

**Farm Women's Experience and Practice:
Off-Farm Work and Agricultural Health and Safety.**

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By

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture challenges health and safety professionals as it continues to be one of the most dangerous occupations despite the considerable attention that has been paid to it. Researchers have struggled to obtain the information necessary to challenge the cultural, economic and family dynamics that seem resistant to change. To add to this difficulty, attention has not been paid to the concerns of the farm women who work off the farm while taking care of children and supporting their husbands. This research process has resulted in viewing the women as women, not as wives.

This qualitative research proposal used feminist methodology to study the perspectives of farm women through the focus group process. Data was collected and an analysis performed using the transcripts. Ultimately, meaning emerged from the collective lived experience of these farm women. The farming community hopefully will benefit from this research through the creation of better safety interventions targeted to the farm wife in the future.

Keywords: women, safety, agriculture, health and safety, feminism, family

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Chapter 1

History to Present

Many traditional farm families of the 21st century still fit into a patriarchal time when the man of the house farmed and then took a wife to take care of him. This seemed like a good idea, considering that men live longer when they are married and men generally wish to procreate. Although the idea of marriage might not have been entirely selfish and calculating, the wife's domain in the partnership included all the household chores, care of her husband, children, sometimes aging parents, and parents-in-law, as well as contributions to the farming operation in the barn and in the field during busy times. In more recent times, farm wives also contribute through off-farm work. It is interesting, albeit somewhat bewildering, that in less busy times, women seldom have the favour returned by getting extra help in the house with house work and care of children. This represents an injustice perpetuated by a patriarchal society. Who benefits most from such a marriage? There is a saying in Norway: "One teacher equals ten cows – the farmer who marries a teacher has done well for himself and the farm" (Moxnes-Jerrell, 1999). She brings a perpetual dowry that keeps on giving.

Our fore-mothers made significant contributions to the farming industry in Saskatchewan even though they seldom had a voice in the business side of the farming operation. The farm always came first, and her purpose in life was to learn to make do for the improvement of the farm, efforts that may or may not have considered the safety of the family. It is interesting that

farm wives have not demanded change. This oversight has still not been corrected, as is evident in the continuing injury rate on farms in rural Saskatchewan, in spite of general safety education. The problem is of great concern to women. Their perspectives and voices need to be heard before we can continue constructing interventions that work effectively. To neglect women's perspectives is like putting together a puzzle without some of the pieces. Women's voices must be heard.

“Farm-wife” is an umbrella term for many roles that any woman married to a farmer may take on. The notion of the farm-wife is wrought with contradictions and role combinations. Although there are women who are farmers, this is still by far the exception in Canada. According to Statistics Canada (2006), just over one-quarter of farm operators are women, and it is still rare to find a woman as a sole operator. Other married women do not have the same involvement in their husbands' careers. A surgeon's wife would never pinch hit in the operating room, and a lawyer's wife would never help him give closing arguments. When a woman marries a farmer, she also marries a lifestyle; her husband's occupation will affect every aspect of her life. Although farm-wife is a gendered term, the case in 2013 is still that men are considered farmers and their wives are considered to have married into their roles demonstrating the patriarchy in our culture. The farm-wife may take on numerous out-of-the-house roles, including work with animals, grain production, gardening, and yard work. Household roles may include childcare, cooking, cleaning, elder care, and bookwork. Off-farm work sometimes takes the form of more than one part time job, or full time work, which may require commuting significant distances. The role combination is unique to each farm-wife, making the term “farm-

wife” appear incredibly over-simplified. For the purpose of this research, it will be understood that each farm-wife has a unique combination of multiple roles, running the risk of role overload. Later throughout this research, I chose to use the term farm woman. As my understanding changed, so did the language demonstrating my own growth in consciousness. The term farm woman demonstrates a potential for these women to be active in their conscientization.

Farm women are not the only ones under stress and role overload. In recent decades farmers are increasingly expected to produce inexpensive food for Canadians and for export while taking risks with their own health and safety so that consumers can afford to spend more on material things such as the latest electronic device. A low value is attached to food, and consequently a low value is put on the farmer and his family. No longer is it considered an honourable occupation, and the urban public grumbles at subsidies and assistance given to their rural food providers which are minimal in Canada compared to the United States. Many farmers live at a subsistence level not that different from European peasants of the previous century. In Southern France, small farmers call themselves “paysans,” someone who has been raised on the farm and inherited the farm from farming parents (Saugeres, 2002). This is not a derogatory term, although a patriarchal one. In Canada, farmers are subjected to pre-determined prices which they cannot control. Even when poor years drive up the cost of food, farmers often do not receive more income for a commodity that is high in demand. One must wonder what is on the horizon for a society that puts such a low value on food, and the families who are exploited in the process of production.

The Agrarian Myth and the Agrarian Imperative. Historically, civilizations have often developed in areas conducive to agriculture. Rosmann (2010) refers to a genetic connection known as the “Agrarian Imperative” that explains why farmers become so engaged in agriculture and why farms are so willingly accepted by the next generations. In contrast, Saugeres (2002) addresses the farmers’ imagined connection to their patrilineal farm land and observes also that even though women’s work is often considered “menial and secondary” (Saugeres, 2002), they support their husbands. However real or imagined the connection, it is these women’s reality in which they live. Women have been an instrumental part of building civilizations, not only by taking care of their families, but also by volunteering in their communities. Women in general have always performed multiple roles. Even before off-farm work became necessary or common, women took on multiple roles at home in the farming operation and in the community.

Many rural and urban dwellers believe in the myths surrounding agriculture. The familiar “agrarian myth” depicts the serenity of the farming environment where nature and people co-exist (or live together) in beautiful harmony (Melberg, 2006). This myth includes details about home grown and home-made food, luscious yards, golden fields, and healthy children and so forth: “the interest in protecting family farming as such is connected to the view that it is superior, stable, robust and has special value for society” (Moxnes-Jervell, 1999, p. 103). It is no wonder that someone brought up to believe in the lifestyle would very easily buy into the agrarian myth, as it is a beautiful story. In a world where large farming businesses are taking over small family farms, we may eventually see only the remnants of Saskatchewan

family farms in the Western Development Museums of Saskatchewan or on role-playing vacation farms designed to give tourists the thrill of the farm experience.

My Story

I have farming relatives and ancestors.

I grew up around agriculture.

I married a farmer.

I had visions of kittens and haylofts and little boys on tricycles, fresh chickens and eggs, and feeding an orphan calf full of gratitude for my care. I had imagined the experiences I would give my children and all the extra family time we would have on the farm. I had envisioned being a stay at home mom who would have coffee with the neighbour women and volunteer in local organizations in my spare time. What was I thinking? Did I believe in a myth? Or was I genetically disposed to head to the nearest farm?

Once reality set in, I did what I needed to do, even when I should not have. I thought, isn't that what a woman is supposed to do for her family? I did what I thought I had to do and the best I could do in the circumstances that I was presented with. After our yearly share of farm injuries including stitches, dislocations, sprains, chronic back pain, I would think that safety interventions had to become an absolute priority. Nonetheless, that did not happen. Was it because farmers do not want to be told what to do? I did not know.

After the children got a little older, I realized that we could not afford to raise children on the farm and have them participate in extra-curricular activities to provide them with a well

rounded childhood. So I went to work. However, the options were very limited, and even bustling little small town hotels do not pay much more than minimum wage. I went to university, while working an off-farm job till the wee hours of the morning, and taking care of the house and children so that I could become a teacher. I never thought about having multiple roles. I was doing what I had to do so that we could continue farming, never considering that it might not be the right choice. It felt as if I was fighting uphill all the time and never getting any further ahead. Meanwhile, my husband farmed – pigs, cows, chickens and nine quarters of pretty decent Saskatchewan landscape seeded with a variety of wheat, canola, barley, and flax. As the only son, he was destined to continue farming the family farm, against his own logic, rather than disappoint his parents. Even his grandfather refused to die in the hospital until harvest was over. From his hospital bed, he asked every day if harvest was over. Once the crop was in, he died peacefully, comforted by the thought that he had not interfered with harvest. His wife (my husband's grandmother) would have purchased the entire countryside if there had been more sons to farm it. She was known to have physically defended the property with a fencepost. These were the stories I, the daughter-in-law, heard about lives filled with dedication, hard work, and sacrifice, all for a future that they dreamed of for generations to come.

There were some logical safety measures in place. Sundays were always a day of rest except for the person who was still cooking and taking care of the children. Alcohol was never served during work hours because the body always needed to be rested and chemical free during the work week. However, it was a common occurrence to arrive home from work or school to find a mysterious mark of blood in the bathroom sink, signifying that an injury had occurred, yet

no one to be found to explain it for several hours. This was before the common use of cell phones.

At peak seasons, I rose with the children, at 6:00 a.m., after I had worked in town until 3:00 a.m. Of course, by then my husband had already put in an hour or two fixing equipment. There was no doubt that he worked very hard especially during peak seasons. I made breakfast for the children and thought about lunch, supper, laundry, cleaning, yard work, and child care. It was hard work, for a mythical lifestyle that never materialized outside my imagination. I was asked by town folk, “What is a nice girl like you doing in the middle of nowhere?” I had no plausible answer for that question. Reality had begun to set in, and the elusive mythical country setting dimmed as a distant dream.

My grandmother, a widow, raised seven children on the family farm. She thoroughly enjoyed the fall harvest season which meant everything for the coming winter. I always figured that if I possessed half the strength and determination that she had, we would succeed. However, her goal was not only to feed her family, but to ensure that the farm stayed intact for her children to farm. My uncle (14 years old at the time of his father’s passing) was the new man of the house and made sacrifices, using his desperation and creativity to support the family. On a hope and many prayers, they made the farm work, against all odds.

But this is just my story. Unique in the way it brings the many sides of my experience together, yet similar to those of many farm women. The stories of other women in my neighbourhood (the nearest neighbour was several miles away) were supportive. Being very young and enthusiastic, I listened intently to the stories of the older farm women. They were my

influence and my support system. They each firmly believed in their myth, as it was their perspective and their story too. There is no stronger stance than that of one's perception because to the individual her perception is her reality. Some of these women have since passed away, or experienced debilitating farm injuries. Their stories will always be with me as part of my past and present, and ultimately, my perception.

Having the support of my husband who appreciated most of what I did most of the time was important to my perception of my position and also helped me survive an intolerable situation. This affirmation was extremely important and made the situation much easier and emotionally worthwhile. Despite the odds, I could flourish under conditions that would make my urban counterparts gasp in disbelief at the horror of it. Most urban women would never consider such a way of life.

My background as a rural woman and farm wife supplies me with first-hand experience of the real dangers on a farm. My husband farmed with his family, therefore I was rarely listened to and my concerns were certainly not considered. I was ignored when I raised safety issues after moving out to the farm with three preschoolers. I believed in the agrarian myth that raising one's children on the land was ideal. My most important condition was that we have a fenced play area around the house. Sadly, and to my everlasting chagrin, we never got that fence.

The following spring, my 2 ½ year old wandered off while I worked on the massive yard doing some clean up as I had been instructed to do in addition to the childcare, housework and cooking for extended family. I heard a loud crunch that turned out to be the tractor denting the

car door because the driver avoided running over an escaped toddler (a very near miss with potential devastating consequences). I was to blame. This is only one in a series of close calls. I spent a lot of time arguing for the safety of my family within a farming culture where “it’s always been done this way.”

My work on and off the farm and my financial contributions went largely unnoticed even when the savings from my off-farm work funds (after deductions for child care costs) throughout the winter paid for the huge grocery bill throughout the spring, summer, and fall when I had to prepare large nutritious meals for extended family, and the occasional hired worker as well. Because very high input and repair costs kept all available farm income tied up during the summer, I received no pay or compensation for the work I did in summer. So, during the active farming season I contributed not only my income from off-farm work but also my hard labor in the kitchen and yard. Neither contribution was recognized.

In a province that produces a large percentage of Canada’s exported grain, the federal government has made it increasingly more difficult for family farms allowing corporate farms to consume them. They do not understand why a community function or a committee meeting would have poor attendance in the fall season or why farmers cannot reply to a September wedding invitation with any certainty whatsoever. The farm family is oppressed by a consumer society that demands cheap food. Coping with this reality requires that women work off the farm, taking them away from their families when they could be on the farm ensuring safer practices for themselves, their husbands and their children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to give rural women who must work both on and off the farm a voice and visibility in the area of farm health and safety interventions. Participants will have opportunity to explore the issues connected with farm safety and to work through their concerns, which can then be heard later by those developing safety interventions. This study has two objectives: to hear women's perspectives on their coping skills for the health and safety of their families; and to find ways to identify the issues that require safety interventions and to empower Saskatchewan farm women. It is expected that this study will also generate issues for further research.

Research Questions

What are the farm safety perspectives and experiences of farm women who work off the farm? What are their strategies to prevent farm injury? How can farm women be empowered? Throughout this study I remained sensitive to ways in which farm women can empower themselves.

Researcher Background

I have worked in agricultural health and safety for over four years, and am embarrassed to have to admit to being guilty of focusing on the male farmer. Even though women are not excluded, we tend to focus primarily on what we, as an institution, think are the needs of the male farmer. This includes print material and workshops or presentations that address primarily the male farmer. Since education interventions continue to be ineffective in the prevention of

injury, perhaps effective health and safety intervention strategies need to include the female voice in their design. A follow-up study will be needed to establish whether an educational intervention directed at women is effective.

Subjectivity and Reflexivity

I came to this project with a series of preconceived notions from my experiences and from my work at the Canadian Centre for Health and Safety in Agriculture. I have identified a need for this research because of my work and my personal experience living as a farm wife. I have confronted the dearly held beliefs and values in a way that has been difficult, and I feel qualified to facilitate as my research partners (farm women) begin to consider their experiences. I could not possibly facilitate the telling of their stories without my own story as a connection to them. Thus, for the purpose of this study, subjectivity is a positive attribute. I believe that this background affords me two benefits for this research. One is that I can understand the context of the discussion of farm women. The second is that I have an inside appreciation of the lives of these women from my insider status. This positive subjectivity will help me with the data collected during the focus groups.

Reflexivity is essential due to the uniqueness of each qualitative research project and the individual researcher (Watt, 2007). I kept a research journal. I kept a minimal journal up to the point of writing my proposal, focusing more on my struggles with the proposal writing. I did a lot of writing and rewriting. I am aware of my personal story, my goals, and my empathy for farm women. It is my hope that writing throughout the process of data collecting and analyzing

will help me to manage issues of subjectivity, and enhance my learning process and assist me with the emergent nature of qualitative studies.

I do not come from a position of bitterness. I have watched my children get on the bus with the assurance they would be delivered back to me safely by 4:15 each afternoon. They have had opportunities for many hours of fresh air and exercise, small pets, and rich experiences from the natural world. These are experiences they would have had difficulty learning elsewhere. My now-adult children all started their first city jobs with a strong work ethic, making them high in demand in their work places. I do not believe that the farming lifestyle is all a myth, as a small part of the positive aspects became a reality. Perhaps there is a little bit of the happily ever after and many positive aspects of farm life. I do not believe that all of the agrarian myth is misleading. Some of the positive promises have become a reality, as I can see in my grown children. I am comforted that not all of my labor and sacrifice was for nothing.

However, I have experienced the injuries, the sleep deprivation and the stress of agriculture, the incessant juggling of multiple roles, and feelings of inadequacy as a parent when there is not enough time to spend with children. I have experienced role overload, been invisible and voiceless, and worked off the farm. There are many others like me with experiences to share that hopefully will help us improve the safety on farms in Saskatchewan.

Learning with Farm Women

I have come to terms with who I am and who I will be. I believe there are injustices that need to be addressed: I have a voice and I intend to use it to facilitate farm women in finding

their own voices and being heard. At this point I have changed the language from farm-wife to farm woman because it is the beginning of a new feminist language for farm women.

Working with farm women required delicate facilitation and necessary connections that had to be carefully cultivated in an unthreatening setting since these women were challenged to consider their values, beliefs, and behaviours in a way that they did not necessarily want to be challenged (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). We researched and learned together. A safe environment was created for the purpose of critical reflection. Critical reflection, locating their power and identifying patriarchy at work must be common goals for the group of women who are potentially considering the farm culture that may have encouraged risky behaviour, even though it may be uncomfortable or even painful for some. Empowerment cannot take place until critical reflection takes place (Knowles et al., 2005). These women felt that they benefitted by participating in these focus groups.

Stories

Palmer (1998) spoke of going into the world of his students to bring them into his world. My goal was to go into the world of farm women to explore with them how we can make the farm a safer place for families. I accomplished this through the sharing of experiences and stories: “When the language of change becomes available in the common culture, people are better able to name their yearnings for change, to explore them with others, to claim membership in a great movement” (Palmer, 1998, p. 36). Change is possible if stories and dialogue are

shared, but not until we talk about it together and reflect together can we focus on the purpose of action. In this case, this is about making family farms safer.

Palmer discussed the story of the women's movement which applies to this project. Once heard, women's voices and perspectives in the area of farm safety could be "public and compelling" (Palmer, 1998, p. 36). Where other groups have failed, women may be able to rally enough attention, interest and mutual support to bring about change in the way agricultural health and safety issues are perceived. In the United States and Canada there is evidence for a difference in public perception of drinking and driving as a socially unacceptable activity, which is attributed to MADD (Mothers Against Driving Drunk). The work of MADD has resulted in more effective laws and federal legislation. There are now official MADD affiliations in five other countries (Fell & Voas, 2006). It is a possibility that farm women as a group could accomplish similar changes regarding agricultural safety and health if they work together to change social perception.

For the purpose of this document, the term "farm woman" needs clarification. There are many variations among farm women in the combinations of roles. Each woman in all the focus groups had a different combination of multiple roles. The traditional farm woman cares for family, household tasks, children, garden, and yard; she runs for parts, prepares food and delivers it to the field, and participates in the farming operation to varying degrees. The modern farm woman may also work off the farm, but does as many of the traditional tasks that she possibly can and tends to feel guilty when she cannot do all of it. For the purposes of this study, the term "farm woman" includes any combination of those roles but includes off-farm

work as one of the roles. For example, those who work full time off the farm may not do as much farm work, and those who work part time off the farm may do more farm work. “Farm woman” is an umbrella term for anything that they may do for their farm, family and work place. For the purpose of this document, “farm woman” refers to the modern farm woman who works off the farm as well as doing all the above tasks.

