study. One alternative farmer, Gina, has a degree in microbiology and a master's degree in environmental health; so caring for the Earth was a deeply important aspect of her farmer identity:

With environmental stuff in my background, it was amazing to me how much degradation was caused by agriculture and stuff. When I graduated with my master's degree I thought, I need to do something different. I need to make real change in my community and this is really the only place I can start...So in my head, it's like, "okay [conducting environmental studies] is not what I need to spend my life doing. I need to be in the direct—you know. So that was a big reason...[To] feel like I was really making change and pushing my community towards what I thought it should be, you know, and rather than trying to go from the top-down, to try and go from the ground up was just a more tangible approach for me.

Gina's background drove her to explore the alternative agriculture paradigm and she believed that by working, quite literally, from "the ground up," she was able to make greater positive impact on the environment. Another farmer, Lane stressed the importance of her connection to and care for the Earth when she expressed, "I approach this work thinking about 'how can I make the largest contribution as an individual to our planetary crisis?'"

Another way women engaged with an ethic of care was in care for farmland. One of the main goals of KayAnn was to "preserve agricultural farmland." Farmland is being ceded to development along the Front Range, and it is becoming increasingly more expensive to purchase land. Preservation of farmland requires a concerted effort within regional bureaucracies to designate land as agricultural and therefore ineligible for development. KayAnn, and many other farmers seek to place their land under a conservation easement so that future farmers could use it for production. This expresses a care for farmland and agriculture.

Women across the agricultural spectrum expressed care for their farmland, specifically related to soil conservation. Jenna, a young conventional farmer, engages with her Soil Conservation Office to educate youth, but also directly cares for her farmland's soil: "[I] make sure our soil health is good, we do a lot of soil sampling and for nutrients to see what we're missing, see what we need to add, see what will help the next crop." Jean, a large-scale organic farmer also expressed the importance of soil health. She expressed,

[We] make sure that we are keeping our ground sustainable for the future. That's important to us that we're not just trying to reap crop off of our land without taking into consideration the soil itself. So the soil is very very important to us. It's the foundation of our business.

Jenna and Jean express a care relationship based on the complementary aims of care and production. It is a mutually beneficial connection—without care for soil, a farm cannot produce its highest yields, and therefore will fail. Conventional women especially expressed care for their farmland, while alternative women expressed care for the environment in general.

Many women in the study expressed feeling a responsibility and connection to the Earth as it related to their gender. While connection to nature is not exclusively feminine, once again, differential socialization of men and women primes women to embrace their connectedness with nature (Kheel 1991). At the age of 86, Doris still longs to be outside working when she has responsibilities inside:

I still enjoy doing it, and I like being outdoors. I mean, yesterday it was so hard for me to stay in there. I had phone calls I had to make...And being inside yesterday I kept thinking "there's *gotta* be something I can do out there."

Lane noticed her fulfillment of working in nature while working as an AmeriCorps member. On the days where she got a chance to work in an agricultural capacity outside rather than in an office, she expressed "that's when I was happy and more connected

and more holistically enjoying my work. So I went home feeling physically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually more satisfied on the days where I was actually outside.[...]So I wanted to work outside.”

Angie, a direct-market alternative farmer discusses her connection to nature as something that may be connected to her being a woman:

I prefer to be on the ground. I'd really rather be interfacing with the plants and the bugs and everything else. I'd rather be harvesting by hand; [my husband would] rather be harvesting with a machine. That's just—we're different people that way, so our experiences have been different because of who we are, not because of—and maybe obviously who we are is influenced by gender for sure.

Angie prefers to be interfacing with her farm with her hands in the soil. This was not a unique desire. She cites the difference between she and her husband as “influenced by gender for sure.” Angie is likely referring to their different socializations of growing food. Several of the women expressed that when they have a mixed-gender workforce, they see that the women prefer pulling weeds, preparing products for market, or using hand tools, where their male workers want to work with machinery. This gendered division of labor is unintentional, but emerges when workers self-select the work they prefer to do. Once again, different socialization of work and with nature may contribute to these gender divisions on the farm.

