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September 1998
Farm Women:
Diverse Encounters with Discourse and Agency

Susan J. Peoples

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Otago,
Dunedin, New Zealand.

December 2006
Abstract

This thesis contributes to the established literature on farm women within the context of family farming. It recognises that not enough is yet known about the discourses and agency which influence their lives. Consequently, this study has sought to establish what dominant discourses shape the lives of farm women, their responses to these discourses and how their discursive positioning influences their agency.

This study employed a qualitative case study approach involving interviews with a diverse mixture of independent farm women, along with women farming in marital relationships. This thesis engages these narratives to showcase the colourful, complex life-experiences of farm women. In addition, and where present, women’s partners were interviewed to provide male farmers’ perspectives about women in family farming.

This research has found that women’s lives are shaped by positioning and contextualising discourses, with which they comply to ensure that the family farm survives. Their subservient discursive positioning limits the agency they can express, although they are able to mobilise indirect agency through supporting their partner; an implicit form of agency which has previously been unrecognised or understated.

Cumulatively, this thesis highlights the need to recognise the diversity of farm women, and how they are able to exercise agency from their constrained subject positions within the family farming context. Furthermore it emphasises that agency is a dynamic, and far more varied concept than previously understood.
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A Tribute to Farm Women:  
The Farmer's Wife

The farmer came in from the field one day, His languid step and his weary way,  
His bended brow and sinewy hand, All showing his work for the good of the land;  
For he sows, And he hoes, And he mows, All for the good of the land.

By the kitchen fire stood his patient wife, Light of his home and joy of his life,  
With face all aglow and busy hand, Preparing the meal for her husband's band;  
For she must boil, And she must broil, And she must toil, All for the sake of the home.

Sun shines bright when the farmer goes out, Birds sing sweet songs, lambs frisk about,  
The brook babbles softly in the glen, While he works bravely for the good of the men;  
For he sows, And he hoes, And he mows, All for the good of the land.

How briskly the wife steps about within- The dishes to wash and the milk to skim.  
The fire goes out and the flies buzz about- For dear ones at home her hear is kept stout;  
There are pies to bake, There is bread to bake, And steps to take, All for the sake of the home.

When the day is o'er and the evening has come, The creatures are fed and the milking is done,  
He takes his rest 'neath the old shade tree, From the labour of the land and his thoughts are free;  
Though he sows, And he hoes, And he mows, He rests from the work of the land.

But the faithful wife, from sun to sun, Tales the burden up that's never done;  
There is no rest, there is no pay, For the household's good she must work away;  
For to mend the frock, And to knit the sock, And the cradle to rock, All for the good of the home.

When autumn is here with crippling blast, The farmer gathers is crop at last,  
His barns are full, his fields are bare, For the good of the land he ne'er hath care.  
While it blows, And it snows, Will the winter goes, He rests from the work of the land.

But the willing wife, till life's closing day, Is the children's and the husband's stay,  
From day to day she hath done her best, Until death alone can give her rest,  
For after the test, Comes the rest, With the blest, In the farmer's heavenly home.

Anonymous (1885)
Chapter 1  Introduction

Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, except backwards and in high heels.  Thaves (1982)

The dancing relationship between Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers provides an analogy for the life of a farm woman. While Ginger Rogers was certainly not wearing ‘gumboots’, she was a crucial part of the dancing duo, supporting her partner as he led her around the dance floor. She complied with dance etiquette following Fred’s ‘lead’, which ultimately enabled him to achieve fame and recognition for his dancing feats. Ginger largely remained the invisible ‘other half’. Likewise, the farm woman has traditionally been the supportive farmer’s wife who complies with broader agricultural and rural social expectations. She has followed her husband’s ‘lead’ and assisted him with the running of the family farm. This has enabled him to maintain the position of ‘farmer’ and the prestige associated with being a landowner and operator, whilst she has often remained the invisible helper behind the scenes.