It also needs to be specified that the farms that the women in this study live on are small family farms that do not have outside paid employees.

Overview of Thesis

This research project focuses on the health and safety perspectives in the context of the experiences of Saskatchewan farm women.

Chapter 1 sets the context for this research by discussing the recent history of the traditional roles of the farm woman. My story and background illustrate key concepts such as multiple-roles, role overload and conflict, lived experiences, off-farm work, stories, and oppression. I consider the opportunity to listen to the experiences of these farm women a privilege and an honour. Chapter 2 focuses on the literature pertaining to farm women, health and safety, gender, and issues on the farm. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative methods chosen for the study, focus groups, and feminist research methods. Data collection, analysis and ethical issues that require consideration will also be described. Chapter 4 presents the findings coming out of the focus group data and discuss these findings. Chapter 5 will compare these findings to the literature.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter has been divided into five segments. The first segment surveys current farm safety, including the dangers in agricultural production. It also discusses health and safety interventions, including the experiences of farm women. The second section discusses the many challenges experienced by farm women historically and in the present. The third section discusses multiple roles, the potential for role overload, and the ensuing conflict. The fourth section considers the gap caused by the lack of women's voices and visibility, and the fifth looks at gender, gender differences, and the different perspectives related to gender. Exploring these areas and giving farm women a voice will provide a background for future farm safety interventions, empower farm women to promote farm safety practices, and focus further research.

The Current Situation of Farm Safety

Agriculture is a dangerous occupation; the injuries that occur and the illnesses that arise due to exposure to harmful substances have been of concern for decades (Thurston, Blundell-Gosselin, & Robinson, 2003). The Saskatchewan Farm Injury Project team set out to study the farm injury epidemic beginning the study in April 2007 and ending in March 2009. Analyses of the Saskatchewan Farm Injury Cohort data produced several papers which concluded that

farmers are at a high risk of injury due to very long work hours, insufficient sleep during peak seasons (Labrash, Pahwa, Pickett, Hagel, Snodgrass, & Dosman, 2008), child supervision strategies that put their children at risk in an effort to cope with long work hours, the exposure of teens to hazardous farm work on older equipment without safety features (Marlenga, Pahwa, Hagel, Dosman, & Pickett, 2010), a significant number of work hours per day far past traditional retirement ages (Voaklander, Dosman, Hagel, Warsh, & Pickett, 2010), and a reluctance to be receptive to educational interventions (Hagel, McDuffie, Dosman, Lockinger, Bidwell, & Siever, 2008). Canada, the United States, European countries, Australia, and New Zealand have found similar high injury and disease rates in agriculture (Colémont & Van den Brouke, 2006). The consequences of farm injuries are far reaching creating a need for farm safety interventions.

Organizations have acted on those concerns by implementing a variety of interventions, yet many of these programs have not been well evaluated, making it difficult to discern their effectiveness (Rautianinen, Lehtda, Day, Schonstein, Suutarinen, Salminen, & Verbeek, 2007). Educational interventions such as printed resources and newsletters are the most cost effective, yet by themselves, they do not appear to have reduced the risk of injury (Hagel et al., 2008, Rautianinen et al., 2008). Educational and resource based interventions are necessary but need to be combined with other types of interventions (Hagel et al., 2008). Interventions that entail considerable financial outlay to help farm families make changes have shown only minimal success (Donham, Rautiainen, Lange, & Schneiders, 2007) and may be difficult to implement in our current political structure which places higher value on money than on people. Government supported programs are receiving less funding. Safety programs are forced to seek corporate

funding or reach fewer people. It appears difficult to change the attitudes of farmers towards safety without enforcing safety regulations through Occupational Health and Safety. The reasons for this resistance to change remain complicated and elusive.

The impact of injury reaches agricultural business, the spouse, children, extended family and the community (Colémont & Van den Brouke, 2006). The World Health Organization (WHO) defined “Health as being “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (Basics Documents, 2006, 1). This emphasized the preventive side of health care (Sze, 1988). Farm health and safety programs need to include this holistic view of health incorporated into attitude and practice for a healthy community of farm families.

Safety professionals have been slow to design successful interventions: “Experiential data to scientifically validate typical farm safety and health education approaches are minimal at best” (Murphy, Kiernan, & Chapman, 1996, p. 396). Reviews of farm safety interventions found that studies of educational interventions did not show positive effects that were statistically significant or that could be used to draw general conclusions (Rautiainen et al., 2008; DeRoo & Rautiainen, 2000; Rodriguez, Schwab, Peterson, & Miller, 1997). Of the limited number of education based interventions that are being used, very few have been rigorously evaluated. Of those that have, Rautiainen et al. (2007) concluded that there is “no evidence to suggest that educational interventions had an injury-reducing effect” (p. 11). Hagel et al. (2008) corroborated this finding in the study of the Agricultural Health and Safety Network. Although educational interventions, primarily printed resources designed to reach the maximum number of farm

families, are an inexpensive way to attempt to reduce farm injury in a time of limited funding, they have not been effective (Hagel et al. 2008). Regardless, there has been no drop in injury rate even though there have been various attempts at agricultural health and safety interventions. A possible reason for this lack of success is that most interventions focus primarily on knowledge and awareness of safety issues and on risk analyses which do not necessarily elicit behaviour change (Colemont, 2006). Although the measurement of success is unclear, it is clear that the best intentions of agriculture health and safety professionals have fallen short of success.

However, most studies concerning farm health and safety have typically been directed at male farmers. Before more costly interventions such as training and equipment are designed, all voices should be heard to ensure that the most effective interventions are chosen. In this instance, the farm woman's voice has yet to be heard within the patriarchal society. We could easily conclude that if education does not make a difference, then enforcement is necessary; however, not all perspectives have been thoroughly explored. Society and government will not contribute to expensive interventions without evidence of the legitimacy and effectiveness of the potential intervention, and perhaps rightly so. Before large amounts of money are invested in costly interventions, evidence that they will work must be provided. If government and supporting industries can see that the cost of prevention is lower than the cost of injuries and illness, they may be willing to invest in prevention.

Given this confirmation of agricultural risk, we need to design effective and appropriate interventions and to target these interventions where they will work best. We know that targeting farmers is not working so we need to try to target a different population. A natural

place to begin is with the family care giver who holds multiple roles, observes and takes part in many aspects of farming, and experiences the resulting conflict. Targeting farm women is a logical alternative because it is clear that targeting farmers with educational materials is not working.

So it is necessary to evaluate the needs of those we are targeting because farm women have been underrepresented in the health and safety literature. This research gave them opportunity to share their perspectives that might give reasons why health and safety interventions have had little positive effect to date. Perhaps we can spare women the choice between saving their families from epic agricultural failure and neglecting the safety of their families. Past farming practice does not have to predict future behaviour if we can discover what may motivate those changes.

Rural women need to be included in the design of potential interventions as they are at the heart of rural society and possess valuable rural insights. Wright (2005) suggests that because women are the caregivers of their families, they should be part of health and safety decisions on the farm: “It is apparent that women on farms need to become more empowered in order to create a safer and more efficient work environment for everyone living on the farm” (Wright, 2005, p. 111). However, Wright also indicates that it is not until there is a death or injury that a farm woman finds that the lack of safety for her spouse or child has increased her already heavy workload of multiple roles. Worse yet, she might be a widow left to take care of the farm or in a position where she has to take care of a seriously disabled spouse or child as well as the farm. A life altering injury can be the result of unsafe farming practice. The prevailing

belief in Agricultural Health and Safety is that these incidents are foreseeable, predictable, and preventable.

The Farm Woman's Experience

Culture and history. During the 1930s depression, farm women received very little in return for their labour (Bye, 2005). Often it was the women who kept their families on the land by working very long hours and selling eggs, butter, poultry, and cream. Everyone struggled and everyone worked hard for survival. These pursuits may not be feasible now, so we find women developing new incomes for the farm (Bock, 2004). Creative diversifications such as raising various livestock, market gardening and so forth are something they can do on the farm to contribute to the survival of the family farm. The other option is to take off-farm work. They tend to fit the additional work into their current schedule so that their family does not suffer (Bock, 2004). They do this so well, that their husband and children often do not even notice a change. Cummins (2005) found that “[w]omen’s work on a busy farm included maintaining different schedules and simultaneously seeing to the needs of the family” (p. 295). These contributions are largely overlooked, under-appreciated and sometimes resented by male farmers who would rather see themselves as the exclusive bread winners. Any threat to this power inequality can lead to discord and then conflicts (Shortall, 1992).

Although rural women’s issues have been understudied in Canada, they were examined in the 1970s and 1980s in conjunction with the “farm crisis.” Berkowitz and Perkins (1984) wrote about role conflict and supportive husbands in relation to stress experience. They

indicated that there was a complex set of factors in the 1980s and recommended further research. However, scholars have not been able to adequately include adequately women's work and important issues into the conventional writings on agriculture in Canada into the 1990s (Shaver, 1996). This omission, Ghorayshi (1989) claimed, is a distortion of reality: "to the extent that farm wives' work on and off the farm is essential for the well-being of family and enterprise, their exclusion is arbitrary, and produces false conceptions and misleading interpretations of agrarian structures" (p. 587). Shortal (1992) is also critical of the industry:

it also seems that the exploited labour of the farm wife is essential for the survival of the family farm with capitalism . . . farm women's inferior position has benefits for the industry as a whole. If the contribution of farm wives were to be acknowledged and fair retribution made, it would place huge strains on the farm industry. (Shortal, 1992, p. 447)

If, for example, the farm woman were to take a wage from the farm, the farm finances would show a less successful operation, but perhaps in some cases neither could her husband take a decent wage from the farm. Women's contribution continues to be exploited and under acknowledged.

Cummins (2005) suggests that farm women experience negative reactions if they do not assimilate to the cultural norm and learn the "cultural farm scripts":

They successfully adapt to agrarianism and the ideology of separate spheres in their preservation of home and family on the farm. By declining to do so they would be defined as deviant, cast aside, divorced, or perhaps even socially marginalized in

communities that support traditional belief systems and are organized around patriarchal structures. (p. 300)

However, Argent (1999) suggests as a note of caution that “the exploitative aspects of these relations can be overstated” (p.12). We cannot say that there is exploitation in every circumstance. This is not an instance where we want to assume that every farm wife is exploited. That would simply not be true.

There is some literature that includes farm women that is noteworthy. Pryor, Carruth, & LaCour (2005) found that men and women learn their roles and their safety culture as children, and found that children used personal protective equipment (PPE) if their mothers did. However, if the caregiver did not use PPE, then neither did the child. This is an argument for modeling behaviour, and demonstrates that children learn both positive safety practices as well as negative safety practices from their primary caregiver which invites the following questions: What happens when this caregiver is often absent while performing off-farm labour? Who is there to be that role model for safe farming practices? The women in this study expressed their concerns on this topic. If you are not present for educational purposes, in this case modeling appropriate safety behaviour, the learning does not take place.

Farm safety, health and women. As primary caregivers, mothers are also in a good position to judge children’s developmental levels regarding the chores they are able to do. As Leipart & George (2008) point out, “Rural women have unique experiences with respect to the determinants of health, including employment, gender, health services, and the social

environment” (p. 216). If the main caregiver is not around to make these judgements due to off farm labour, children could be at risk.

In two studies, women blamed accidents on long working hours and a shortage of labour (Lilley, Day, Koehncke, Dosman, Hagel, & Pickett, 2008, Bolwerk, 2002). They also felt that allowing children to work on machinery at a young age put their children at risk (Bolwerk, 2002, Marlenga et al., 2010). However, “Farm women seem to avoid talking from an analytic perspective, one that searches for causes of the problem” (Danes & McTavish, 1997, p. 84). The farm culture may have made them fearful of speaking out or perhaps they are unable to see outside the hegemony. However, the women in the focus groups of this study did not seem afraid.

Multiple Roles, Role Overload and Conflict

Roles. Danes & McTavish (1997) maintain that farm women are involved in four main roles: farm work, off-farm work, family/household, and community. In light of the increase in roles over the decades, Danes & McTavish (1997) suggest that “[t]hose communities may have to redefine what ‘farm wife’ means and their expectations of that role” (p. 86). As noted in the introduction, the term farm-woman is not well defined; it can vary significantly for each family, and is in itself, therefore, problematic. The role of farm woman is always attached to an additional role or even two or three to the detriment of the individual who tries to fill all roles adequately.

Off-Farm Work, Reasons and Exploitation. Brandth (2002) found that “when family farms are struggling to survive, it is the women who are most likely to look for off-farm income” (p. 64). This financial contribution is rarely a temporary fix, but a permanent solution: “The survival of most family farms would be immediately threatened if wives were to cease their support” (Ghorayshi, 1989, p. 586). Loyalty is their coping strategy (Brandth, 2002). As the farm income decreases, the off-farm work increasingly goes towards farm expenses (Heather et al., 2005). Farm women value their way of life so highly that they will do just about anything to make sure their families can keep it (Danes & McTavish, 1997). The farming lifestyle “amalgamates the historical, cultural and economic facets of family farming within one patrilineal ideology” (Price & Evans, 2006, p. 284). These interwoven aspects make this a very complicated way of life.

Women choose to work off the farm for a variety of reasons including the need to support the farm financially (Kelly & Shortall, 2002), but perhaps also to get away from the farm. Nurses who worked off the farm found that their nursing gave them a break from farm stress and isolation, as well as other adults to talk to (Heather, Skillen, Young, & Vladicka, 2005). Kelly and Shortall (2002) did not see evidence of individual motivation, although Heather et al. (2005) did find that individual motives were sometimes the reason. The main reason for off-farm work that Kelly and Shortall found was economic necessity, subsidizing the farm business. There was little indication that it was individually motivated or considered individual income. This maintains their status in relation to their husband’s occupation and mental well-being. McCoy and Filson (1996) and O’Hara (1997) found that the main reasons for seeking off-farm work

were more income, better standard of living, and survival of the family farm for both men and women. All three of these reasons point to economics.

Kelly and Shortall (2002) found that off-farm work often maintained family farms in Ireland. When women took off-farm work, they found themselves “struggling to maintain the family farm, as they [worked] off the farm often at highly demanding health care jobs while attempting to upkeep family and community relationships, and consequently feeling that they [came] last” (p. 86). Because the work in the home does not get redistributed when women work off the farm, the result is work overload: “Women work to save their husbands from failure and to preserve their way of life” (Heather et al., 2005, p. 91), and “in order to obtain much needed capital” (Ghorayshi, 1989, p. 586). Such economic necessities combined with the resultant work overload may create highly emotional, even potentially volatile, tensions in family relationships, particularly in light of the traditional patriarchal nuclear family comprised of the man as breadwinner, children and a woman who stays home to look after them all.

Participants in a 2005 Alberta study were keenly aware that they were being exploited, that expectations were too demanding, and that they were hurting physically and mentally (Heather et al., 2005). This study looked specifically at farm dwelling health care workers who have obtained post-secondary education prior to working in rural health care facilities. Participants stated that they knew or felt that “you come last” (Heather et al., 2005). It is interesting that this group seemed aware of their oppression yet unable or unwilling to effect a change demonstrating some powerful hegemonic discourses.

Men and women are affected by off-farm work in different ways. Women are more affected by off-farm work because they are still responsible for most of the child care and housework. This unpaid work which is usually performed by women is unrecognized because there is no monetary value attached to it and is, therefore, invisible (Waring, 1990). It is found that there is no significant re-division of household or childcare responsibilities (Kelly & Shortall, 2002; Bennett, 2004; Saugeres, 2002). Women working off the farm often perceive their quality of life as lower due to the increased work load and lack of leisure time (McCoy & Filson, 1996). This is a natural consequence of the higher number of work hours.

It is not only farm women, whose roles have increased from a decade or two earlier, who may be oppressed or exploited by patriarchal structures that are still prevalent (Bennett, 2004; Price & Evans, 2006). Many men likewise feel that their lives have been determined for them. Conditioned to be farmers from an early age, little boys absorb all the cultural norms associated with the role of farm and gender, and are expected to take over the farm, often regardless of aptitude or personal interest (Bennett, 2004; Saugeres, 2002).

Multiple Roles. Farm women's multiple roles give them insight into many aspects of farm and family, especially into their family's safety. In Alberta, Heather et al. (2005) found that rural women struggle for voice and recognition, yet their work remains almost invisible, especially for those who work off the farm in the health field. They seem unable to fight for themselves and have come to be "trapped in an endless and health-threatening cycle of working for others" (Heather et al., 2005, p.95). Danes (1998) asserts that "[s]ocial positions such as mother, wife, and farm woman involve a great deal of caring for others and managing others

often to the detriment of their own needs” (p. 420). These women have intimate knowledge of the family’s health and safety, yet they continue to struggle to be heard, when they should be the first point of contact in any study of agricultural health and safety.

Role overload and conflict. Role conflict is almost inevitable when an individual performs multiple roles. Research going back to the 1980s demonstrates that role conflict and overload leads to stress (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984), and juggling a multitude of responsibilities increases the risk for symptoms of depression (Carruth & Logan, 2002). The workloads of farm women are particularly complex and each individual woman’s circumstances are so different that they, as a group, have an unusually complicated homogeneity. Farm women either act strong because they have to be or are trying to be superwomen. Just because we can does not mean we should strive to achieve unrealistic ideals to the detriment of health.

It may be less to do with the desire to reach an unrealistic goal than it is to fill a desperate need for unpaid farm labour. Women cannot be replaced by outside wage earners (Ghorayshi, 1989), because unpaid family labour is necessary to the survival of the farm (Price, 2010). Even if they and their partners chose to replace them, it would not be economically feasible. Yet this kind of irreplaceable, flexible role is not given status or value. If we consider, for just a moment, the cost of babysitters, cooks, housekeepers, farm labourers, plus the added off-farm wages, exactly what is the monetary value of a farm-wife? Yet women and their work seem to become ever more invisible and marginal (Fink, 1991). Some families are only able to make a living on the farm because women do not expect to be paid for their work on the farm and in the home

(Price & Evans, 2009). This remains the case regardless of the necessity of their contributions to the farm and to the family. It is the value that a patriarchal society has placed on them.