Women in alternative agriculture stressed care for community, environment, and a healthy food system. Much of this care is linked to considering nonhuman entities as social actors in need of care (Swanson 2015). Overall, an ethic of care was an important aspect of agriculture expressed by the female farmers in this study. Women farmers, especially within the alternative paradigm, linked their care for the natural world to their gender or

their upbringing. The ability to care for people, for crops, and for the greater community and environment were of utmost importance for respondents across the board.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Women farmers in Northern Colorado shared their varied experiences and fed my passion for engaging with the food system. Their reports on the challenges found within the male-dominated space of agriculture reflected the experiences of many women that navigate other male-dominated industries. Their shared stories provided a perspective that revealed women's great care for their community and deep passion for and empowerment through their work. Although hostile sexism was at a minimum for most of the women in the study, other, subtler forms of sexism reigned. Agriculture, while by-and-large an autonomous profession, is not immune to the tendencies of gendered organizations. Much like the role of worker is coded as masculine so is the role of farmer.

Women who are agricultural entrepreneurs and leaders are subversive simply by existing. The women in this study are well aware of the patriarchal nature of agriculture. However, these women are not discouraged, and often regard sexist interactions as comical, or at least manageable. Sexism was easier to mitigate for women in leadership roles, who were able to deploy their power to avoid or remove sexist behavior within their environments. In addition to deploying their power, women strategized their entry into the agricultural sphere by embracing an ethic of care. An ethic of care, while often traditionally feminine, creates a space for women to enter agriculture and create a niche, bolstering feminine traits when they find success, and opening the door to other, less traditional roles.

Women expressed passion and skill for educating the public about agriculture and the food system, and prided themselves on spreading knowledge and bettering the lives of those they taught. They took pride in their ability to feed their customers, and in their care for their farmland and the environment. By-and-large, women felt blessed to work within

the agricultural industry, and several would recommend it to other women. Anne shared “When you’ve been in this work for a while, it ruins you for all other jobs.” Jean expressed that she feels great respect in her industry: “I think women are highly respected in agriculture...women are greatly respected in ag because everybody knows that they play a critical part.” Gail acknowledged the hard work inherent in agriculture, but does not mind it: “It is a lot [of work] but I love it. If you really have a passion for it, it’s not work.” Gina felt empowered by her status as a female farmer: “I think farming...it’s an empowering thing, and I think that a lot of women feel like that that have come and worked on the farm—that it’s a welcoming environment and they don’t have to be perfect at everything right away.” Gail’s perspective aligns more closely to the experiences of alternative farmers, whereas women within conventional agriculture have felt that pressure to be perfect. However, women across both paradigms felt empowered by their work

Women farmers are challenging the agricultural landscape and reshaping the farmer role as their own. As the proportion of female farm operators increases, their visibility increases as well. Given the upward trend of female farm operators in the agriculture census, this disruption in the male-coded role of farmer may continue for years, and perhaps one day women will reach parity.

Until then, women’s contributions in agriculture must be respected and celebrated. As Jean said in an interview: “Listen, no man is running a farm without a woman involved somehow—somehow! Driving tractor, helping, you know, nobody is isolated when it comes to a farm.” Research that centers are women’s contributions is important, because it acknowledges the roles that are so often made invisible. By specifically conducting interviews with women in agriculture, their perspectives are centered and made known.

This research has explored the multifaceted experiences of female farmers; experiences of sexism and frustration, but also experiences of pride, power, and joy.

Potential Limitations

Limitations while conducting this research were related to interview questions, sampling, and time. In my study, it would have been interesting to gain more concrete data about acreage and sales, as well as things such as marital status, and perhaps some data on division of labor in and out of the home. This could have been better evaluated using a short survey, either after the interview or in a follow-up online survey. In future research projects, I would hope to engage with this mixed-methods approach in order to interrogate my data further and examine relationships between more variables.

Another limitation was within my sampling method. Since I was time-limited, I used key stakeholders and chain-referral sampling to access my population. This method limits recruitment to people's networks, which may yield a homogenous sample. This issue was mitigated through the sampling stakeholders from across the alternative/conventional paradigm spectrum in order to engage with a range of perspectives.

Within a two-year master's program, I had less time to engage with more participants and more methodological approaches to expand on the research. If time were not an issue, focus groups, surveys, and multiple interviews with participants would have been conducted and potentially yielded more data. Future research on this topic could engage with these additional methods.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could employ the use of focus groups among female farm operators in order to create a space for in-group engagement around gender-related topics in order to generate useful concepts related to this population. A comparison between urban and rural farm operators would provide interesting paradigms to explore as well. Future research could also engage with mixed methods, incorporating surveys or sales data in order to analyze data in a more complex quantitative and qualitative way.