Various conflicts arise that lead to stress and depression. Heather et al. (2005) found that most of the women in their study talked about work overload. Women are vulnerable to role overload and strain because the demands of multiple roles and because there is not enough time to perform each role properly (Danes & McTavish, 1997). The distance that women have to travel to their off-farm work increases the burdens of travel and potentially insecure income (Leipert & George, 2008). Travel means additional time taken out of very busy days, costs associated with transportation, as well as safety issues due to weather conditions. The vast geography of Saskatchewan dictates that commuting will be inevitable which reduces the value of the additional income and increases the time away from family and on farm and in house labour. Conflict involving safety also arises: “The ever-present threat of harm to self and family members is one of the burdens farm women face while balancing multiple roles and responsibilities” (Carruth & Logan, 2002). These escalating burdens faced by farm women inevitably lead to unsafe situations, stress and possibly depression. Therefore, they need to be addressed.

Patriarchy at its best dictates that a male heir will inherit the farm which “embodies history, emotions and beliefs that make revolt against such a ‘way of life’ highly unlikely” (Price, 2010). Conditioned to believe his identity is synonymous with farmer even when he would rather be doing something else (Saugeres, 2002), he is committed to what may be a life of long struggle shared with his wife and children. The farmer is a victim as well as the wife he

takes and the children they have. Patriarchy also exploits this male heir. Farmers have, therefore, been marginalized. They are victims themselves of a corporate capitalist society.

O'Hara's (1997) research intention was to consider the influence that farm women had within the patriarchal structure rather than focusing on them as unfortunate victims. Their off-farm work is a development that is more common than it has been in previous generations when the patriarchal structure dictated that women's only work outside the home was farm work. O'Hara (1997) also credits them with educating their children to ensure the best occupational future possible, and challenging the traditional role of farm wife by working off the farm in spite of the lack of recognition or reward for their triple role. It cannot be said that there have not been any changes within the patriarchal structure such as giving women the opportunity to work off the farm. These changes that were supposed to be an improvement have only further exploited of women's capabilities.

Women's actions can have powerful effects (Bennett, 2004) in the perpetuation of patriarchal structures. Often a mother-in-law (the farmer's mother) has worked her whole life to maintain the farm and its patriarchal structure, and she now wields the power to inadvertently oppress her son and daughter-in-law (Bennett, 2006). The oppressed therefore becomes the oppressor (Freire, 1970). Bennett (2004) found it troubling that women can affect patriarchal structures at the same time that they are out of their control.

Voiceless and Invisible – Identity

Women are voiceless and invisible. Women are the neglected voice of the farm family. The majority of the literature that focuses on farm safety focuses on men (Cummins, 2005; Pryor et al., 2005), yet men and women on the same farm have different perceptions (Thurston et al., 2003). Rural men's health and safety has been targeted whereas rural women's health has been largely ignored (Thorndyke, 2005, Rautiainen et al., 2007). Even less is known about women's injury prevention behaviors (Pryor et al., 2005, p. 10), partially because of research funding constraints within a patriarchy that considers men as the primary farm workers (Rautiainen et al., 2007). Perhaps the farm woman's voice could counteract this discrepancy and enlighten us in ways that could improve future interventions for farm health and safety for the farm family.

Voice and visibility. Farm women are hidden beneath the patriarchal structure that does not acknowledge their position in their communities. They are cloaked in a conservative tradition that has not kept up with a changing industry and are silenced by desperation. The farm woman is the quintessential example of a voiceless population:

The consciousness of women is not created solely by a male hegemonic ideology or language; it is grounded in actual material life. That material life includes obligations and duties which are not only different from those of men, but which male studies of social reality have left invisible. (Weiler, 1988, p. 61)

Although there may be a number of reasons or explanations for the phenomenon, the farm woman needs to lose her cloak of invisibility and become seen and heard.

The willingness to be invisible is related to several issues. Firstly, women's invisibility is related to the desire to support her husband and her family's status: "Since a woman's status is linked to her husband's she would tend to downplay her contribution to make him look prosperous" (Fink, 1991, p. 21). Secondly, a woman's work on the farm is performed out of sight making her literally invisible. It does not seem to exist if no one sees it. For an example of invisibility, we can look to the 2003 drought in Australia where women were "shouldering the responsibility of their family's welfare to the detriment of their own health and safety" (Alston, 2006, p. 155). Off-farm work was not an option but a necessity for these women, yet the drought was considered a men's issue. In the literature on this drought, women worked off the farm, their efforts were invisible and their voices not heard (Alston, 2006). The Heather et al. study (2005) also indicates that women in Alberta perceive that their efforts go unrecognized. The invisibility of women's work is all about how the family, community, and society value women's work.

Rural women's narratives provide a voice to this marginalized group (Singelmann, 1996). Farm families should be examined in the context of their own communities (Ames, 2006). It is time to listen and observe what happens in this neglected culture by giving them the opportunity to use their voices within the context of their lives.

Gender Issues

Different perspectives. Men and women have different perspectives (Thurston et al., 2003; Keating, 1987). Although men and women experience stress differently because the

sources of their stress are different, current interventions do not appear to accommodate these differences because they address primarily the stress that the male farmer experiences. In addition to differing perspectives, men and women have different voices. When women are interviewed separately, they indicate that their husbands consider themselves “infallible and invincible” and feel that their husbands underestimate the risks they take (Green, 1999). Thurston et al. (2003) identified an interesting challenge in that male farmers tended to worry more about the effects of farming on the health of their families than their own health and safety. Interventions may not adequately address this valid and important concern and certainly have not capitalized on this opportunity. That is to say, focusing interventions on activities in which a farmer can feel his family is safe, and activities that farm women can use to promote safety for the whole family.

Brandth (2002) found in their European research that women do not resist being underrepresented in a rural patriarchal culture. They do not pursue individual interests such as using day care without feeling guilty. They do not pursue self-interests, and their main strategy is loyalty to the family farming operation (Brandth, 2002). Contribution to the farming story elicits an “intense sense of pride” for many farm women (Price, 2010). Even when identifying with feminism could provide them with a voice, rural women resist identifying themselves as feminists. The conservative ideology that permeates agricultural culture may explain this behaviour.

Gender inequalities in family farming are documented beginning in the early 1980s (Fink, 1992). In spite of this documentation on and attention to the subject, farm women still do

not seem to identify with feminism (Brandth, 2001). Brandth (2001) also suggests that the rejection of feminism by farm women will not be understood until we hear their voices. She contends that because the roots of feminism are urban, there is no room for the unique contexts of the farming operation or the diversity of women. In Australia, for example, the farm women's movement briefly enjoyed some government attention, before experiencing a decline in government interest (Pini & Panelli, 2008). Governments change and farm women continue to be seen by society as traditional and conservative (Pini & Panelli, 2008) which may explain why they continue to live up to this expected role. If farm women were to have an empowered voice, then perhaps there could be a positive change.

Feminism does not seem to translate into the experience of farm women, either because it has not been articulated in a way that they are comfortable supporting (Grace & Lennie, 1998) or it seems irrelevant to them and does not fit the traditional and conservative roles they have been presented with. If it does not support them, dismissing it would be natural especially when it comes in a language that they do not understand. Someone needs to articulate it for them in a way that they can relate to and with principles they can use. There is a big risk involved in taking a chance on feminism which can be seen as individualistic in direct contradiction of the farming culture where everyone pitches in. The farm woman does not want to be viewed as selfish, concerned only with her immediate needs. If she could begin to see it as a collective movement that would benefit her entire family, then perhaps she could use it to her benefit. Rural women may also reject the label of feminist because it conjures up an image of victims (Grace & Lennie, 1998). It is a contradiction to place very strong, innovative women into the

category of victims. Perhaps if they could view their feminism as a sisterhood focused on doing the best for their families, farm women would embrace feminism. We will focus on hearing farm women's voices in their rural context.

Gender differences. Thurston et al.'s (2003) study on health concerns of male and female farmers found continuing challenges associated with gender differences and roles on the farm. Even in farming operations where a woman considered herself as having an equal role, her male partner still believed that he was the lead manager of the agriculture business. Others found themselves "[l]eaving the major decisions to their husbands"; they knew that they were "seen as an extra pair of hands" and even their own description of their work as "filling in in a pinch" indicates "their lesser value [as] given by their own words" (Cummins, 2005, p.293). This picture of them indicates the difficulty they have in defining their own role on the farm. Thurston et al. (2003) suggests that health promotion planners must be sure to notice the role of women as farmers. Farm women have different or additional stressors that need to be addressed.

Farm women's work varies more than their male counterparts' work does. Farm women have to juggle many more tasks (Heather et al., 2005) on a busy farm, including maintaining many schedules while at the same time tending to the needs of the family which leaves them with very little time for recreation and holidays from farm work (Cummins, 2005). Many farm women have developed scheduling skills that many an executive assistant would envy and are master multi-taskers.

Many farm women realize too late that they are trapped on the farm. It is quite common for their spouses not to view it that way, however; farm women are reluctant to move their

families off the farm. Their sense of realistic practicality leads to off-farm work which is rarely just temporary further trapping them in the cycle of supporting the farm and family. This had not been part of their dreams or the rural idyll.

Gender Identity. Off-farm work has both benefits and disadvantages. Oldrup (1999) suggests that women should not be portrayed as heroines because they do not see themselves that way and do not brag about their success in navigating multiple roles. Instead, “ in their accounts of their everyday life on the farm they talk of the many compromises, painful experiences and broken expectations that they experience as part of constructing identity in relation to their life on the farm” (Oldrup, 1999, p. 356). Those with off-farm work found “their sense of self and identity is enhanced by securing an income off-farm” (Cummins, 2005. P. 298). Because they are able to support the farm financially through their off-farm work, they are valued by their families (Cummins, 2005). Off-farm work provides their niche within the farming operation since they add capital and take the pressure off the expectation that the farm will support the family.

In her extensive literature review, Brandth (2002) found that women in farming have been reported to have severe difficulties in describing their roles and identifying their occupation, often unable to describe their farm work as an occupation at all. In Denmark, farm women who share their stories and discuss their home situation with coworkers at off-farm jobs are seen as oppressed and are expected by co-workers to leave the farm or demand changes (Oldrup, 1999). The urban women they encounter in communities or larger towns they commute

to may have been influenced by feminism, or perhaps lack the understanding of the conservatism within the farming culture.

Oldrup (1999) looks at the identity of the farm women and notes that a new identity is replacing “the traditional farm woman’s identity” (p. 344). In her study, Oldrup (1999) found that although women find little if any pleasure in it, they are responsible for the majority of the house work and expressed a dislike for the daily responsibility of cooking. The benefits of working off the farm and the identity obtained are still counteracted by their voicelessness in the farming operation and their continued duties at home.

Summary

Agricultural health and safety is a multi-faceted issue riddled with complexities and challenges. Although some research looks at farm women, their roles and identities, there are limited studies regarding their perspectives on farm health and safety. It is this gap that this study will address. What they have to contribute may bring us that much closer to successful interventions and instigate further research considering farm injuries. However, an additional complication to this endeavour is the enduring patriarchal society that permeates the decisions they make.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter defines the appropriateness of feminist methodology and qualitative research for examining the perspectives of farm women on health and safety, and of focus groups to explore the experiences of farm women. This chapter also identifies ethical considerations, including the reliability and validity of the chosen methodologies. The reflexivity built into these methods, through the intense involvement of the researcher, adds legitimacy to the findings.

Social Science

Levenstein (1996) suggested that more social scientists should be included when investigating interventions within a society. Interventions of poor design, he claimed, may actually slow down progress towards health and safety. His argument supports the notion that valid interventions should be designed at the grass roots with social scientists to ensure they are appropriate. Policy and practice are influenced by the success of interventions. Therefore, it is imperative that researchers include social scientists when they evaluate the success of the interventions including the choice of targeted audience. Likewise, Needleman and Needleman (1996) believe that “intervention research requires a qualitative understanding of the social meanings and social relationships that make up the study environment, in order to clarify

possible explanations for the quantitative findings and to suggest new interpretations and lines of inquiry (p. 329). Qualitative methods may assist social scientists to uncover findings overlooked by quantitative methods.

Qualitative Methods

Both Ames and Pini found qualitative research extremely important while focusing on women's work and their family experiences in the rural context (Ames, Brosi & Damiano-Teixeira, 2006; Pini, 2002). Qualitative research is "the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p. 545). I believe that such a group setting with open ended questions encouraged the women involved in this study to work through this process of identifying perspectives, illuminating their thoughts and feelings about their experiences and supporting each other in describing their experiences. I chose focus groups rather than individual interviews because I felt that as potential emerging feminists, they needed the support of a budding rural feminist sisterhood. This setting provided a good fit to develop an understanding of the perspectives of farm women.

I focused on the experiences of the women within the context of their culture, including farm family and community issues. That is to say, I created the opportunity to focus on their perspectives in their natural setting, considered their perspectives and understanding during this process and worked with the data to form a theory about farm women's perspectives on safety. They had a voice and became visible in the focus groups. Their expressed perspectives will be

made visible in chapter four which gives an opportunity for their voices to be heard at a higher level. These perspectives will generate issues for future research.

Feminist Research

Feminist theory is characterized by an appreciation of women's subjective experience, recognizing their experience as significant, and focusing on political commitment. Feminist theory and practice carry out strategies including women in the research process instead of performing research on women: "women must create a new language based on women's actual lived experiences" (Weiler, 1988, p. 61). As a researcher I want to be part of establishing what Oldrup (1999) referred to as a new language to accommodate the farm woman's unique lived experience and contribute to their new identity formation, bringing them beyond the experience of the original farm women who shaped this province. The language must be developed before it can be spoken.

I believe that we should work towards redefining feminism for rural women. Like Pini (2003) who rejected the notion that there was only one correct feminist methodology, I believe that there is not just one correct way to identify with feminism. Feminism must accommodate the uniqueness of the individual and her experiences. I believe that what farm women share is the uniqueness that makes it difficult for them to identify with a feminist group. Not only do they have unique combinations of multiple roles, but their family life and work life is intertwined with their husband's occupation and identity. These women may already possess some elements of feminism in their own way, although I have treated them for the purpose of this study as

emerging feminists who need to be heard to gain empowerment and exercise it in ways that will keep them and their families healthy and safe. Collectively, with farm women and through this study, we worked towards a definition that farm women could identify with and that would accommodate their unique situation. This began with identifying them as farm women rather than farm wives or extensions of their husbands. Focus groups are a contextual method of research that focuses on the individual within her social context and allows the participants a voice that is necessary to gain a balance of power (Wilkinson, 1999). Focus groups allow participants to gain the balance of power within the context of the individual's social setting which is, in this case, with other women. Although it is possible for focus groups to silence individuals, that was not the case in this study. Each woman had ample opportunity to speak, and did so.

My feminist research focused on making farm women's perspectives visible. Brandth (2002) pointed out that the label of "feminist" in connection with issues of identity is a problem for rural women and that feminist theory does not provide a readily transferable theory to the farming sector. Brandth (2002) believed that the label was a problem in part because of the romanticized view of rural life that has subordinated women. She also suggests that academic feminism has confirmed farm women's impression that feminism is not for them. Brandth (2002) also advocates for the importance of local context. The context of agriculture is different because it is necessary for husband and wife to cooperate for the survival of the farm. Focusing on their perspectives, I believe, is a start to building a character of farm feminism, and may contribute to dispelling the false consciousness that has led farm women, in general, to reject the

notion that any injustice exists (Jost, 1995). This is caused by hegemonic discourses such as farm wives stereotyped as being loyal. Jost (1995) defined false consciousness as “the holding of false or inaccurate beliefs that are contrary to one’s own social interest and which thereby contribute to the maintenance of the disadvantaged position of the self or the group” (p. 400). Exposure of false consciousness opens up opportunity for farm women to develop their own brand of feminism, thus granting them a forum in which to begin to identify existing injustices and articulate their own voices.

Brandth (2002) found that many oppressed farm women do not perceive themselves as oppressed. They have been socialized into a patriarchal society through birth or marriage. In addition, Danes (1995) found that many farm women value the lifestyle and the farm so much that they would do just about anything to maintain it (Danes, 1995). Farm women’s dedication and contribution to their family farms have saved many family farms from being lost (Danes, 2003). Their very dedication is problematic because they do not identify themselves as oppressed. If they do not recognize this oppression, they do not have the ability to take action against it (Jost, 1995, p. 300). It is no doubt difficult to identify with the oppressed when one is strong, innovative and family oriented and when one has grown up to believe in this way of life. Farm women have made up false conceptions of themselves in an effort to realize the agrarian myth. Consider the pressure on the shoulders of someone who feels an obligation to obtain mythological status. When your life’s dreams and goals depend on you, feeling oppressed is not an option and, worse yet, may signify defeat. However, if a language is developed that accommodates the discrepancies between the farm woman and the current language of feminism,

accounting for the strengths and accomplishments that accompany the farm woman's experience, one may be able to communicate in a meaningful way.

Oldrup (1999) suggested that women should be seen "as active and knowledgeable actors giving shape to their lives" (p. 356). Women schedule their work, farm, family, and personal lives in a manner that makes the most sense to them and is the most advantageous to their families. Working off the farm is done to increase capital and to purchase the necessities for their families. Each situation is unique and each woman chooses different means of work. As well there are varying numbers of hours worked from only a few hours a week to full time hours. (Oldrup, 1999). The number of hours that constitute an off-farm job differ considerably, as total workloads are individually chosen and combined. Just as each farming operation is unique, each farm woman has her own combination of variables and value that she adds to the family and farming operation.

Pini (2003), experienced in feminist methodology and rural research, wanted to give value to women's experiences even though many of them did not place a very high value on their own experiences. Pini found that potential participants were willing to assist with the project but were self-effacing and often suggested that there would be more appropriate people to research. As Pini explained what she wanted to study, they could not believe that they would have any knowledge of value for a research project (Pini, 2003). Similarly, Hastings (2010) found in her study of voiceless pre-service cooperating teachers that there was "surprise that anybody would 'bother' to listen to their story and many expressed an appreciation that [she] wanted to hear their stories and tell their stories" (p. 313). These examples demonstrate that a voiceless population's

oppression may continue unchallenged. The entrenchment of many farm women's lack of power or refusal to demand any power because of their belief in the rural idyll is not so mysterious. To them it is everyday life and the conservative or traditional norm for them with all of its complexities is commonplace. Participants need to comprehend the distinct value of their voices and understand that their experiences are valuable to the future of safe farms.

Use of feminist theory while working with farm women may be detrimental as Pini (2003) attested that the feminist focus in rural society will continue to be limited if feminist writers do not pay more attention to methodology. Feminist methods have generally focused on urban context. Adapting these methodologies to rural situations should be considered. Pini (2003) also rejects specific definitions and suggests working within general themes, and rejecting any attempt to define one correct feminist methodology. This makes sense since farm women have an aversion to internalizing or identifying with feminism. I will use the following four key areas that Pini (2003) outlined as a guide: focus on gender, value women's experience and knowledge, reject the separation between subject and object, and emphasize on consciousness raising and political change. I experienced these principles as interwoven. Although previous research has found that farm women do not tend to identify with feminism, I believe that these key areas complement the themes in this research and will ultimately reveal insight into their lives.

It is important to take up Pini's (2003) challenge, so I continued to ask the following questions: Is my work making some aspect of women's lives visible? Have I acknowledged my own position within the research?

Conscientization

Conscientization refers to developing consciousness that is understood to be able to transform reality (Freire, 1970). The first step is to become aware of the oppression. The next step builds on the first by a liberating cultural action that is a continuing process until they are no longer oppressed. Freire's "struggle for humanization" is embodied by the devalued and dehumanized male farmer's struggle in a society that insists on inexpensive food to feed the population and to export. In turn, the male farmer oppresses the farm woman by his reliance on her to perform unpaid labour and seek off-farm work. Since women have been excluded from farm literature and research, the male farmers remain dominant because they are the visible population (Shortal, 1992). This culture of silence (Freire, 1970) is a problem for the farming community especially the women.

Farm women may not see themselves as oppressed, and seem to act in agreement with Freire by taking on "the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (Freire, 2001, p. 172) by seeking off farm work to liberate their families from an oppressive society. This well-intended action may oppress their husbands further by enabling them to farm, therefore giving them a false sense of farming as a viable occupation when it is neither economically feasible nor physically safe. They are also, in a sense, joining the greater oppressors in society, by keeping their husbands farming and consequently devaluing them both. As co-dependent oppressors, male and female farmers have to work towards freeing each other from the expectations of society to stop the vicious cycle that results in role overload with negative health and safety effects for both men and women.

Freire's (1970) notion of conscientization promotes individual change, quality of life in the community, and policy change that is directed at attaining social equity, and ultimately transforming the reality of the oppressed. Quality of life cannot be improved for farm families until there is true awareness. All voices must be heard before society can be truly aware and change its limited perceptions of farm life that has been its reality to date.

Freire's (1970) concern with "values which are lived rather than myths which are imposed" (p. 44) exposes the imposed agrarian myth: "Critical consciousness is brought about not through an intellectual effort alone, but through praxis – through the authentic union of action and reflection. Such reflective action cannot be denied to the people" (Freire, 1970, p.44). It is not just the farm family that is prone to believing in the agrarian myth but the society that imposes its low value on the farm's produce, making the opportunity to live the rural idyll in the agrarian myth the only payment for feeding the rest of society. These men and women need to take action and free themselves from the greater oppressors in society.

This study focused on the perspectives of farm women, which have been largely ignored. Giving farm women a voice through focus groups provided an opportunity for consciousness raising: "as the method is appropriate for use with underrepresented and severely disadvantaged social groups; as a tool for action research; and as a form of 'consciousness raising'" (Litosellite, 2003, p73). Shortall (1992) found that some groups of farm women are becoming increasingly aware of their exploited position. As this first step, awareness of their exploitation, increases, the language will emerge through consciousness raising. Perhaps it will only be a short time before farm women reject this exploitation, further develop their own brand of feminism, and free their

families from society's oppression of farm families as a result of corporate capitalism. How this cultural action will be realized may take some time and have surprising results. Women may decide they do not want the responsibility of farm safety. They may decide it is no longer in their family's best interest to farm at all. This will end the culture of silence and change the face of agriculture that is becoming increasingly swallowed up by large corporations.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are an established, effective means to explore farm women's perspectives. Focus groups are designed to include a carefully planned series of discussions geared toward obtaining perceptions on a specified area of interest in a comfortable non-threatening environment (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Morgan (1996) stated that "focus groups are most useful when they produce new results that would not be possible with the standard methods in a particular field" (p. 136). I chose this method because I was looking for new results to guide future research and interventions. The purpose of a focus group is to collect qualitative data from a focused discussion with the goal of understanding the topic of interest (Krueger & Casey, 2000). In this situation, the topic of interest is the unheard perspectives of farm women regarding farm health and safety.

The data were gathered by encouraging participants to describe their experiences. Each person gave her brief story before the discussion was opened up to ensure that all had an opportunity to tell their story. Three focus groups lasted between 90-120 minutes each and included four to five participants. The results were examined for "saturation" after three sessions

(Krueger & Casey, 2000). Saturation occurs when the ideas that participants are providing in different focus groups are similar, and they are no longer supplying researchers with any new ideas (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Three or four focus groups are the recommended number to attain saturation (Krueger & Casey, 2000). I felt that saturation had been reached after the three focus groups were completed, since the separate groups demonstrated similar comments regarding their experiences.

Participants. Three relatively homogenous focus groups were conducted for this study and participants were made aware of the homogeneity of the focus group. They were located in three separate rural communities in Saskatchewan. The criteria for participants were simple yet specific. The women were employed off the farm at least 15 hours per week, and had dependent children (or had experienced having dependent children while working off the farm). They were also partnered with a farmer and were between the ages of 25-50. These criteria were specified at recruitment to ensure the homogeneity of the group as well as assist in getting to the heart of this research project. The information obtained from these focus groups was analyzed across the groups for patterns and similarities. Data were recorded digitally and I transcribed it myself later.

Recruitment. Recruitment took place by contacting a community member and having them recruit eight participants that met the criteria. One contact was a veterinarian in the community, one was a health care professional, and one worked at a local rural municipal office. I had met each of these women previously. It may be advantageous to have participants

recruited by a local resident who is a trusted member of the community (Krueger & Casey, 2000). There were refreshments and a nutrition break after each meeting.

Ethical considerations. Women invited to attend were between the ages of 25 and 50. I collected consent forms after discussing the document with them. The researcher is responsible for “monitoring and renegotiating consent” (Haverkamp, 2005, p. 154). They were made aware of the advantages and disadvantages that might arise in being part of this project. The advantage is the opportunity to tell their stories and discuss their experiences with others. They also knew that they could leave at any time. The disadvantages are related to the small chance that they could be identified in the final document.

This risk of inferred identification needs to be addressed because it is possible to identify a participant even if no names are given (Anastas, 2004, p. 60). Moreover, the subjects may react negatively if they recognize themselves and may reject the interpretations of the researcher in the final document (Haverkamp, 2005, p. 154). I made sure that they were aware that they could withdraw at any time. None of the participants expressed any concern before, during or after the focus group meeting. They were provided with my contact information in case they had any concerns later.

Gathering Data. Data gathering was ongoing throughout the project. Discussions were audio recorded and transcribed by me. It evolved as the project continued; therefore, it is important that the group meeting transcription was done along the way and not left for the end. There was a need for intermittent reflexive journaling. After each period of transcription, I went through the transcript to code and found themes. I did this manually.

There was a large amount of data as there were over 100 pages of categorized comments that had to be strictly organized. Properly managed data contributes to high ethical standards and rigor. Data storage will be arranged at the University of Saskatchewan, and the data will be destroyed after five years.

The Process

Four focus groups were planned and two were cancelled. I felt there had been three successful sessions. These three focus groups were small. At first, the low attendance numbers concerned me, but after the first group, it became apparent that if I were to allow these women to relax and tell their stories, each individual needed a significant amount of speaking time. Larger groups would not have had enough speaking time for individuals, and smaller groups made for an intimate forum.

All three focus groups produced good conversational data on the topics and remained focused. The women displayed a passionate attitude towards farm life. They were relaxed and considerate of each other. One group included friends and neighbors, one group coworkers, and one group neighbors. They were purposefully invited by each host, and each host is a friend or acquaintance of the researcher. These women's off-farm work was varied: receptionist, agricultural worker, nurse, veterinarian, lab technician, bank teller, medical transcriber, house cleaner, and an adult educator. Some had held several types of employment throughout their married lives. They all commuted. In one group, all the women had found employment in the

local community, and so their commutes were short, however, all women had to travel off the farm to work.

Once the focus group interviews were completed, I transcribed them. Once data were transcribed and printed, they became the yellow, orange, and green groups (paper colours). Transcribing is very time consuming, but it is useful to listen to the transcripts while typing the text. Although it took a long time, it was worth it for a beginning researcher to really feel the text and re-experience the sessions by listening to the recordings and to catch nuances that were forgotten after the meetings and not characterized in the text.

The transcripts were then read through as a whole to pick out the various themes and categories that emerged from the text, and a spider diagram was developed which underwent metamorphosis several times throughout this process (please see appendix). Out of the spider diagram development four major themes emerged: Cultural Expectations; Off-Farm Work and Multiple Roles; Stress, Worry and Sleep; and Injury Prevention Strategies (Coping). All other categories fell within these four themes although they overlapped significantly. The overlap in some ways made it all come together easily, but in other ways made it very complicated.

Transcript lines were numbered, and two copies were printed of each group's transcript on a different colour of paper. One set was kept intact, and one set was cut up for analysis. Each step that physically changed the transcripts in some way had one copy left intact without written comments in case there was a reason to go back and to provide a paper trail. One set was cut up and sorted in themes and categories on large sheets of bristle board. This was too large to work with, so eventually strips were glued on regular computer paper lengthwise to leave lots of space

for notes. Once these were glued into their sections, they were photo copied leaving the originals untouched. The copies were studied and notes made in the margins. These notes were the basis for chapter four.

The challenge became that so many of the pieces of data overlapped and could be put into a variety of the themes and categories. So many of the pieces of data overlapped and could be put into several of the themes and categories that the interconnectedness of the issues became obvious. The more I worked with the data, the more these interwoven connections made sense to me, and the clearer my picture became of how this information could be shaped. It was a complicated process that required much reflection.

At this point, I listened to the original recordings again to see if I had missed anything by having taken it out of context. The transcripts alone do not reflect the entire character of the sessions. For example, the ease of interaction between participants is not reflected in words, nor is the congenial laughter, agreement, or tone.

The people in these groups were all comfortable with each other, and individuals used humour to lament the ludicrous situations they found themselves in. Although I was the moderator, I felt that I could share their humour as an insider, understanding the culture and having experienced similar situations. The environment was supportive with a spirit of commonality. The positive high energy that farm women possess could have been felt by anyone entering the room.

These women were all energetic and dynamic story tellers, using humour to lighten their stress. They were deeply passionate about their family's health and safety. There was frequent

laughter throughout the sessions and often unanimous agreement concerning many situations or topics. There were also moments of extreme concern when they questioned their choices and situations. There was also a common sense of frustration when sensitive topics came up, and occasionally it was impossible to transcribe sections because everyone wanted to talk at once, or were laughing over top of the dialogue. Farm women are indeed full of energy and are passionate about their jobs, families, and farms.

It is important to capture the mood and tone of these focus groups. Emotions came through as all of these women shared tough aspects of their lives, each with her group. Their insecurities about how they raised their children and how they could be good employees, demonstrated how hard they really work to do an amazing job in all areas of their lives especially where it affects other people.

I purposefully did not reread my literature review as I was analyzing the data. I wanted to avoid finding only what I was looking for based on what the literature had told me. I feel this was helpful, especially since there had been a long interlude between defending my proposal and collecting and analyzing data. I believe this gave me a fresher perspective. However, I was not under an illusion that I could completely block out my experiences and what I had already read. It took a great deal to reconcile my experiences with what the data was telling me. Once I finally had a draft of Chapter Four, I went back to my literature review.

Analysis

When looking at transcripts, I highlighted statements, sentences and quotes in order to develop themes. I wrote a description of what the participants experienced. Although Richards and Morse (2007) explained that this process is iterative rather than linear, I used my personal experience as a starting point and wrote and rewrote with much reflection until the lived experience was expressed.

Rigor: Reliability and validity. To increase the legitimacy of the findings, I compared them to the literature. As the design emerged, I reviewed additional literature. I discuss this in the final chapters. I demonstrated my positioning through consistent reflection. Although it is impossible to completely bracket out my personal experiences, values, and notions about the phenomenon I am investigating, I tried to be thoughtful and self-aware, using a reflexive journal. I had begun writing this journal and practicing reflexivity while writing this proposal in an effort to make it a natural part of the process during research and analysis.

Reflexivity. Watt (2007) promoted writing and reflection as an essential tool to develop the connections between theory and practice that keep project momentum going. I kept notes and took stock of my biases, feelings, and thoughts. Once the writing began, it was a very circular process that included much writing and rewriting. My writings also served as a place to record what I know and how the research comes together to form that knowledge. It will possibly be the place where the appropriate group for farm women's feminism begins.

Reflexivity can enhance the position of the data and could offer more validity to the project. Pini (2004) argued that "reflexivity has the potential to enhance rural research because it

makes transparent the context in which knowledge is produced and thus opens it up to scrutiny and interrogation” (p. 169). She also cautioned researchers to be aware that there are limits to reflexivity as it cannot be fully representable, but it is a journey worth taking: “It can assist us in producing better quality data, in critiquing and analyzing our relationship with the field and research participants and in revealing questions of power and ethics in the research process” (Pini, 2004, p. 177). The journey through this process included the challenge of practicing reflexivity within my writing.

Naples and Sachs (2000) advocated for the process of self-reflection used with ethnographic investigation as well as listening to marginalized women and not just the key informants who are in influential positions. My experiences relate closely to those of my participants. Naples and Sachs (2000) also discussed the advantages of being an “insider” or an “outsider” in the community. Insiders know the language and can fit into the social setting without affecting it too much. The disadvantage is that I may not have the objectivity of the outsider (Naples & Sachs, 2000). I felt that I qualified as an insider because I have had many experiences similar to those that these women have had, yet I worked at maintaining some objectivity even though it is impossible to accomplish that completely. Jenkins (1995) also cautioned that the same “native competence” that gives the researcher a natural entry in the field must be protected because it will continue after the field research is complete. Therefore, self-awareness is pertinent and must include epistemological reflexivity so that the “native competence” does not become a barrier (p. 19). It was important that I did not lose sight of the purpose of this study, and take my “native competence” or insider status for granted.

I knew where I entered this research: “An embodied standpoint perspective emphasizes how researchers’ social positions, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, and residence, influence what questions we ask, who we approach in the field, how we make sense of our fieldwork experience, and how we analyze and report our findings” (Naples & Sachs, 2000, p. 209). Similar to standpoint perspective is Hsiung’s (2008) Conceptual Baggage Inventory for students and researchers to learn reflexivity which also focuses on the awareness of researcher position. It is clear that regardless of what it is called, the researcher’s positions must be addressed using reflexivity. I cannot emphasize enough how important I feel this aspect of qualitative research is.

Russel and Kelley (2002) encouraged researchers to hold their judgement and be open to the data to talk with them rather than drawing their passionate conclusions. It may be easy to look for a perspective and then simply find what one is looking for. Allowing the data to speak will result in more interesting findings. I found it extremely interesting listening to the women in these groups and having the opportunity to work with the transcripts to hear the themes emerge and to address the categories. Richards and Morse (2007) noted “the value of the process of writing and rewriting cannot be overestimated. Insight is developed through reflection” (p. 171). Similarly, Clark & Sharf (2007), emphasize the researcher’s role: “In engaging in this complex, rigorous process of inquiry, it is essential that we recognize that qualitative research is a deeply personal enterprise” (Clark & Sharf, 2007, p. 399). It would be counterproductive and perhaps damaging to the entire qualitative process to try to deny or omit the personal aspect of qualitative

research. Instead, it must be embraced, and celebrated. A passion for a project will drive it forward, but when it is driven by a deeply personal focus, it can only flourish.

Rigor. I tried to avoid the perils of finding only what I was looking for or suffering from a selective perception by using verification strategies. My preconceived notions may be false and should be submitted to “the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain” (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002, p. 9). Verification will also be found in the trail of evidence. Rigor is ensured if verification strategies are used frequently throughout the process: “It is essential that the investigator remain open, use sensitivity, creativity, and insight, and be willing to relinquish any ideas that are poorly supported regardless of the excitement and the potential that they first appear to provide” (Morse et al., 2002, p. 11). Rigor ensures that the outcomes of this research are true to the farm women’s experiences and not based on discovering what I thought I was going to find. During my process, I went through the data in several different ways, reviewing it manually, making notes, checking the literature and going through this process again.

In this chapter I have outlined the research design. I conducted this qualitative research using feminist methodology via the use of focus groups to collect data. Data analysis was performed with the transcripts generated from audio recordings of three focus groups sessions. The findings of this work are found in the next chapters.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

This study provided farm women with an opportunity to have their voices heard, to explore their experiences regarding the effects of their off-farm work on the health and safety of their families, and to share their injury prevention strategies. Themes emerged from these focus group discussions which took place within the local context. The goal was to give farm women a voice and make their perspectives visible. These themes developed as the data were analyzed, notes were written, followed by reading, rewriting and reflection.

The process of listening to the focus groups and working through the data made me consider what good it might do these women to speak if they remained invisible in the community at large. It is a possibility that voice and visibility must be present before they could accept feminism with its goals of equality. Perhaps it was not about language so much as about the need to be free from the traditional boundaries in which patriarchy had held them prisoners. It was patriarchy that had encouraged them to seek off-farm opportunities, but only because their earnings were required to maintain the traditional farm. Thus, what looked like freedom to make a positive contribution and perhaps even a feminist move turned out to be yet another chain, forged by their own misplaced loyalty to a tradition that has long since ceased to be an ideal way of life.

Perhaps further discussion on this supposed ideal way of life could lead to the women's acceptance of feminism as a positive element for their families. Now that they have shared their perspective in one context, the next step to acceptance of feminism is to hold more discussions. It is imperative to get these women communicating with each other and others whether in person or by electronic means.

This chapter will explore the themes that emerged from the data that came out of the focus group transcripts. There are four general themes labeled cultural Expectations, Multiple Roles, Stress, and Injury Prevention Strategies. Under each theme are sub-themes that were used to help organize the data. These themes and sub-themes proved to be interrelated and a challenge to keep organized.

A noteworthy observation is that the women who participated were very open. They were open to each other's ideas, as well as new ideas, safety strategies and to the potential of more discussion. I believe they would be open to further opportunities to discuss feminism and to consider embracing its principles because of the beginning of their consciousness raising. They appeared open to an emerging rural feminism.