Several women expressed a positive dynamic with their farm partners, who were often their romantic partners as well. In this study, farm husbands often defended their wives' status as farmer. A deeper look at the interpersonal relationship between farm partners could reveal interesting gender dynamics. Research on farm husbands whose farm role is regarded as equal or secondary to their wives' role could also contribute to gender and agriculture research and provide a look at the other side of the coin.

An additional theoretical lens to explore would be feminist, race, and queer perspectives. Perhaps studying the degree to which women identify with feminism and perceptions of their work. In order to further study oppression, an intersectional approach to this research would be incredibly valuable in understanding how multiple oppressed identities affect women of color or queer women in the agricultural sphere. Additionally, a more focused research project could be conducted, looking specifically at the experiences of CSA or direct-market farmers and their work or exclusively looking at female primary operators in the region. A comparison across other regions in the United States may yield a variety of findings as well.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A1: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

VERBAL RECRUITMENT

FEMALE FARMERS IN NORTHERN COLORADO THESIS PROJECT

Date

Dear Participant,

Hello, my name is Rebecca Shisler and I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the Sociology department. Under the guidance of my advisor, Joshua Sbicaa, Ph.D., I am conducting a research study on the experiences of female farmers in Northern Colorado. The title of our project is Female Farmers in Northern Colorado. Dr. Sbicca is the Principal Investigator and I am the co-principal investigator on this project.

We would like you to participate in an audiotaped in-person or phone interview, whichever is easier. We can set up a location that is convenient. Participation will take approximately one hour. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. All your data will remain confidential; your name and data will be kept separately. An encrypted file with your data will be kept on a password protected computer accessible only to the research team.

When we report and share the data with others, some data will be combined across all participants. We will also present quotes from participants, but will ensure that these cannot be linked back to you. We may publish the results of this study and write about the combined information we have gathered; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

There are no known risks or direct benefits to you, but we hope to gain more knowledge on the experiences of female farmers in the region.

Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Rebecca Shisler at rebeccashisler@gmail.com ; (330) 815-7742. If you have questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Shisler
Graduate Student
Department of Sociology
Colorado State University

Appendix A2: WRITTEN (EMAIL) RECRUITMENT

Hello [Name],

We spoke on the phone this morning, and I'm looking forward to meeting with you on the 29th! I've attached a consent form for you to look over, additionally, here's my spiel about this project:

I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the Sociology department. Under the guidance of my advisor, Joshua Sbicca, Ph.D., I am conducting a research study on the experiences of female farmers in Northern Colorado. The title of our project is Female Farmers in Northern Colorado. Dr. Sbicca is the principal investigator and I am the co-principal investigator on this project.

We would like you to participate in an audiotaped in-person interview. The interview can be conducted at a time and location of your choice, be it your home, your farm, or a public space like a cafe or library. Participation will take approximately one hour. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. All your data will remain confidential; your name and data will be kept separately. An encrypted file with your data will be kept on a password-protected computer accessible only to the research team. When we report and share the data with others, some data will be combined across all participants. We will also present quotes from participants, but will ensure that these cannot be linked back to you. We may publish the results of this study and write about the combined information we have gathered; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. There are no known risks or direct benefits to you, but we hope to gain more knowledge on the experiences of female farmers in the region.

Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Rebecca Shisler at rebeccashisler@gmail.com or by calling (330) 815-7742. If you have questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Shisler
Graduate Student
Department of Sociology
Colorado State University

Appendix A3: RECRUITMENT FLYER

Female Farmers in Northern Colorado

If you are a woman who farms in Boulder, Larimer, or Weld County, we want to talk to you about your experiences in agriculture! Your participation would include a 1-2 hour interview and 1-3 hour focus group. Participants will determine times & locations of the interviews and focus groups.

This sociological study is exploring how gender affects how women begin farming, how they learned agricultural techniques, and what their experiences in the marketplace and organizations are like.

If you'd like to participate in or learn more about the study, please contact researcher Rebecca Shisler* at rebeccashisler@gmail.com

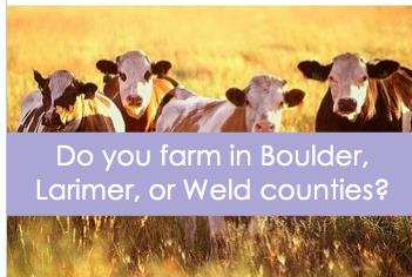
*Rebecca is a graduate student in Colorado State University's Sociology Department. The Principal Investigator is Joshua Shicca, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Sociology Department.