Cultural Expectations

Cultural expectations may vary from community to community and from family to family, but the farm women in this study felt that the expectations of family and community defined their position on the farm. This section will look at how they often feel undervalued when highly productive. It will address the difference between his expectations and her

expectations of what farm life would be like. Perspectives on risk taking and the contributions of children on the farm will be discussed. Lastly will be a look at what may be considered luxury living.

Modern farm women find themselves trying to fill multiple roles and live up to the expectations that traditional farm women without off-farm work have set as a precedent. With a heavy volume of work and child care considerations, these modern farm women attempt to perform their off-farm work with as little disruption to their families as possible. Not surprisingly, the multiple roles lead to stress, worry, and health and safety issues over time. As a result, they develop amazing injury prevention strategies and in spite of the challenges are doing a pretty good job of keeping their families safe. Nonetheless, it is to the detriment of a farm woman's health and safety if she is always looking after everyone else, yet no one takes care of her safety. It is important to note, however, that these farm women never expected to be taken care of. They are strong and innovative, and they think they can do it all, until they cannot. The following story captures the common plight of the farm woman:

I'll never forget the first week that we moved here. Oh my god, I was expected because I came into a houseful where mom had stayed home and had been a home maker all her life. You know you took coffee to the field in the morning, you had lunch, you took coffee in the afternoon, you had supper at exactly 6:00 and you took coffee out again at night. So try that schedule when you are working full time and you have three kids. And it was harvest time when we moved out here. Honest to God I had a half ton full of corn that year. That was how big my garden was. I

canned 120 quarts of dills, and I started working full time doing all of that. And I will never forget that first week of being on the farm and going back to work and we had pigs at the time and three boys and they had school clothes and they had farm clothes. I had 12 loads of wash downstairs and I was so exhausted because it was time to be the farm wife that they knew, to be a mom working away from home and looking after everybody. I went downstairs and absolutely bawled my eyes out because I thought what the hell have I gotten myself into? And who do I think that I am that I can do all of this? (12:102-113).

This story was followed by a moment of silence with head-nodding and murmurs of agreement and support. Each farm woman present could tell a similar story of when she was placed in a set of unreasonable expectations she was not prepared for, and should not have been expected to meet.

Cultural expectations are the beginning of stressors through multiple roles and off-farm work, ultimately affecting their stress levels and therefore their injury prevention strategies and coping skills. For important injury prevention activities, one cannot afford to be under extreme stress and over- worked. Cultural expectations have not yet caught up to the current times to accommodate the modern farm woman. The expectations of the previous generation of farm women who did not work off the farm are still imposed on women who do work off the farm. We have come a long way since the 1930s depression when everyone struggled to survive. Women are no longer dependent on selling eggs, butter, poultry and cream to make a little bit of extra money to sustain their families and the farm. What has not changed is their hard work and

struggle to keep the farm and their families afloat. Now we are seeing off-farm labour as the norm and a resultant feeling that they are missing out on the “luxury” of their foremothers who were able to work only in the home and on the farm. These women plan carefully in order to keep their off-farm work and absence from being a burden on the farm, and willingly use their incomes to support family and farm. Yet sometimes their absence is resented even while their income is welcomed into the farming operation and household. For example, one woman felt that when she was working off the farm, she was questioned about why she was not there to help with farm activities.

Undervalued. Farm women speak of feeling undervalued and include phrases such as these: we don’t count, feeling like the biggest loser, wanting to please, trouble receiving EI, and not being worthy. Farm women feel that they are undervalued in spite of the value they add to the farming operation. These comments suggest that there is discontent. This could be the place where a rural theory of feminism could take root and start to grow. Society does not hear them and neither do their families. They do not feel they have a voice so that their perspectives can be heard in this regard:

A: I would like to see more of these things, Bonita. You know if there is some grant or something that can be applied for. I personally have never sat in on a women’s focus group like this before. Have you girls?

B: No

C: No

D: No

A: It's like we don't count. I don't think there's been other focus groups and I think that women have a huge impact on farm safety on their own farms. (8:677-684)

It is interesting that they realized that they had not heard of a meeting like this before, and were excited about this potential opportunity. Perhaps this indicates the beginning of consciousness raising. This is a significant understanding in the potential and awareness of the importance of their voices.

Ironically, while being undervalued and unappreciated for what they do, they are still highly productive. Their quality of farm and household work is judged by an unreasonable standard considering the workload they are often presented with:

If you didn't have supper on the table by 6:00 you were the biggest loser in the community. (12:114-115)

This is, of course, after working a long day, on, or off the farm and juggling numerous interruptions and anomalies that make a specific eating time a problem. It was suggested that one way that value can be attached to the wife's work is through income splitting of the farm income:

I think there is room for a farmer and his wife to split the farm income. In the old days that would never happen. The husband claimed all the farm income. (56:622-623)

Traditionally the farming husband has claimed the majority of the farm income even in cases where, for income tax purposes, it would make more sense to split it. This demonstrates the lengths that patriarchy will go to preserve itself. Paying a price for a service adds value.

However, this is still not about who gets to spend the money, but about recognition.

Nonetheless, farm women look for validation at a monetary level:

One thing that I wish is that there would be some kind of pension or something for farm women in the end because when you are working on the farm and raising children. That's more than a full time job. It's not like two separate incomes. Sometimes farm women feel that they're not worthy that they aren't actually having another paying job but if you knew you were getting some kind of pension in the end I think that would be a good thing. (59:606-610)

This woman is definitely onto something. Splitting the income would result in two very small incomes, which would bring attention to unfairness of claiming it all as farm income. But this is how patriarchy perpetuates the illusion that "the man" has a decent income. Income splitting is an example of what could be done to demonstrate value in the farm wife's role.

Farm women also want to please, which is problematic when they should be standing up for themselves. Although they know that they have to stand up for themselves because no one else is going to, it is easier said than done:

A: And just put your foot down if you have to, just say it if it's not safe or say I don't know what to do here, it's your safety too.

B: That's easier said than done.

C: Yes, very much easier said than done, yeah.

B: With family, um hmmm.

A: Because you want to please too.

C: Yeah you do.

A: You know, yeah I'm going to combine or you want to be part of the farm community or the little farm group that you wanna do your part. (58:377-385)

It begins when they are young and sometimes still newlyweds. Entering a new family, they are alone in their opinions when introduced to a new environment where patriarchy reigns with the premise that things have always been done this way, so therefore they must stay the same regardless of the safety hazard to each member of the family. They know they have to stand up for themselves, their children and sometimes even their husbands, but they also know how difficult this is when dealing with family and in-laws:

You have to stand up for yourself and say I am not going to be the super woman (murmurs of agreement). (62:394-395)

A common theme was that these farm women did too much. There were many examples of their unreasonably heavy workloads. Any given day in the life of a farm woman demonstrates this phenomenon. They are not alone, because many of their husbands typically also work off the farm. A consideration that never came up was how hard on a marriage this must be.

Her expectations/his expectations. Prior to moving to the farm, the women's expectations differed considerably from the reality they faced. Even those who had grown up on farms had done so in a time where their mothers did not have to work off the farm. The rural idyll had been ingrained in them either by their own families' experiences with a stay-at-home farm wife as a mother or by a romanticized urban perspective of what country life should be.

The following are three examples of what farm women expected prior to living and experiencing the farm and how reality unfolded.

I had envisioned like a lot of city people do that it's great out there, you don't have to do anything and I have a lot of relatives that the women never ever had to work off the farm and they didn't have to help drive the machinery, they just basically made lunches and looked after the kids and tended the yard but that's the role that I would have liked but then I made the mistake of wanting to learn how to drive all these things (laughter). Now it's a full time job because you are out in the field from early morning till late at night and if you have hired men you have to be juggling and packing lunches all the time. And you've got a garden, you've got to do that stuff picking stuff in the morning and probably canning in the evening. . . This wasn't what I thought it was going to be, but it's okay. (13:63-67)

The more you "learn" to do, the more is expected of you. They use this efficiency as evidence that they are not victims. When we consider a victim, we seldom envision someone capable of multiple roles. Besides, they must consider their choices. They are seldom ready to leave the farm, and possibly their children:

I grew up on a farm too and my parents worked strictly on the farm at the time so they did everything together so I just kind of assumed that I would hold the same rule because my husband is an only child and he farms with his dad so I thought there might be more room for me to help take over, but it all depends on the family dynamics. (10:30-34)

This woman referred to the work relationship with in-laws, and how daughters-in-law negotiate a place in the agricultural aspect of the operation. It was the desire for some farm women to work side by side with their husbands in agriculture. When the previous generation is still involved in the farming operation, it may be difficult for a farm woman to find her agricultural niche. The following demonstrates how there was not actually a full role for this farm woman on the farm because in-laws were still involved, yet the income from the farm was not supporting her family:

When I got married to a farmer I thought that I would work until I had children and then I would no longer work anymore and that I would help on the farm, and I thought we would get livestock which would be part of what I would help with but that didn't work out that way. . . What ended up happening is I was never able to just stay home and take care of the kids and be a farm wife which would have been awesome, but it didn't happen that way so you do all the things that a farm wife does on top of having a job which is very, very busy. And it is the expectation of you (murmurs of agreement follow). (53:51-62)

Farm women find themselves married with children before they realize what the real expectations are. Some women grew up on farms where it was possible to support a farming family without off farm work. Their mothers helped on the farm but were essentially stay-at-home mothers. Some had little farming experience and bought into the rural idyll, believing in idealistic country lifestyle. This is not to suggest that they were intentionally deceived, but that their expectations were contrary to the ultimate reality. It was not necessarily their husbands' intention to have them, but the current agricultural economy made it impossible for the family to

make a living without the off-farm income. Many of these men also have to work off the farm. Farm women are rudely awakened by the reality that confronts them when the only other option is to leave the farm, and they are not about to leave their marriages and families. Neither women nor men anticipated that their expectations would conflict with the reality that off farm work is necessary:

This wasn't what I thought it was going to be, but it's okay. I didn't think I would have to do it forever, I didn't think I would be out there that much, but his parents, his mom did everything on the farm and he expected that of me, and he didn't tell me that he expected it so when we started I had to pick rocks and a lot of manual labour because the family wasn't that well off, they didn't have great machinery so you did that with your hands and yeah it was a real rude awakening . . . and when I started working I would take holidays for harvest and seeding, that was always what my holidays were. (13:73-79)

The reality is that it would have been impossible for any farm woman to have predicted her current lifestyle. Like most marriages in which more time is spent planning the wedding than the actual marriage, there probably was not much discussion about each other's expectations. This is not unique to rural marriages. The big surprise was the combination of the current agricultural economy and the unknown quantity of marriage into a farm family.

Perspectives on risk taking. The cost barrier and the time barrier are reasons farm women gave for risky or unsafe farming practices that have been outlined in the literature to date. As women see it, men act as if they are invincible, use cost and time barriers as excuses for

not farming safely, and equate their ability to do work with health. The older farmers also play a role both in retaining cultural expectations and in adding to the farm women's worry and stress. Women consider long term health and injury issues, whereas men seem to think more about the present. Farmers and their wives have taken an optimistic approach to farming, especially in believing that an injury will not happen to them:

I think they think that they are invincible all the time and it's not going to happen to them until something does happen to them that's when they start to take, you know, safety into consideration a bit more. (50:113-115)

In tight economic times, cost affects safety decisions.

A: Even all of the special features they come with a cost, you can buy the ladders for the bin but then it is an added cost to the bin. I think that's a barrier. I know that's a barrier.

B: We don't buy stuff like that because of the cost.

A: But you buy what you need to buy and if I'm careful I won't need that kind of attitude. Yeah it's not going to happen to me.

B: Yeah

A: I think farms are probably another thing that would decrease or hamper I guess some of the safety things that we could have on the farm because we think I'll be careful we just don't need to spend it we'll just do without it you know I'll be careful. (60:425-469)

Being careful is their safety strategy when the monetary cost of safer options is too high. So, not only are we looking at a farm that forces one, if not both spouses to work off the farm, but the farmer does not feel that he has the finances to make the farm as safe as possible. Issues of time also play a role as farmers do not feel they can take the extra time to do everything safely:

I've heard neighbors saying, well if you had to do everything safely, then they would never get anything done. It would take longer and they wouldn't be able to farm.

(50:148-149)

Is this a valid reason, or an excuse for taking short cuts and not farming as safely as possible? Is it merely an excuse? How much more time would it really take to be safer? Would it really be so much time that they would not be able to get their work done? These questions will not be answered here. Issues of health impact farm safety; if they are capable of doing the job physically, they do it even if they have to push themselves:

I think that a lot of men view health with their ability to do work. Right? So if they can still work then it's really not a hazard so I guess it's not really going to harm them. Women see it the other way. I guess I always see that too, in 20 years they will stop jumping off the machinery you know it's hard on your knees. It's hard on your back. (50:169-170)

Farmers talk about their aches and pains and injuries as badges of honour. The dangerous part of farming is just part of the job, and above all else, they have to prove they can do it because they have bought into it and cannot back down now. Worry was associated with

working with older farmers and the extra concern because of the normal aging process affecting ability to do farm work. Some of these farm women had men in their 80s in the family that were working at least part time on the farm. There is a fine line between keeping everyone safe and allowing elders to feel useful:

They had the old ways of doing things and it's hard to move ahead from that and you know eventually even today he wants to come out and help and he is 86 years old. (11:118-120)

The previous generation that is still involved in the farming operation affects farm women in two ways. First, their patriarchal attitudes towards women tend to be very strong. Secondly, they are an additional safety concern for women. The old guard is respected, yet this respect perpetuates patriarchy at its finest with no allowances for the next generation to develop a more modern ideology surrounding farming that accommodates farm women and rural feminism.

A: But you don't have the heart to tell them that they shouldn't be there.

B: I know

A: But if it risks a life

B: I know

C: I know

B: You don't want to hurt their feelings. (55:300-306)

Taking care of older farmers is an additional challenge and potential stressor:

They'll send John home and Aaron will take over combining because my son's not around all the time so John sometimes puts in longer hours than he should be for someone his age. (56:335-336)

Invincibility, cost, time, health and age demonstrate evidence of risk taking behaviour which in turn causes stress for the farm woman. Sometimes the older farmers are there as necessary labour to make the farm viable for the next generation. There may also be guilt associated with the knowledge that they have passed a non-viable business down to their children which makes them obligated to help. Perhaps the reason is as simple as that they just love the land.

Contribution of children working on the farm. Cultural expectations extend to children on the farm. This section relates closely to stress and worry because children working on the farm place stress on their mothers. However, it still remains a risk-taking phenomenon of the farming culture. The question regarding children working on the farm is a fine line between part of a positive experience and what is a risk-taking concern. The previous generation grew up very quickly because they worked hard at adult tasks when they were children:

Steven started farming with his dad when he was eleven years old. Trucking grain and working like a man. (63:192-193)

You would think that there would be a better alternative to children working as adults, but the farming culture regards it as necessary: "You do what you have to do" (63:200). Just because children can does not mean they should be working as adults. Placing children in unsafe working conditions is not the answer to a labour shortage or financial restraints related to not being able to afford to hire adult employees on the farm.

A: I think farm kids have responsibilities earlier.

B: Oh for sure, but you know when you said that, we did that, how often did you go out there and you always hope nothing is going to happen and you are always happy nothing has happened.

A: But then you take that chance again.

B: Yep.

A: Probably lots of unsafe things to do. We probably don't want to know what all our kids have done that we haven't been able to watch because we have been busy.

(64:370-481)

Although there are many reasons why farm children should have limited responsibilities, another concern is the stress this has on their parents: "You know, what happens to your stress level when your kids are doing those things?" (65:505-506). They know their children are at risk, yet farm women feel powerless to do anything about it, hoping that the pros outweigh the cons, and meanwhile hoping and praying they will be safe:

It's really just a push for time, isn't that what it boils down to? The safety tasks that we are trying to accomplish. The time factor. Yeah I sit here feeling like all the times that you would have put your kid at risk, my god I'm a terrible parent [emphasis on last two words]. You know you're very thankful that no one has ever gotten hurt but if you think of all the potential risk. (65: 512-515)

The following statement was said with great emotion and realization of the inherent contradiction. Chores and responsibilities for children are not the issue; the issue is children doing jobs that are unsafe or beyond their capabilities:

I mean, my god, if we were to see someone else do that or we would see someone in a third world country do that, we would think that was, it is child labour. (65:494-495)

There are three elements within this comment. Women feel powerless to keep their children totally safe if the practice has always been intended to off-set labour shortages on the farm. This type of labour is unique to the farming industry. Finally there is high stress associated with worrying about children who are working at potentially dangerous tasks.

Empowering farm women so they can have their children experience all the positive aspects of the farm experience without danger should essentially be our goal here. And there are examples of safe activities for children on the farm so that they can learn family responsibility:

They had to have 500 pounds of potatoes in the summer. When the kids were home I think we did it more and they would curse me because they would have to pick all the corn and shell all the peas, but it's family time (laughter) and it was good for them you know. (63:240-242)

The goal is to balance the positive farm experience of our rural youth with a moderate risk taking element, and empower farm women so that they can be the conduits to make this happen.

A luxury. It is extremely interesting how farm women felt that a farm woman who does not have to work off the farm has the equivalent of luxury living. My first reaction to this was

that this is definitely relatively speaking because even farm women who do not work off the farm work very hard:

When we moved to the farm I sure had hoped that I could stay at home and live a farm life. Well I don't think our generation had the luxury of doing that. There were a few (agreement of group). Even when we moved here there was probably 2 or 3 women in the community that weren't working. Now I don't know of anybody that doesn't work off the farm never mind your husband going to work as well. (12:90-95)

Some women expressed a desire not to work off the farm. Regardless of whether any of these women wanted off-farm labour (this question was not asked or brought up) they agreed that living in a situation where they did not have to take off-farm work for financial reasons was preferred. These women are working off the farm for financial reasons. None of them chose to work off the farm especially when their children were small.

When asked what they needed for a safer farm, one common idea was not to need to work off the farm, although they were, at this point, resigned to the necessity:

A: Money to afford the better equipment

B: Yeah, and to afford help so that we (farm women) don't have to do it.

C: Or somehow a living on a farm where you don't have to work off the farm. That would probably never happen. (59:429-432)

Women's off-farm income is essential to the farm family, but their jobs are considered by their husbands and families a burden during peak seasons which is stressful especially since there are

years when they depend on that income and every extra cent is brought back to the farm to support the family and the farming operation:

We have had a few good years and it has improved but there were some very poor years where all of our off-farm income basically paid for all of the farm expenses.