Are you a woman and primary farm operator?



Are you interested in sharing your experiences in agriculture?



Do you farm in Boulder, Larimer, or Weld counties?



If so, please consider being part of this study!

Appendix B: CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in a Research Study Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: Female Farmers in Northern Colorado

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joshua Sbicca, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, (970) 491-2834, j.sbicca@colostate.edu

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Rebecca Shisler, Graduate Student, Department of Sociology, rebeccashisler@gmail.com

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? You qualify to participate in this study because you are a female farmer in Boulder, Larimer, or Weld County.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? The research team is a graduate student working on her thesis and professors on her committee.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? We are learning about the experiences of female farm operators relating to their gender.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? The research will take place at farmers' markets, as well as farms or locations designated by the subjects when conducting interviews or focus groups.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? You are being asked to participate in an audiotaped in-person or over the phone interview, whatever is more convenient. You can expect this to take 1-2 hours. Questions ask about your experiences within and views on the agricultural field will be central to the interview. You will also be asked to participate in a 2-hour audio-recorded focus group with other female farmers.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? There are no known risks associated with your participation. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. If you choose to participate in the focus group, the researcher cannot guarantee that information shared within the focus group will remain confidential as members of the group may share your comments outside of the group.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no direct benefits to participation in this research.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. We may be asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary. All your data will remain confidential; your name and data will be kept separately. An encrypted file with your data will be kept on a password-protected computer accessible only to the research team. When we report and share the data to others, some data will be combined across all participants. We will also present quotes from participants, but will ensure that these cannot be linked back to you. We may publish the results of this study and write about the combined information we have gathered; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

Permission to audiotape interview:

I would like to audiotape your interview to be sure that your comments are accurately recorded. Only our research team will have access to the audiotapes, and they will be destroyed once they have been transcribed and the research project has been completed.

Do you give the researchers permission to audiotape your interview? Please initial next to your choice below.

Yes, I agree to be digitally recorded _____ (initials)

No, do not audiotape my interview _____ (initials)

Permission to use direct quotes:

Please let us know if you would like your comments to remain confidential or attributed to you. Please initial next to your choice below.

I give permission for comments I have made to be shared using my exact words and to include my (name/position/title). _____ (initials)

You can use my data for research and publishing, but do NOT associate my (name/position/title) with direct quotes. _____ (initials)

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Rebecca Shisler at rebeccashisler@gmail.com ; (330) 815-7742. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant

Date

Signature of Research Staff

Appendix C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

1. How long have you been farming/ranching?
2. Are you the primary operator of your farm/ranch?
 - If relevant, who else is a primary operator?
 - How are they related to you?
 - How do their responsibilities differ from yours?
 - How does gender play into this divide?
3. How did you get into agriculture?
 - Did you grow up with it? Is it part of your family?
 - When did you first decide to become a farmer/rancher?
 - How did you learn about agriculture techniques?
4. Tell me about your farm/ranch:
 - What do you produce?
 - What is the acreage/size and average sales (this will not be attributed to you specifically)?
 - What are the main goals that you have for your farm/ranch?
 - Do you own, lease, or some other combination of your agricultural/ranch land?
 - If you engage in alternative practices, what are those practices?
 - Where and how do you distribute your product?
5. Who else works on your farm/ranch?
 - What are their main responsibilities?
 - How did they come to work at your farm/ranch?
 - How does gender play into this divide?
6. Do you think there is a distinction between a female farmer and a farm wife? If so, what is that distinction?
7. If you have children, how do you feel that motherhood has affected your agricultural career?
8. In what ways do you think men and women farm/ranch differently?
9. What agricultural organizations are you a part of? Why are you/why are you not part of them?
 - Tell me about the women in these organizations.
 - Do you feel like these organizations discuss issues that are important to you?
 - What has your participation looked like in these organizations?

10. Are you a part of any official or unofficial women-centric farming/ranching groups?
Why or why not?

- If yes, tell me more: when and why it began, what do you do when you meet, what is its main role (social, economic/networking, other).
- If no, would you ever join such a group? If yes, describe an ideal group. If no, why?

11. How does feminism play into your life and job, if at all?

12. How do you feel like your experiences in agriculture differ from men's experiences?

- If yes, how so? If no, why?