(60:322-324)

So why do they continue farming? This is the question that can only be answered by the individual family. Some couples believe it is the best place for their families. Some enjoy aspects of farming, yet some are trapped by tradition, or family obligations or a financial investment that they feel they cannot get out of.

Whatever the reason, it has become a cultural phenomenon that Saskatchewan rural families will give their all to stay farming. No other industry has dedication like this. No one normally feels that working hard at one job while taking care of a family is luxurious living. The sad part is that many families feel powerless to get out of this never ending cycle of extreme workload.

Multiple Roles

Farm women have different role combinations, yet face similar issues balancing these roles. The traditional farm woman cares for family, household tasks, children, garden, and yard; she runs for parts, prepares food and delivers it to the field, in addition to participating in varying degrees in the farming operation. The modern farm woman may also work off the farm, but does as many or all of the tasks that the traditional farm woman does that she possibly can and tends

to feel guilty when she cannot do all of it. The term farm woman in this study includes any combination of roles but includes off-farm work. For example, those who work full time off the farm may not do as much farm work, and those who work part time off the farm may do more farm work. The term farm woman is not just one role but an umbrella for anything that she may do for her farm, family and work place.

These women place such a high value on farm life that they are willing to do just about anything to keep it. The women in these focus groups felt it would be a luxury not to have to work off the farm. There is always plenty of work to be done on the farm, and they are not suggesting that they would be living a life of leisure, but that they would feel it a luxury to be able to focus on the farm and family rather than have their time divided with off-farm work. None of them suggested that they were working off the farm because they enjoyed it or wanted to get away from the farm even though the literature does demonstrate this. Some even lamented the fact they were unable to work side by side with their husbands regularly. They commented that they worked to bring in money, yet did not feel particularly valued for what they did. There is no reward. Even during holidays from off-farm work, women often provided unpaid labour for farm work.

Volume of work. Farm women find themselves trapped in a cycle of seasons that cannot be changed. Non-farm women find this work load horrendous and do not understand why anyone would subject themselves to such a workload:

My sister-in-law was out and she said, she can't imagine all the things I did on the farm. 'What is wrong with farm women?' she says. (79:412-413)

There is always something to be said for an outside, objective view. In the midst of an experience, it is difficult to see realistically or to be aware of how it may affect the individual or the family. It does not help that no one tells them to stop, or gives them a break by saying that they do not have to do it all. The women try to measure up to performance of their predecessors (mothers and mothers-in-law) who did not work off the farm yet they have to add the extra pressure of off farm work.

A: They have to do all of that just because as crazy as farm women get, you know those farm women didn't have jobs off the farm. They were expected. But when your mother-in-law grew up like that and your mother grew up like that, but they never worked off the farm. On the farm there is the expectation that you should make your own bread. I did all those things.

B: Worked and worked and worked. (79:415-419)

To meet expectations, their own and those of family and community that they have internalized, they do so much yet are unable to allow themselves to take care of themselves:

I think that women think they can do it all or HAVE to do it all. I always think that why didn't I do that or you know I should have done that. You could always be thinking that there are things you don't have to do, but you do them anyway because it's that time of year and you need to get them done whether it's the garden or whatever so sometimes I think you rush through things and you don't get your sleep in maybe and you aren't safe you know like you were saying when you drive from

point A to point B and you don't know how you got there. That happens lots going home from work. You are thinking of everything else. (80:590-596)

In addition, women also face the lack of help with small things (81:273). Too often, it is difficult to get help when she needs it with fixing a lawn mower or a toilet. When asked about what they needed to ensure a safe and healthy family farm, one woman responded that she needed a wife and a housekeeper especially when working shift work. The other women laughed and understood. During peak times, everything other than seeding or harvest related activities are her problem, trivial or not. Farm women find themselves concerned with "lots of little things" (83.82) that all add up, but they sound apologetic about even mentioning them: "I know sounds trivial" (83.487). Farm women have internalized the prevailing attitude that their responsibilities and accompanying issues are unimportant, especially in peak seasons, even when those concerns affect the family and quality of life.

Peak Seasons. The most pressing problems with multiple roles include lack of help (paid or otherwise) with childcare, household work, and the very large work load in general. The issues are not limited to these, but what is focused on here. Peak seasons are experienced as expressed as the most complicated time period of concern. Because of the exhaustion, safety issues in the off-farm workplace and on the farm are at their height. As the previous generation ages and chooses to live in town, or retire, and as children leave home to go to school and find jobs, farm women experience increased pressure to pick up the slack. Women in their 40s, 50s, and 60s are taking on even more of the farm work while juggling off-farm work and unpredictable weather:

It's those peak periods that it really seems to make that big difference you know if you could just take off those peak seasons in spring and fall. (69:446-447)

Off-farm employers are not able to schedule around the individual employee's personal schedule. These women felt that if they could at least have those times to concentrate primarily on the farm, they would be much better off. The following story demonstrates the problem clearly:

Before work you are moving machinery, you get a meal ready because you have to be at work by 8:00 you know so you do everything before 8:00. You're up early and then go to work and I come home and usually I'm in the field, like you are and depending on how the day ends, if it's windy you can go until 3:00 in the morning. So then you sleep for just a couple of hours, you get up, you move things because he is by himself, all the kids are moved away right now you know so there is only the two of us right now which makes it a whole lot tougher so sleep deprivation is definitely one of them so by the time harvest is over, seeding is over, you're done. (68:196-202)

By the time harvest is over, farm women are worn right out. Exhaustion, stress, and worry accumulate and contribute to "being done." There is frustration that while they work off the farm, they are sometimes unavailable during peak seasons. They feel guilt, but also feel pressure to be there. Weather is uncontrollable and off-farm work does not revolve around a farming employee. Depending on the industry, a woman just cannot take a day off when the weather suits the farming operation:

A: You go to work even though it's a couple of months I still have to go to work

B: Why aren't you here?

A: I know but I can't take all those days off. How do you calculate that?

B: Yeah.

A: It could go on for two months with Mother Nature

B: Or you could take a day off and then it rains.

A: Or it's a nice day and you have to work. (68:207-213)

There is an element of guilt associated with off-farm work. These women feel guilty for being gone during these peak seasons when they have a shift, yet the farm would not be viable without their paycheck. This guilt demonstrates the oppression they are experiencing. Off-farm work positions cannot accommodate peak farming seasons. Thus, time restraints during the peak seasons continue to challenge:

A: I would think in terms of safety and working on the farm and off the farm that there's just certain times of the year if you just take that break, omit that off farm job for just a couple of months in the spring and the fall and then I think it would be better, umm safety wise because I think it would be more. . .

B: You would just have more time. (69:618-622)

Frustration is often augmented by exhaustion, and they wonder if they are not crazy and soon start to consider what their family is going through and how their off-farm work place also suffers:

A: But it's like you are adding another job so how many people who are not on the farm that have a full time job would take on another full time job at the same time?

B: For two months

A: Yeah

B: So really if you think of it that way

A: You wonder if you aren't crazy

B: Like who would do that? (laughter)

A: Yeah

B: And you do, you put your family in that too. (73:450-458)

And their workplace:

I don't know if we realize if you think about how many farm women are working in other industries, like we happen to be working in health care right now but I mean that takes its toll on that organization as well right because during seeding and harvest if you've got people that are either asking for time off or are tired, right so they are coming, so whether you work in a store or you work in an office you're putting that place potentially at risk. (73:628-632).

This woman considered how the workplace suffers when employees are over extended. An employee who has had only few hours sleep because she was working on the farm all night cannot be efficient or even safe at work. When the employee goes on a stress leave, or is run-down, and eventually too sick to work, the workplace benefits kick in. These women are essentially moonlighting and potentially putting other people at risk because they are

overworked. Both farm and family suffer directly and their off-farm work suffers because a tired employee puts clients and coworkers at risk.

By the end of the busy season, not only have they been exposed to various risks, but they are also exhausted, yet still expected to work off the farm. They never get back that time or catch up on the missed sleep because the cycle repeats itself. Necessary rejuvenation does not happen either. There is no retirement for farm women; in fact, the work load may even increase as they get older.

Garden. The garden is a symbol of something from the past that became a source of contention for some farm women. The following is a humorous story that indicates the pressures faced by these farm women. Sometimes it takes extreme circumstances before women draw the line when it is clear that there is too much expected of them:

A: I know someone who went and bought a bunch of vegetables and then cut open the bags and poured it all in little bags and put it in the freezer.

B: Oh my god! (lots of laughter)

A: I know, but she's a genius. I laughed because she had just thrown it all in the bush. She said I am not going to be shelling these effing peas all night! (lots of laughter)

B: You get wiser as you get older. (77:405-411)

Although there was a lot of laughter at this story, the sad part is that this woman felt so much pressure to have home grown vegetables that she was willing to resort to deception to

accomplish the illusion of the garden. Some women were not able to give it up so easily and stretched their capabilities to the maximum using their sleep time to finish their garden work:

I remember coming home from work, getting the kids ready for bed and then shelling peas till 11:00 or canning beans till 1:00 in the morning and getting up and doing it all over again. (77:397-404)

It would be interesting to know the cost factor (or savings) of doing all that work if you paid yourself minimum wage. Some faced negative reactions when giving it up:

My husband said you're basically lazy for not having a garden the last two years. I was so glad that my garden area was flooded out. I really don't want to have a garden and I don't because too bad it flooded, can't have a garden (laughter). It was so nice to come home at night and not pick beans and peas. (77:399-402)

This husband is unbelievably callous towards his wife, when there was so much work to do both on and off the farm. Some women were able to give themselves a break and gave up the garden:

I could not go to work and garden and take care of the kids and farm and it rained right at that time when you have to do everything else. So I thought maybe I can give up one thing and that was easy to give up. (47:231-234)

Some farm women come to the conclusion that it is okay to give something up sooner than others:

But I think that's where we can help ourselves. I don't have the whole garden I had 26 years ago. I don't want to anymore. (77:397-398)

Patriarchy has influenced how women feel about the garden. It represents yet another task added to a busy fall season as it requires a lot of work to prepare garden produce for storage. Many farm women feel inadequate if they do not fulfill the role as gardener of a large garden. The garden in the past was the difference between survival with proper nutrition and very poor diet in the winter months. Now, with produce readily available in grocery stores, the same dire need for garden produce does not exist as farm women are able to purchase inexpensive food from grocery stores as well as their urban counterparts. The amount of time spent gardening is not justifiable in the face of the rest of their workload. Ironically, patriarchy is exercising its power when the garden is not even necessary for family survival. It is more about tradition. Whether out of personal pride, pressure, or tradition, some tried to hang on to it with futile results:

A: I keep thinking that I've always had a big garden but working off the farm, helping on the farm and having a garden there were several years where you put all this effort into it and the corn would be ready right when I was on a stretch of night shifts. And you know when I was up or did get up I would be helping unload grain or helping a little bit and they don't want to hear that the garden is ready.

B: Exactly (murmurs of agreement)

A: And then you have a day off and the corn is three days too old, you know so you have done all that work and that's just disheartening. (78:265-272)

There just is not enough time. The consequences of the time shortage are significant. It is trying on the family and causes anxiety. What is more interesting is that the garden symbolizes a tradition upheld throughout the decades of Saskatchewan farming. Whether it is a feasible

endeavor or not, women feel pressured to grow a garden. Such traditional work is part of what makes them valuable as a farm wife.

Child care. Child care is a challenging issue that is dealt with in a variety of ways. Taking children to child care or bringing child care to the farm is problematic for several reasons such as availability of care and the feasibility of trying to fit it in with shift work.

A: I couldn't afford a babysitter when I had the third one and I was working (murmurs of agreement). I had to quit working for a while to stay home with them because I didn't get paid enough.

B: How do you justify that (childcare) to do farm work? Women's farm work [emphasis on women's]. (86:330-332)

This was typical of the discussion regarding childcare while working off the farm. It also addresses the attitude that getting childcare while women are working on the farm is not socially acceptable or financially feasible. Paying for childcare for multiple children makes working off the farm not as financially valuable. Not having childcare while farm women are working on the farm is unsafe.

Mixing pre-school children with school age children created yet another difficulty because parents are responsible for children in two locations which makes the situation even more complicated. This is another responsibility that falls to women. Older children may miss out on extra-curricular activities because of the demands of seasonal farm work and off-farm work throughout the year. The resultant oppressive guilt adds to the stress of the primary caregiver:

I think with the kids they don't get to do those extra activities during seeding or harvest because if you live out of town then you've got that added driving time so I think it takes its toll on kids as well. So right? Usually who feels all the guilt of that? The mother of the kids usually right? Because if you think you have to be doing all of that all of the time, they're your kids but you are also working and helping on the farm. (70:462-466)

Women feel guilt thinking about having children in childcare just so that they can sleep or do housework or farm work because of the cost, yet there is no monetary value attached to the work the woman is doing on farm or in the home. What cannot be afforded if done by somebody else is still expected of the women, for free:

A: Childcare I think is a barrier too 'cause you go and work a shift and you know you can justify taking your kids to a babysitter when you work a shift.

B: Yeah but you feel guilty if you take them after work.

A: You work off the farm so the kids are with a sitter so when you are home even though you are doing farm work that other men would be getting paid to do you're still expected to do, you know, child rearing. . .

B: But could you possibly afford to hire somebody to do it? (86:312-317)

Many farm women are not opposed to doing farm work. It is an issue only when they have to work off the farm as well or, when the workload is too heavy. It was evident that these farm women demonstrated the most distress when it came to concern about their children. This may be one of the most important aspects of this study. A rural feminism may develop as a result of

the guilt they experience because of concern for their children. These women were particularly worried about both child care and their children working on the farm performing tasks that they were too young to be doing safely.

Stress

A woman's role as caregiver to her family suffers if she is not there to perform it. Women admit to being the most concerned about health and safety but worry that if they are not around to remind and teach safety to their children, and insist that their husbands use best safety practices, their families will not be safe. This leads to a stressful existence. Farm women worry about what happens when they are not there. This is likely an additional stress when they are away at their off-farm employment, potentially distracting them from their work.

They recognise that they are trying to do too much, yet feel powerless to change the cycle, concerned with their own work-loads that they know are extreme. The sub-themes within the theme of Stress are hurriedness and time, worry, and planning. An emerging rural feminism may change this feeling of powerlessness.

Hurriedness and Time. Farm women are concerned with the amount of rushing everyone does. Often women are the voice of safety and have to send their husbands to bed during peak seasons, while their husbands want to push on, not take breaks, not sleep enough, and so forth:

It took a lot of years for it finally to register that if you stay up that extra hour or two it does bugger all anyways. Go to bed and you will feel a lot better the next day and to get into that habit. (41:207-209)

Farm women demonstrate that they are needed on the farm as protectors and caregivers of their husbands, but some things they cannot control no matter how much they want to. A certain amount of the time is simply dictated by the weather:

I would think the biggest thing for safety and health would be not to be rushed for time all the time. I think time is the biggest factor for farmers and 50% of it or more has to do with the weather, and you can't control the weather so if you have to get up at 4:00 to go spraying you have to get up at 4:00. If they had more time it would be a way safer, healthier way of life but you can't control that. (41:222-225)

Hurriedness is a term used in the agricultural safety industry. These women realize that hurriedness is not healthy or safe. In the heat of the peak season, they are in overdrive, and the minute they slow down, they realize how unhealthy and unsafe they really are:

A: Because we rush so much for ten years now. You've got your little kids and you've got your job and you know we used to be up every day at 5:00 and be in the city by 7:00 and dropped the kids off at the babysitters and you just rush so much I don't think you realize a lot of things.

B: You don't realize you are doing it at the time. After you realize it and you think that was really dumb. (41:245-249)

Yet, they feel powerless to do anything about it. They find it difficult to stand up for themselves which relates back to the feeling of being under-valued, but if they do not stand up for themselves no one will. Their husbands are caught up in the whirlwind of the farming season:

I think a big thing too is like this is for our farm safety like for women and kids and I think a big thing is our responsibilities like to stand up and say, I am too fricken tired, I am going to bed, or to stand up and say I don't know how to drive this combine, you have to come in here and you have to tell me this all over again before I'm gonna start. Or you know this little one is sick and I'm taking her to the doctor now. I think the big thing for us is that you have to stand up and say, you know maybe listen to your gut feeling or something and voice it, because if you do voice it, chances are they will listen. (42:367-373)

Farm women are well aware that hurriedness or rushing and lack of sleep are not good for themselves or their families. They express a need to voice their concerns to stand up for themselves and their family's wellbeing especially when they know their husbands are wrapped up in the season, and they know they cannot change that.

Worry. Farm women live with constant worry about their families which affects their stress levels and therefore their health. Worrying about their families during off-farm work hours is a distraction. They worry about what goes on when they are not home, and they worry about their husbands:

I sometimes worry that my husband might call me out to help him do something where if I'm not home I don't think he would call his dad to come over and help him do that 5 minute task. (71:190-192)

Children on the farm are yet another worry since it is difficult to watch them constantly while you are doing other work. They are a constant concern and as most children are escape artists, a continuing worry even when you are doing your best to watch them:

You've always got to have your eyes everywhere . . . I always worry about that too to make sure the doors are locked. (85:272)

This constant worry places them in planning mode, and they push for more reasonable work hours on the farm, although more so for others than for themselves. They are recognizing the danger of operating farm equipment when overtired:

I think sometimes too having worked off the farm in the job that I do shift work and what sleep deprivation can do to you and pushing my buttons that way I think I push for them to sleep like during harvest you know I say that half hour isn't going to make a difference you guys need to shut it down, go to bed, or now they are doing shifts now where one will get up early in the morning and do the morning stuff and one will stay up late so that they aren't both trying to get up early and stay up late. (71:193-198)

The caregiving traits of the farm women cause them to worry about their families. They do not idly sit around frozen by their fears and worry, but they do what they can to prevent some of the cause for worry. It also causes them to consider how proper planning can alleviate some of this

worry because it alleviates some of the risk. It is a coping skill they employ to do the best they can under circumstances that are far from ideal.

Planning. One of their best coping strategies is planning. Planning for farm families can sometimes take extreme measures to accommodate the farming operation and the seasons. Two women even planned when they would be pregnant and when their babies would be born as to not interfere with the peak seasons. This was not seen by the others in the group as unreasonable although it was acknowledged, with humour in the form of laughter, that it was not always something that could be planned entirely, although they could try:

Sometimes you think you don't really have a plan on your farm you know, you think you don't really do anything on your farm to make it safe, but you know maybe we don't have it written down in stone but we really do and it gives us an opportunity to think about what do we do and how can we change that to do it better? . . . To do better at what we do and change how we think and help our husbands change how they think and how they've been raised. I think you have to just start doing stuff. When you've been raised in a household and your farming culture where safety is like that and it's hard to change and move it forward. (47:662-672)

Farm women strongly advocate for good communication and planning as the keys to taking care of their families and having a safe and successful season. This includes scheduling in breaks and sleep and planning a work schedule in everyone's best interest.

Well we said good communication skills so everyone knows what they are doing and good planning skills like someone works early, someone will work the late shift.

You've got to coordinate things so that nobody is over tired and that kind of stuff.

That makes a huge difference I think. (48:227-229)

Planning and communication go hand in hand regarding health and safety. Farm women are safety champions in their endeavours to encourage these two necessary components of farm safety. However, the question still remains why they should have to use extreme methods in order to keep their families safe.

Injury Prevention Strategies (Coping)

These groups believe that their best injury prevention strategies include education in the form of modeling safe farm practices, using stories to discuss farm safety with family, and repetition. They also felt that good communication, and working in close proximity with their husbands made for a safer farm. What they felt was missing was better cell phone coverage for better communication. Rural childcare and less need for off farm work were also issues they felt would make their farms safer. They also felt that better farming income would make for a safer farm so that they could afford some of the extra expenses related to safer equipment.

The theme of Injury Prevention Strategies includes sub-themes that demonstrate how they cope and what these coping strategies are. There is discussion around their husbands working alone, caregiving, communication, and safety education.

Working alone. There are three aspects to working alone that were addressed in the focus groups: worry, the desire to be able to work with their husbands, and coping skills or strategies for dealing with the reality of working alone. Farming alone is expressed as one of the

biggest concerns regarding safety. There is a “constant worry all the time” (21:459-460) around their husbands working alone. Women worry about safety issues all the time which overlaps with the theme of stress and sleep. They also realize that as women they are not strong enough to be a complete help in heavy lifting situations but that their presence provides a safer work environment for their husbands. Farm women expressed a desire to have the opportunity to work together with their husbands. The barrier to this is their off-farm work as well as child care. They felt it would be safer for them to have a hand right there consistently:

I just know that if we worked side by side I would always be yammering about stuff.

I mean he’s getting way better at it too, but I just think it would be a safer farm if we worked side by side and were able to do that. (16:467-470)

If I am there more often I am there to remind him as well. You need to do this, be careful with that, you know not nagging, but then we are a team. He is missing his team mate when I am not there. (62:623-625)

Women give their husbands credit for the safety practices that they know are being used. They find themselves continually encouraging safety even when they know they will not be around to ensure that best safety practices are used. These are the best strategies that they can employ under the circumstances when there is much time that their husbands work alone.

Caregiving. Farm women are always caregiving, yet they did not once indicate who was taking care of them. They express frustration when they know that their husbands are not taking care of themselves. For example, a man may not eat properly when his wife is not home to make sure a meal is eaten. Some families have stopped taking the traditional meals out to the field, but

others suggested that it is important to take meals out to the field, forcing men to stop, take a break, and fuel their bodies:

I think we should be taking out some food . . . I think we should take supper out because I think they should stop. (24:508-511)

He will take a break if you take lunch out and he has to stop. (24:504)

It is also another safety check to have someone checking on the farmer. Women know this; it is common sense that comes with care giving. They claim farm safety is more of a priority for them than for their husbands. That makes them farm safety champions:

I think we take farm safety more serious and try to implement things differently that way. I do. (24: 690)

The evidence of caregiving permeates all their stories in this chapter, demonstrating their safety concerns through how they react to situations, and how they feel about farm safety and express those feelings.

Communication. Farm women promote and encourage good communication.

Communication came up over and over as a very important farm safety strategy which is highly encouraged by farm women. This has been made easier with 2-way radios, and even better with cell phones, although some areas of the province still do have cell phone coverage.

Communication is also involved when workers cooperate physically in potentially dangerous circumstances, working with equipment and animals. A miscommunication could be fatal:

You have to just communicate and understand you know how people work together and around equipment. (25:88-89)

Not only for knowing where each other is or what they are doing but for Wayne and I, if I'm in the tractor and I'm having to hook up or something like that or whatever I have to do something with the big equipment I want to know exactly what's going to happen. (25:647-649)

Women encourage this communication by asking questions and insisting on the immediate planning and training before starting to work on the task at hand:

I say what's going to happen here? What do you plan to do? Where do you want these cows or equipment? (25:655-656)

They ask questions and insist on getting the answers before they start a task. Another example:

Backing up into the equipment. Where do you want this in the end? He says, let's see how it goes and we will play it by ear. But I don't know how to play it by ear.

You might but I don't. (26:657-658)

Some of these farm women have to have the strength in these situations to insist on near flawless communication. Some farm women seem to be able to stand up for themselves in issues of communication. Unfortunately, not everyone can. It is important to note that it is difficult for farmers who have been doing various tasks as second nature for decades to have to break it down into instructions so that they can do it with a person who has less experience.

Education. This sub-theme is further broken down into the farm safety strategies that these women use to educate their families including modeling, storytelling, fear tactics, and repetition. These strategies happen as they spend time with husbands and partners and capitalize on the teachable moments as they arise.

I think that's the big responsibility is teaching them, and I think we've done that.

(39:526)

You've got to start young because otherwise they get certain things where they think they've done it this way forever. (18:148-149)

Farm women listed the following educational strategies as important elements of safety on their farm: presentations in schools, progressive farm safety days, pamphlets and pictures, Network educational packages, come home safe tonight campaigns, stickers, various media at seeding and harvest, and sessions like the focus group they attended. This complements the teaching women do with their families regularly. Although studies have shown that education alone is not changing the injury statistics in Saskatchewan, I would argue that the right audience has not been targeted. Men have previously been the targets of this information; therefore we need to direct this information at farm women in the absence of enforced legislation. They may be more likely to use the educational materials.

Modeling. Parents need a campaign that reminds them their children are watching them; parents are models whether they plan to be or not (28:579). Awareness of their role as models would help them teach their children farm safety. The women were open to suggestions here:

It's well worth the effort whatever it is whether it's teaching your kids or having rules on the farm that's important and even the time thing cause how much more time does it take to slow down and do that the proper way and what are you going to lose if you have an accident. (28:660-663)

I think kids learn not always by what you say but by what you are doing. (29:665)

This is their reasoning for positive role modelling. Positive role modeling has always been recognized as a valuable teaching tool.

Storytelling. Storytelling is part of the rural culture. Farm women often use stories to teach their children and to illustrate the strategies they use to prevent injuries. Here is one example that could be a case study of why one should not wear loose clothing around machinery:

I was probably seven or eight years old and it was dark and we had a forage harvester at the time which was a big long thing which was pulled behind the tractor that chopped the straw. It was dark and I remember dad coming into the house with blood all over his one leg and scratched all the way up and all he had left on him was his belt loops and his belt and mom started crying right away and gave him this look. “Clarence, what in the world happened?” Dad said he got caught in the power take off and dad was a strong young man and he was able to hang onto the steering wheel of the tractor while it spun around and ripped his pants off. Oh my god. You never forget that as a kid, EVER. (33:578-586)

The stories adults hear raises their awareness, too:

When you hear about an accident it’s more in your mind. I know when our kids were small there was a five year old that was run over and we had small kids on the farm at the time so you know when you hear that you are always thinking about that. Unfortunately that does raise the awareness and make you think a little more safely I think. (30:69-72)

I heard many stories throughout this focus group process. It is a valuable way to make connections, communicate, and give examples.

Fear tactics. Sometimes as part of a story, fear underlined what was being taught:

I think that it's good to tell stories and I always tell them that story. Well you are putting fear into your children. They need to understand what can happen and I think storytelling is, you know, a good way of driving home a point. (34:251-253)

Women use fear tactics with their spouses as well. For example, one nurse used the threat of cancer in the genital region if a certain chemical should be splashed there. Women also understand that the absence of an immediate effect or injury does not rule out the possibility of long-term hazards. Trying to convey that long-term risk to their husbands was often frustrating. Concern was also expressed that men and children wear their farmer tans as a badge of honour with no concern for the potential of future melanoma. The women pointed out that they did not want to be too graphic, but needed to get across the message that a major injury changes lives.

Repetition. Farm women talk about repeatedly about telling husbands and children how to be safe: "I'd be a broken record, they're going out to do this and you are telling them 'Don't!' and it's 'Yeah mom, I know.' We get the eye rolls" (39:537-539).

Sometimes the same safety issues need to be mentioned many times to both adults and children. Every season has to have seasonal messages repeated over and over, at the risk of nagging or "yammering" as some women put it.

Conclusion

The women in the three focus groups had keen senses of humour. They understood that their circumstances were not ideal, yet these women were not bitter. Hard working, optimistic, independent, and strong, they radiated a loyalty to the family farm life. Their personalities were vibrant and their laughter infectious. In the face of what their urban counterparts would consider absurd, they were witty and charming.

However, these farm women expressed a desire to have a voice. They were interested in having more focus groups and hoped that this research would result in articles published everywhere. They also talked about their promotion of communication on the farm, yet found it difficult to stand up for themselves. This is frustrating.

In the midst of all the challenges described here, farm women are taking very good care of their families under the circumstances. Where they fall short is taking care of themselves. They should not have to do it all. They can be hard on themselves, have unreasonably high expectations, and are their own biggest critics. They also believe the farm is the best place to raise their families:

Even with the financial problems we have had on the farm we have never been sorry we moved here and raised our kids. Never ever. (59:372-373)

We have a give and take. I wouldn't move off of here for nothing. Honestly, I love it out here. I think we are really lucky to live where we do and have the farms we do. (72: 377-378)

These are demonstrations of unwavering loyalty to the family farm. On a less positive note, an overall theme throughout this chapter has been that farm women and their husbands sometimes lack the power to do the right things for their families. They need to be empowered to protect their families. This study is a step towards giving them their voice, which will, I hope, give them the sense of empowerment that will lead to a better existence. This is where a rural feminism begins.

Encouragement for the emerging rural feminist may result from the many adverse effects farm women are experiencing with increasing frequency. As they begin to experience enough of these effects such as the constant worry, awareness of their exploitation, and so on, along with an opportunity to use their voice, they may even decide that they do not want the responsibility of farm safety on their plate. This could lead them to voicing their concerns and deciding that their loyalty no longer lies with the family farm, but with their family. Time will tell. Someday farms dependent on external female wages may no longer exist due to the infeasibility. Perhaps the voice of emerging rural feminism will be heard within the patriarchal confines so that conscientization can be experienced not only for the farm woman, but for her husband and family.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the themes found in Chapter Four. Chapter Four presented four themes that emerged from the focus group data. These interwoven findings will be considered regarding the previous literature concerning farm women. This chapter will look closely at cultural expectations permeating issues of multiple roles, coping, and injury prevention strategies. It will look at the potential for consciousness-raising, challenging patriarchy, and emerging feminism, requiring a significant amount of nurturing for and by farm women. The researcher's position will be addressed as well as limitations of this study, and suggestions for future research.

Summary of Results

Cultural Expectations

Cultural expectations play a paramount part in how much work these farm women feel they have to do. They feel pressure to live up to the standards of a historically different time. Many family farms cannot exist without women's off-farm labour as well as their on-farm work. Above all else, farm women value farm life which explains why they support it even when they know they are being exploited. Farm women are the primary safety promoters in their farming operations regardless of the patriarchal structure. They are slowly developing their voice; however, they still value the farm lifestyle and willingly do whatever it takes to maintain it.

Farm women's perspectives are influenced by the cultural expectations they have assimilated, including the expectations of those around them. Shortal (1992) found that the power inequality within the patriarchal farming structure resulted in women's contributions continually being overlooked. This study found that these women did not perceive that credit was given to them even though they contribute so much to the farming operation and family. The proverbial magic sock drawer is never noticed until it is empty. Likewise, many women are so adept at keeping it reasonably full of socks that no one notices the work done behind the scenes. It may not even be only their husbands and families who exploit their loyalty to the farm but society also uses them to skew the agricultural economy. I am positive that some farm women are appreciated for what they do. However, it invites the question why would anyone allow such stress in the life of someone they truly valued?

Even though historically, women did not work off the farm, the patriarchal structure has accommodated this more recent phenomenon because it perpetuates patriarchal goals. Whatever benefit women felt they achieved by this accommodation, in the long run, it has worked against them because it simply leads to a very heavy workload. Women worked invisibly according to Heather (2005) in order for their husbands to save face and to preserve their sense of masculine identity. The identity of the farmer is at risk if he is not perceived as the breadwinner (Saugeres & Price, 2010). He is a victim himself of a patriarchal system in which he must be dominant or be seen as a failure. The modern patriarchal structure allows women to earn substantial wages off the farm without negatively affecting their husbands' identities as farmers. Now that "everyone is doing it," it has become acceptable. There is no disgrace for a man if his wife has

to work off the farm. The women in this study could not think of more than a couple of farm women in the community who did not work off the farm although the majority of them said not working off the farm would be desirable and ideal for safety concerns as well as decrease their excess roles. Yet there was not a single woman who thought their farm would be sustainable if they did not work off the farm.

At the same time, their work on the farm is equally essential. The women acknowledged that their on-farm work would never be done by a hired hand because “who would pay for that?” The farm can often survive only on unpaid family labour (Price, 2010; Ghorayshi, 1989). In fact, farms are kept up not only by unpaid family labour, but by off-farm jobs, sometimes the spouse’s off-farm work as well, which increases child care needs. Society should consider the monetary value of a farm wife, although this will not happen as long as their work does not have a paycheck attached.

The literature shows that farm women place great value on the farm (Danes, 1997, McCoy & O’Hara 1997). The farm women in this study also indicated that they would never trade this experience for their families. They value it so much they are willing to contribute financially and work ridiculously hard in multiple roles. This perception of the value makes them vulnerable for exploitation. Shortal (2002) is positive of the necessity of the exploitation of the farm wife to ensure the survival of the family farm. This study also heard these women suggest this was also necessary in their farming operation. This is a societal/political issue that Ghorayshi (1989) says leads to false conceptions of the success of family farms.

In the regular workplace, women do not contribute part or all of their income to the company their husband works for, come and help him at work, as well as bring the children into the workplace. Why farm women do this is a question that our society and farming couples need to think about. How much are they willing to let the farm suck out of them before they call it quits? This concerns the cultural exploitation of farm families in general. Society needs to ask why we are not paying farmers enough to support a family when food is so cheap, in comparison to costs in other countries. If the farm income cannot support a family or sustain itself, it cannot be deemed a viable source of income. Society cannot in good conscience continue to exploit this population in this way.

Bock (2004) found that women are so efficient at juggling their multiple responsibilities that their families do not suffer any obvious negative effects; their efficiency contributes to their invisibility. Farm women want their children to experience a positive childhood. However, these women feel guilty if their children miss out, so they try hard to make sure that their children have positive agricultural experiences, extra-curricular activities, and home cooked meals.

The women in my study did not say directly that their mothers-in-law were sources of pressure or oppression, but they were not directly asked either. The problem is that the mother-in-law set such a high standard of the “farm-wife” role, even though she did not work off the farm, that today’s farm wife finds herself held to the same standard of caregiving and farm work as her predecessor, regardless of her additional roles working off the farm. Pini (2007) found mothers-in-law were a direct source of oppression or conflict. It was more apparent if the

mothers-in-law were still involved in the farming operation. Bennett (2006) saw the mother-in-law as a perpetuator of the patriarchal structure, placing pressure on the daughter-in-law. I saw a subtle difference. The family has expectations based on what the mother-in-law did without working off the farm. These expectations are applied to the daughter-in-law without consideration for her off-farm work. It is not necessarily conscious pressure, just an “it’s always been done this way” pressure which suits the goals that maintain the patriarchal structure. The mother-in-law has set a precedent contributing to the cultural expectation. It is not necessarily the mother-in-law who puts pressure on the farm woman, but the family as a whole and even the farm woman herself.

O’Hara (1997) looked at women’s influence on the patriarchal structure of the family farm. Off-farm work is now extremely common, if not essential to the patriarchal structure that could completely collapse without the exploitation of these strong women’s capabilities. At one time, women in the patriarchal structure did only farm work in addition to their role as homemaker. As the family farm began to fail to make a living for the family, women started working off the farm to bring necessary capital to the farming operation and to support their families. Whereas before, patriarchal pride would not have allowed this development without a blow to the male ego, there is now no shame or failure attached to the need for one’s wife to work off the farm.

Farm women want to fit into an existing culture and they are exploited through love and the desire to be accepted. They continue to attempt to fit into the lifestyle, because they believe it is worth it. If they were to accept elements of feminism, they might not feel the same way.

Effects of Workload, Stress, and Guilt

The farm is in most cases, dependent on farm women working off the farm to support the family, yet women worry about their husband who take serious risks, older farmers who may be present, and children who are at risk. They are concerned about nutrition, health, and child care, feeling stress particularly when they have the added responsibility of working off the farm, but want to be there to take care of these issues. They maintain very heavy schedules while juggling childcare and peak agricultural seasons, sometimes using their holiday time for farm work.

These farm women regretted that they could not afford to give up their off-farm income and that, in poor years, every cent of that income was necessary. Brandth, Ghorayshi, & Heather (2005) also found this necessity for farm income. Heather and Kelley (2002) found that although some women worked off the farm by choice or for personal reasons, economic reasons were still the primary reason for off-farm work for both the farmer and farm woman.

The women in the Bolwerk (2002) and Marlenga (2010) studies knew that the proximity of machinery places their children at risk. Danes (1997) found that they did not search for solutions to safety issues. I found that women were happy to discuss solutions, although their only power appeared to be educating their families in best safety practices. They educated through storytelling, fear tactics, and repetition, and felt that they were doing a good job. However, they were open to more discussion about safety and to any tools that might keep their families safe. They acknowledged that they cannot always be present to do the educating because of off-farm work, another source of stress.

These women were concerned that their husbands took unnecessary risks, considered themselves invincible, and did not seek medical attention. Thurston, et al. (2005) and Keating (1987) also found this concern about risk taking behaviour and a difference between the perspectives between men and women. Women said they were concerned about their husband's safety behaviour, but observed that their husbands took risks with very little concern.