13. To what extent, if at all, do you feel your gender has affected your agricultural experiences?

14. About how many other female farm operators do you know?

Demographics: Year of birth, Education, Race/Ethnicity, Political Orientation

Appendix D: CODEBOOK

First Cycle Codebook

Code Book			
<u>First Cycle</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Keep/Combine/Scrap?</u>	
Advocacy/Education	Mention of advocating for ag/food, educating others about it.	KC	
Empowerment	Ag described as empowering or healing	KC	
Ag in her core	Ag has always been part of her life or "ag is my life" (grew up farming or drawn to it)	KC	
Anecdote	An anecdote which illustrates an experience of female farmers	S	
Community	Mentions importance of building and connecting community, providing a place for community, educating community	KC	
Division of Labor	How is work divided with their (male) partner and workers on the farm? What is the DOL at home?	KC	
Double Bind	Statement emblematic of the catch-22 of being female	S	
Environment	Stresses importance of the Earth, caring for the earth/water/soil, envt sust	KC	
Farm Info	Broad category encompassing details about farm information--like history, acreage, sales, and type of farm	K	
Farm Tech	Mention of ag technology; drones, GPS tractors, new irrigation	S	
Farm Wives	The distinction between farmer and farm wife	KC	
Feminine Farm Work	Mention of office work or other traditionally feminine farm work	S	
Feminism	Discussion of feminist ideas, or explicit talk on feminism	KC	
Gender Essentialism/Gender Differences	Women are one way, men are another. They are different. Observation of difference.	K	

"hands in the dirt"	Explicit mentioning of getting down in soil/dirt/field to do work	KS?	
History	Personal history of the interviewee	KS	
Interfacing	Discussion of the importance of communicating with consumers, workers. Role of communication, teaching.	C	
Like Family	The description of how certain people connected to the farm (workers, customers) are "like family"	S	
Male-Dominated/Good Ol Boys	Discussion of how ag is male-dominated and the results of that. Explicit mentioning of "good ol boys" or "boys club"	K	
Male Family Members	Interviewee talks about husband, father, son, son-in-law etc.	S	
Motherhood/Family	Respondent talks about how motherhood/ her family affects her work	KC	
Need to Work Harder	The need to work harder than male peers is made explicit	CS	
NeoLib Feminism	The idea that to be respected you just need to work hard and make people respect you--if you want it you just have to do it	KC	
Organizations	Broad category encompassing details about the organizations the interviewee participates in. Includes Women-centric orgs and the interviewee's leadership position	K	
Other Female Farmers	Mention of other women in farming, either actual names or discussion of what the experiences are.	KC	
Passion for Ag	Agricultural is my life. I wouldn't want to do anything else. Love and happiness	KC	
Pathways to Ag	What led women to farming? How did they learn?	K	
Sexism	Explicit or nuanced. both benevolent and direct, instances of sexist behavior. Self-identified and also perceived by researcher	KC	

Sexual Harassment/Violence	Sexual harassment ranging from dirty jokes to sexual assault	K	
STANDOUT STATEMENTS	Statements that are impactful to the researcher	K	
Technical Ag Knowledge	Technical knowledge about farming, irrigation, describing an ag process	CS	
Things Are Changing	Optimism that things for women are getting better	CS	
Tokenism	Feeling like a token; singled out, stressed about representing other women, worry about being the best	CS	
Widow	Talking about a loss of a spouse	S	
Bitch	Mention that they have maybe been perceived as "bitchy" in ag world	S	
	35		
KEY		<u>Coded in at least 10 Interviews</u>	<u>Coded in less than 5 Interviews</u>
Most Referenced		Organizations	Widow
Least Referenced		History	Double Bind
		Farm Info	anecdote
		Other Female Farmers	farm-to-table
		Pathways to Ag	bitch
		Division of Labor	feminine farm work
		Standout Statements	NeoLib Fem
		Gender Ess/Gender Diff	Like Family
		Technical Ag Knowledge	Farm Tech
		Advoc/Educ	Sexual Harassment/Violence
		Sexism	Things are Changing
		Passion	
		Community	
		Motherhood/Family	
		Ag in her core	