Sometimes to the detriment of their health, women are stressed about their families' eating habits, long work days, health conditions, and so forth. Farmers do not seem to take care of their own health, and will put off serious health conditions until after peak agricultural seasons even if waiting may prove dangerous. The long agricultural seasons take a toll on the farm family. One farm woman told us that she begins the season cooking healthy meals, but by the end she resorts to Doritos. The others laughed at this story about being too tired to care about making food because they have all had that experience.

Heather (2005) and Danes and McTavish (1997) discuss role overload and strain caused by multiple roles. Off-farm work is problematic for the women studied by Kelly and Shortall (2002), Bennett (2004), and Sugeres (2002). These farm women also discussed role overload, especially when it comes to peak seasons. Patriarchy perpetuates male dominance because everything focuses on the farm during the peak seasons. Although the seasons are determined by nature, the farm woman never gets this privilege of concentrated focus and extra help with her work.

My participants experienced role conflict while trying to juggle so many different roles. This is a serious concern and needs to be addressed considering Berkowitz and Perkins' (1984)

contention that this conflict places such women at risk for stress and Carruth and Logan (2002) say it increases the risk for symptoms of depression. Danes' (1998) findings show that farm women do a great deal of caring for others, sometimes to their own detriment. The farm women in this study were concerned about their own stress levels but did not have a solution to the problem.

Guilt presented itself in what they would not do such as obtain childcare so that they could sleep during the day when they were working nightshifts. Brandth (2002) claimed farm women do not pursue individual interests. This is not surprising when they already use their holidays for the farming season and do not have very much time for individual interests. Cummins (2005) found that they maintain horrendous schedules with little if any time for recreation. Hectic schedules, minimal relaxation time or holidays, lack of sleep, and guilt are not a healthy combination.

There are reasons why organizations and labour standards suggest a certain number of holidays per year and days off each week. These are health related issues. Heather et al (2005) found evidence of work overload in Alberta farm women who were also health care workers. I heard the participants talk about taking holidays from their off-farm work to support their families and do farm work. There is a serious discrepancy here and serious enough that these workers recognize themselves that they are not giving 100% to their workplace when they arrive tired from trying to fulfill the needs of their various unpaid roles outside the workplace.

Farm women are the safety champions for their families, and continue to worry about the safety of their spouses when they are not there because of off-farm work commitments. They are

concerned about their husbands farming alone and how their children, in absence of child care, are fitting into the farm lifestyle. They were aware that there is risk taking on the farm, that child labour that may be problematic, and that older farmers pose a danger to themselves and others. These are all part of the cultural expectations perpetuated by a patriarchal structure that they have become a part of, usually through marriage.

Injury Prevention Strategies and Coping

Farm women need to be empowered (Wright, 2005). I extend the empowerment specifically to safety concerns. They have a natural desire for good communication, a caregiving attitude, a desire to educate, and most importantly a goal for their families to be safe. It is necessary for women to incorporate feminism for their own care and to ultimately protect their families. Men also need to be empowered to see themselves as worthy of being healthy and safe. Empowered families would have what is necessary to ensure a safe and healthy farm. They cope with difficult circumstances by employing various safety education strategies including communication, modeling, and storytelling.

O'Hara (1997) credits farm women with the education of their children, including safety education. One woman said, "I think we have to realize that we're a big part of our safety and the kids' safety and we should say exactly how we are feeling and communicate" (42:374-375). Safety relates to communication, and farm women advocate for good communication skills on the farm, demonstrating this to their children through modeling and communication strategies.

Women in my study spoke of being role models for their children. Pryor (2005) noted that when mothers use personal protective equipment, so do their children. The logical safety concern here is that children may not learn from this educational strategy if mom is off the farm. Farm women know the value of modeling which can be done only if they are present, and it concerns them that they are away from the farm so much and not present to do some of this valuable teaching.

Farm women demonstrated their ability to connect with people through stories. They connected with each other and the researcher as they talked about how they told stories to teach their families. These connections and the corresponding safety messages are part of their safety strategy on the farm. However, in order to be present for those teachable moments, storytelling, and modeling, they need the support from their families and society to afford them fewer off-farm work hours. This is where feminism could help them protect their families. They just need to accept it and make it theirs.

One of the aims that I had for my focus groups was to provide the opportunity to share lived experiences. This was easy to do since these women used story telling as a way of sharing their lives and connecting through those stories. As they did so, they focused on what they needed to make their farms safer. Palmer (1998) describes this process of connecting through storytelling and suggests that the issues could become “public and compelling” (Palmer, 1998, p. 36). Once there is a prominent voice of farm women, farm safety issues could become public and compelling.

The reflection that took place during this time was also very rewarding as these groups felt they had gained something from the process. They challenged some of their own values and practices with critical reflection. They considered their situations openly and challenged their values, culture, and behaviour. They expressed the ludicrous nature of their existences, working off the farm and on the farm while taking care of a family. Although this had an illuminating effect, there were also some sad realizations and some frustrations voiced. However, they ultimately felt that they had benefitted from the discussion.

Consciousness-raising. The members of these focus groups experienced stages of consciousness-raising evident by their comments regarding their experiences. They could now challenge the unfairness of not having a monetary value attached to their farm and household work as well as the lack of help they received when they were not in peak season. Jost's (1995) theory of false-consciousness can be applied here. I believe we can start bringing farm women out of false-consciousness as they develop their voices and give them the ability to take action to make the injustices visible; they have recognized the injustice but require the power to move forward and have their voices heard. As I listened to the focus group recordings, I felt these women moving through the stages of Lather's (1991, 1986) consciousness-raising diagram. They will find themselves located in a stage of action and liberation more of the time. Farm women can support each other by having local meetings. Electronic discussions could also take place on on-line forums, blogs, Facebook groups, and so forth. When they get to a healthy stage of empowerment, they may choose a public arena.

Women expressed a desire to be heard during the focus group sessions by commenting that they wanted to see articles regarding this topic everywhere. They want their voices to be heard. They wanted everyone to know about the struggles they faced and the hazards Saskatchewan farm families face. They suggested that talking about it was a positive step and that there should be more meetings like these. Such meetings give them the support they need to increase the safety on their farms as well as develop their acceptance of feminism and rejection of the patriarchal hold on them.

Friere's (1970) struggle for humanization will continue until society recognizes and pays for the food they eat: "The farmer is the only man in the economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale and pays the freight both ways" (John F. Kennedy, 1960). Different groups over the decades have attempted a unified voice for lobbying government. But the patriarchal culture of silence and male independence has made it difficult for them to advocate successfully for themselves.

Farm women have the potential to liberate themselves and their husbands and families from their oppressors if they use their voices. Farm women themselves may be oppressors at times by enabling the farmer's belief that he is the breadwinner. Perhaps these women's reflections, with some encouragement, will lead to action (Friere, 1970). They must also consider their value rather than succumbing to the imposed myths, in this case the "agrarian myth" accepted by a society that benefits from their firm belief in this myth.

Feminism

Brandth (2002) found that farm women had experienced discussions with co-workers about their multiple roles a problem because the other women saw the huge work-load as a type of abuse. I also found that at times women in the focus groups thought these farm women were crazy. They sometimes even called themselves crazy, and questioned why they thought they could do all of this.

Although Heather (2005) found farm women struggling for a voice, the women in my focus groups, by their own report, used their voices to begin to stand up for themselves. They were able to stand up for themselves and insist on good communication without negative reactions. This is a step in the right direction towards rural feminism. They knew they had to continue to speak up for themselves because no one else was going to. They brought this up themselves, demonstrating on multiple occasions that they do this in a variety of circumstances on the farm.

For farm women to embrace their own kind of feminism, their voices must be heard first. Brandth (2001) claims that farm women do not identify with feminism, but I believe that we are one step closer to hearing farm women's voices so that there will be a mutual understanding and they will be able to embrace feminism. However, I found that, like Brandth (2002) their main strategy is still loyalty to the family farm. But, given a voice, they may be able eventually to identify with feminism albeit with difficulty, considering the conservative ideology that permeates the agricultural culture. This brings us back to the potential of Oldrup's "new language." These farm women have expressed a desire to have a voice. They also intend to be

loyal to the farm. In light of these conversations, I believe that the language used must accommodate the loyalty to the farm and the culture surrounding the farm family. Sensitivity is the key here to introduce feminism in a way that accommodates culture.

Patriarchy has changed in ways that frees men from the guilt previously associated with accepting their wives' off-farm income to support the farm and family. It essentially gave the illusion of equality to women yet exploited them further. Their wives work double and triple duty to gain extra funds. This is demonstrated by the expectation that farm women will work off the farm and give their income for use in the farming operation. However, this adjustment to accommodate women's off-farm roles (very few women now do not work off the farm) does not seem to have decreased the overall stress level of farming families. On the contrary, the stress seems to be higher or has moved to areas other than the financial.

As Wilkenson (1999) found in his or her study, groups that focused on individual experiences within a social context gave voice to participants and had a balance of power. Having begun with a few guiding questions, these women led the discussions. They were happy to share their experiences in the small groups, which seemed the ideal research setting for this purpose.

Some farm women were beginning to decrease their work load where they could. For example, the traditional garden produce that was canned or frozen is decreasing in amount or they simply quit gardening. They are aware that commuting decreases the time they have on the farm and with family, and that being away places their family at risk, so they cut corners where

they can, but it is not enough to decrease the work load to a reasonable level. However, they still believe in the farming way of life.

The garden is a symbol of this work. The women who have had gardens have either given up or still struggle with them. Some have failed and some have succeeded. The garden has to some extent gone by the wayside. It was a tradition that kept many families in food for the winter, making them almost self-sufficient, but that was back in a day when farm women did not work off the farm. Those days when mom, dad, kids, and grandparents worked hard for seven months of the year and had some periods of leisure time throughout the winter months are gone. Farm life has become an intense, fast-paced lifestyle rivalling that of large city life, but with a sparse population.

Urban women's struggle to gain equality in the work place is analogous to the farm woman's effort to deal with exploitation. These women may find equality in the workplace, but at home they are being exploited by their families, communities, and a society that insists on supplying cheap food to its population. Yet their contributions are still under acknowledged. If society is aware of this exploitation, it should pay attention. However, it is entirely possible that no one will even notice until all small farms are obliterated from the Saskatchewan landscape and Canadians start paying more for food.

My Position

I continue to challenge my position in the research (Pini, 2004) although it has been difficult at times. I learned very much, and at the same time realized how much is still unknown

and how much needs to be done. I also learned how extensive this area really is and the reach that this small area of research could have if it is carried forward.

As I worked through the analyses, I experienced various stages of consciousness-raising myself. Previously Lather's (1991) chapter on "Staying Dumb" had resonated with me only on a superficial level. However, after working through the analysis, I felt a keen sense of urgency to carry on as the analysis of this project drove itself forward. It grew and multiplied like a fertilized garden, but not without a few weeds that needed to be hoed throughout the process. I became comfortable with the literature, my research, and the outcomes, including a clear sense of future direction necessary to make a difference.

My biggest challenge was that the data did not fit into clear, logical sections, so it was comforting to read that this type of research "does not fit categorical unities that order and classify" (Lather, p. 124). This helped me realize that it was not just me being incapable of clear classification. My research led me to more questions that I should ask, since everything is interconnected, and therefore, it is impossible to isolate one small section and discover a clear answer.

Lather (1991) talks about the subtle ways that women are discounted, and this reminded me of the farm women who were hesitant to bring up the "little things" or trivial items that concerned them. These hesitations demonstrated a certain prevailing attitude. They were made to feel that their concerns were not as important because they were women's concerns. This will continue until they are empowered to challenge patriarchy.

For farm women to embrace feminism, their voices must be heard first. If loyalty to the family farm led them to off-farm work without questioning their workload, perhaps they need to consider whether loyalty is not just an oppressive tool that patriarchy uses to keep them hopelessly trapped. Feminism would support them by questioning their workload. Once they have a voice, they may be able to eventually identify with feminism although it will still be a difficult road ahead of them considering the conservative ideology that permeates the agricultural culture. One day their voices will come through loud and clear at the front and centre of the agriculture health and safety mission.

Although the beginning of this study was difficult because I realized many things about my own experiences, by the time I got to the focus groups, I had come to terms with my own positions of privilege (Lather, 1991) due to the amount of reading and reflecting I had done prior to the research. I could not have really accepted my position within the research due to my previous experiences any sooner. When we met in these groups, I think these women were already on the cusp of exercising their voice, and I succeeded in encouraging these women to use their voices. They know so much local context and have a very clear perspective of safety on the farm. I hope to be part of facilitating this continued development in the future.

Lather (1991) states that there are “three primary characteristics of the object of emancipatory pedagogy: she is both victimized and capable of agency; while she has something approximating false consciousness, that consciousness is unified and capable of Freirean conscientization, knowing the world in order to set herself free from it. Finally, a basic assumption in the construction of this subject is that it is knowledge that will set her free”

(p.141). I believe that the farm woman is capable of agency once she is able to have her voice heard. However, until she experiences conscientization, she will be stuck in an endless circle of multiple roles. Part of this process could be her reconciling her loyalty to the farm with her identification of feminism she can be comfortable with. Having a voice, being armed with safety knowledge, and developing her own character of feminism may set her free.

Future Research Directions

Additional focus groups could be held using questions coming out of this research. Farm women appreciated the opportunity and felt they had benefited by being a part of the focus group. The discussion of both farm safety strategies and coping skills gave them ideas and support making it a consciousness-raising experience for them.

It is important to examine further how these women are taking care of themselves because certainly no one else is. Even more important is a phenomenon that is becoming more common regarding the older women in their 40s, 50s, and 60s who are doing more and more farm work as their children leave home and do not return to the farm. If this is happening now, it will continue as the current farm women age.

Recommendations include that women be the first point of contact when health and safety is involved, whether that is for research purposes or for intervention. Women are in-the-know regarding their family's safety.

I intend to bring farm women's voices together through social media, and ultimately through the web, social interactions, farm women's groups, and other means as they arise. My

vision is that all farm women feel they have support as long as the family farm exists and that a language of feminism will emerge for farm women. Social media is a current venue which can reach throughout rural Saskatchewan.

It has been my goal to make this area of farm women's lives visible, to get their perspectives and to learn how they cope. I believe I have done this in a small way and feel privileged that these women opened a window to their lives for me. My goal is to take the results from this research and push it forward to continue this research to make this area of farm women's lives visible by giving them more opportunity to have a voice.

Gaps to be Filled

Health and safety interventions may be more successful if they focus on women's perspectives and give women what they need to continue the safety education that they are already doing on the farm. Women must become more visible. It is now time to set up a means for farm women to communicate such as a series of groups where women can congregate and communicate. Social media is one way to bring these women together in a meaningful way such as Facebook, Twitter, and other online groups.

We are developing the farm woman's voice and with this will eventually come a "consciousness-raising" (Litosellite, 2003). They need to form groups to make this happen. The only way that groups can form in such a vast province is through electronic means. Social media can bring this population of rural women together, where opportunity to meet across the province

is limited; it is an alternative that must be developed. It is a way to communicate, a way to gain a voice that has been elusive, first for farm women, and secondly for the farm family.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to give farm women the opportunity to share their perspectives regarding safety on the farm, their coping strategies, and the choices they make while working off the farm. This study found that they work off the farm to sustain the operation, they engage in various injury prevention strategies regularly, they experience worrying about their family's safety when they are working off the farm, and they are subject to outdated cultural expectations based on a patriarchal culture in which they find themselves undervalued.

Providing farm women with an opportunity to exercise their voice also gave them the opportunity to move through various stages of consciousness-raising. Work in this area must continue to grow and farm women will have to develop an identity that includes feminism, and communicate with each other across the province to develop a voice loud enough to be heard to elicit change. Eventually they will obtain the support they need to make their environments safer. If this change is not possible, then perhaps farm women will be empowered to refuse to allow their families to be exploited, resulting in fewer family farms and more ghost towns, changing the Saskatchewan rural landscape of farming forever.

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APPENDIX A

Questions

1. **Opening:** Invite each participant to take a couple of minutes to talk about their background. Tell us your chosen Pseudonym, how long you have lived on the farm, where you work off the farm, and the number of children you have (This introduction is not limited to this, but limited in time).
2. Think back to when you first moved to the farm. What were your expectations of your work roles, care giving, and so forth?
3. How important is safety on your farm? To you? To your family?
4. What situations have generally influenced or affected your experiences of farm safety?
5. What have you experienced in terms of farm safety in consideration of your off farm work?
6. Describe a safe and healthy lifestyle on the farm.
7. What would you need to ensure a safe and health family farm?
8. What are your farm injury prevention strategies?

The moderator gives an oral summary:

Conclusion:

9. a) How well does that capture what was said here today?
b) Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't?
10. Of all the topics discussed, which one is the most important to you? (everyone answers this question)

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled *Farm Women's Perspectives on Agricultural Health and Safety, Their Coping Skills and Choices While Dealing with Multiple Roles*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Researchers:

Bonita Mechor, BA, B.Ed., College of Education, University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 477-8004

Supervisor: Geraldine Balzer, Ph.D., College of Education, University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 966-6920

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine the agricultural health and safety perspectives of women living on Saskatchewan farms. The agriculture sector has a high rate of injury, yet women's voices are not represented in the literature.

I want to know how they deal with the health and safety issues on their farm, especially when they often have multiples roles including working on the farm, off the farm, and caring for their families.

Procedures:

This focus group will last about an hour and a half, during which time the discussion will be audio recorded for later analysis. During the analysis, concepts and themes that emerge will be considered. After the analysis, my thesis will be written.

Potential Benefits:

The results of this research will benefit researchers and policy makers who are interested in farm safety interventions and the voice of farm women.

Potential Risks:

This study is deemed to be low risk. There may be some personal discomfort if past experiences were negative.

Confidentiality:

The storage of the audio recordings and transcripts will be taken care of at the University of Saskatchewan. The anonymity of the participants will be assured by the use of pseudonyms in any published documents. Only the research team will have access to the transcripts and recordings.

Due to the face to face nature of focus groups, participants may be identifiable to each other. It is important that the group maintain confidentiality for each other.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from your involvement. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the research team. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason during this meeting, at any time, without penalty of any sort.

Questions:

"If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on August 26, 2011. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect."

Follow-Up or Debriefing:

If you are interested in the findings of this study, you may contact Bonita Mechor.

Written Consent to Participate:

I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

(Name of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Participant)

(Signature of Researcher)

APPENDIX C