Second Cycle Codebook

<u>SECOND CYCLE</u>	<u>Definition</u>	Changed from First Cycle?	Combined Codes?	CONCEPT
Division of Labor (MOD CODE)	How is work divided with their (male) partner and workers on the farm?	Yes. DOL Home is it's own code now.	no	ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSINESS
Farm Workers	Statements about who works on the farm	Yes. It's its own code now.	no	ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSINESS
Family Farm (NEW CODE)	Describes farm as such, discusses desire to keep in family or what a family farm is.	Yes. New code.	no	ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSINESS
Farm Info—(subs) Distribution, Goals	Info about the farm.	Yes. Only two subcategs	no	ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSINESS
Organizations	Broad category encompassing details about the organizations the interviewee participates in. Includes Women-centric orgs and the interviewee's leadership position	No.	no	ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSINESS
Farm Type—(sub) Alternative	The farm is alternative (organic, CSA, sustainable)	Yes. It's its own code now. Now two choices for farm types	no	ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSINESS, CARE ETHICS
Farm Type--(sub) Conventional	The farm is conventional	Yes. It's its own code now. Now two choices for farm types	no	ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSINESS

Organizations—(sub) Women-Centric	Subcateg of organizations, includes ideal organization	Yes. no subcode for it	no	PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)
Gender Differences	Women are one way, men are another. They are different. Observation of difference. Includes essentialist ideas	Yes. Renamed	no	PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)
Feminism	Discussion of feminist ideas, or explicit talk on feminism	No.	no	PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)
Sexism	Explicit or nuanced. both benevolent and direct, instances of sexist behavior. Self-identified and also perceived by researcher	No.	no	PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)
Male Dominated (MOD CODE)	Discussion of how ag is male-dominated and the results of that. Explicit mentioning of "good ol boys" or "boys club"	Yes. Renamed	no	PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)
Sexual Harassment/Violence	Sexual harassment ranging from dirty jokes to sexual assault	No.	no	PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)
Additional Challenges	Pressures respondents face or discuss because of their gender; double bind, working harder, tokenism	Yes. New code.	Yes. Tokenism, Double Bind, Need to Work Harder	PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)

NeoLib Feminism	The idea that to be respected you just need to work hard and make people respect you--if you want it you just have to do it	No.	no	PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)
Things are Changing?				PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)
Empowerment	Ag described as empowering or healing	No.	no	INDIVIDUAL
Div of Labor--Home (MOD CODE)	The division of labor at home, unrelated to agriculture, related to housework and childcare	Yes. It's its own code now.	no	INDIVIDUAL
Passion/Part of Me (NEW MOD CODE)	Agricultural has been/is my life. I wouldn't want to do anything else. Love and happiness	Yes. Expanded Code	Yes. Passion, Ag in her Core	INDIVIDUAL
Motherhood/Family	Respondent talks about how motherhood/ her family affects her work	No.	no	INDIVIDUAL, PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)
Learning Ag (NEW CODE)	How did/does respondent learn ag techniques?	Yes. New Code off of Pathways	no	INDIVIDUAL
Other Women (NEW CODE)	Respondents talk about other women; includes farm wives, colleagues, other female farmers	Yes. New Code	yes. Farm Wives, Other Female Farmers	INDIVIDUAL

Pathways to Ag (MOD CODE)	What led women to farming?	Yes. Redefined code, learning is own code	no	INDIVIDUAL
History	Personal/professional history of the interviewee	No.	no	INDIVIDUAL
Official Leadership (NEW CODE)	A respondent discusses leadership roles they hold or have held: boards, organizations etc.	Yes. New Code, used to be subcode in orgs	no	INDIVIDUAL
Environment (MOD CODE)	Respondent talks about being good to the earth/water/soil. Valuing nature/the earth.	Yes. Modified to include valuing and connecting with soil/plants/earth	Yes. Environment, Hands in the Soil	THE EARTH
Sustainability (MOD CODE)	Respondent talks about environmentally sustainable techniques	Yes. It's its own code now. Used to be sub-subcode of farm type.	no	THE EARTH
Community (MOD CODE)	Respondent values their community and wants to enrich it through health, advocacy, education, and face-to-face marketing	Yes. Combined several codes	Yes. Advoc/Educ, Interfacing, Community,	CARE ETHICS
Farm-to-Table(NEW CODE)	Respondent talks about importance of food system, their place in the foodway	Yes. New Code.	No.	CARE ETHICS
Standout Statements	Impactful statements as	no	no	

	determined by researcher			
KEY				
ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSI NESS				
PATRIARCHY (AND RESPONSES TO IT)				
INDIVIDUAL				
THE EARTH				
CARE ETHICS				

Appendix E: INTRA-CYCLE CODING MEMOS

Memo: First Cycle Coding to Second Cycle Coding

I need to narrow down my categories some more, and examine overlap. I can do this by organizing my codes in an excel file.

I want to do conceptual coding based on the literature I've found. Overall, this means I'm looking into Care Ethics, Ecofeminism, and others

After organizing my codes, I feel like I'm able to scrap the following:

- Anecdote
- Double Bind (although I feel attached to it)
- Farm Tech
- Feminine Farm Work
- Like Family
- Male Family Members
- Widow
- Bitch
- Technical Ag Knowledge

I'm thinking some potential code combinations would be helpful, some good combinations could be...

- Advocacy/Education
- Interfacing
- Community
- Farm-to-Table
- Ag in her Core
- Passion
- Empowerment
- Environment
- "Hands in the Dirt"
- Tokenism
- Sexism
- Need to Work Harder
- Other Female Farmers
- Farm Wives

The following are codes I want to keep, but I'm not sure if they should be combined or organized/defined/renamed to get the point across...

- Empowerment
- Division of Labor
- Family Farm
- Farm Info
- Farm Wives
- Feminism
- Gender Ess/Gender Diff
- History
- Male Dom/Good Ol Boys
- Motherhood/Family
- Need to Work Harder
 - Neoliberal Fem
 - Organizations
 - Other Female Farmers
 - Pathways to Ag

- Sexism
- Sexual Harass/Violence
- Technical Ag Knowledge (Might scrap)
- Things are Changing
- Tokenism

Currently, [Pathways to Ag] also covers how women learn ag techniques—maybe separate those out?

“Farm Info” covers a lot of categories, including “farm goals” and “farm type”

- I think I might separate out farm goals—or scrap it to study the specific goals and code them
 - Farm Type has 6 categories (Alternative, Conventional, CSA, Organic, Small-Scale, Sustainability)
 - I think I want to make it into two (Alternative and Conventional)
 - Sustainability may nest better underneath “environment”
 - In order to streamline my coding, I want to create a spreadsheet that includes demographics of my participants, including their size and average sales, as well as farm type, and whether they are partnered.
 - I did not get enough clear data to do average sales—so I may just check out USDA census data to bring that in if I want to.
-

STANDOUT STATEMENTS is a code for impactful statements, and will hopefully aid in guiding the creation of new/combined codes

Looking at STANDOUT STATEMENTS

Common codes overlapping with STANDOUT STATEMENTS

- Feminism (5)
 - Organizations (5)
 - Passion (5)
 - Pathways (5)
 - DOL (7)
 - Advoc/Educ (7)
 - Farm Info (9)
 - Male Dom/ Ol Boys (9)
 - Motherhood/Fam (9)
 - Gender Ess/ Diff (15)
 - Sexism (15)
-

Distilling Codes

ENTREPRENEURSHIP/BUSINESS

- Division of Labor
- Farm Workers
- **Family Farm (NEW CODE)**
- Farm Goals
- Farm Info—Distribution
- Farm Info—Goals
- Organizations
- Farm Type—Alternative or Conventional

PATRIARCHY (and responses to it)

- Additional Pressures

- Feminism
- Gender Differences
- Sexism
- **Male Dominated (MOD CODE)**
- NeoLib Feminism
- Sexual Harassment/Violence
- Organizations—Women-Centric
- Things are Changing

INDIVIDUAL

- Empowerment
- **Passion/Part of Me (NEW MOD CODE)**
- **Family Farm (NEW CODE)**
- **Other Women (NEW CODE)**
- History
- Organizations—Leadership Roles
- Pathways to Ag
- **Learning Ag (NEW CODE)**
- Motherhood/Family
- **DOL HOME (MOD CODE)**

THE EARTH

- **Environment (MOD CODE)**
- **Sustainability (MOD CODE)**

CARE ETHICS ...

- **Community (MOD CODE)**
- Farm-to-Table
- Motherhood/Family
- Farm Type--Alternate

Maybe I should be combining Neoliberal Feminism with Things are Changing to create a Post-Feminist Code. I need to research post-feminism in order to ascertain this decision.

“Tokenism”, “Need to Work Harder”, and “Double Bind” were combined to create “Additional Pressures”

- this allows for a more holistic consideration of the internalized and external pressures faced by women, especially those in male-dominated fields.

Perhaps Empowerment could be combined with Passion/Part of Me, and the code could be renamed Passion/Pride? Sensible or too many things? Need to consider.