Farm women\(^1\) have a long association with family farming, arguably one of the few remaining pre-modern social and economic units to have survived into contemporary Western society. Thus far, the lives and contributions of women on family farms have largely been explored from the feminist academic’s perspective. Such work has aimed to challenge the inequalities that prevail in farming households. While this thesis recognises that previous work, it aims to document the lives of farm women and the meanings and practices which contextualise them. In doing so, it seeks to place the women’s own experiences and voices centre stage to produce a more nuanced, in-depth account of their lived realities. Furthermore, this study will explore the contexts and choices farm women continue to make, including the continuation of their own inferior positions.

\(^1\) Farm women refer to all women involved in farming. They may be independent operators or kin of male farmers, e.g. wife, daughter, mother. As farmer’s wives constitute the largest group of farm women on family farms the following research and discussion will be referring to that population.
1.1 Past studies of women on farms
An in-depth understanding of the lives of farm women has, until recently, been incidental to family farm research. To contextualise this study, an initial appreciation is needed of family farming (and its changing circumstances) and the significance of women on family farms.

1.1.1 The persistence of family farming
The experience of farming for women in Western societies has mainly occurred through their involvement in the long-established unit of the ‘family farm’. However, before embarking on research involving family farming, some clarity of the definition is required. Recent commentary on family farms has highlighted the problems of defining the concept of a ‘family farm’. Gray (1998) suggests that past practice has been to formulate an ideal theoretical definition of the ‘family farm’ based on clear taxonomic criteria. These include Gasson and Errington’s (1993) six elements of family farming, and Djurfeldt’s (1996) ‘notional family farm’ definition. Gray emphasises that these theoretical definitions, focussing on quantitative measures, lack the practicalities associated with how farmers perceive family farming. This study recognises the two definitions above, but supports Gray’s (1998, p. 14) premise that, “…family farming is more a way of being-in-the world than a specific set of people, relations and/or activities whose boundaries can be precisely defined.” Gray goes on to emphasise that the essence of a family farm is not solely the product of specific attributes which combine to produce a measurable concept, but is an appreciation of ‘things’ that are ‘family-farm like’, including a strong interdependence between social and economic factors (principally family labour and the farm), the interconnection between family members and the land, and the commitment made to keep the farm in the family.

For this study, the definition of family farms combines theoretical and practical elements. Figure 1.1 highlights the diverse range of components which interact to form a family farm. The list of elements on the left focuses on the social aspects of the family

---

2 Gasson and Errington’s (1993, p. 18) family farm business definition:
The six elements that can be observed include: business ownership is combined with managerial control in the hands of business principals; these principals are related by kinship or marriage; family members provide capital to the business; family members including business principals do farm work; business ownership and managerial control are transferred between the generations with the passage of time; he family lives on the farm.

3 Djurfeldt (1996) criticised Gasson and Errington’s (1993) definition emphasising that it was too contextually bound to British farming, thus preventing comparative studies between different societies or times. Djurfeldt’s definition focused more on the centrality of family labour in the definition suggesting that it is, “… more formal, and which therefore promises a sharper edge for our research.” (Djurfeldt, 1996, p341).
Family Components
- Household/family unit
- Individual household members
- Intergenerational links
- Extended family members
- Consumers
- Reproduction of the family unit

Farm Business Components
- Family business enterprise
- Commodity production
- Means of production reproduction
- Environmental management
- External agricultural sector links

Family/Individual Aims
- Successful/content family
- Status as a good farmer
- Recognised for work
- Contentedness
- Satisfaction
- Farm lifestyle
- Continue the family tradition
- Skill utilisation
- Freedom to do own thing
- Work/life balance

Business aims
- Maximising production levels
- Satisfactory income/profit
- Asset growth/improvement
- Successful business dynamics
- Independence as own boss(es)

FIGURE 1.1: The interacting social and economic elements of a family farm
Source: Adapted from Johnsen (1999), Gasson and Errington (1993)
farm (the family and its members across generations), whilst on the right the diagram emphasises the economic aspects, underlining the complex, multi-faceted circumstances in which farm households operate. The combination of the farm's means of production, incorporating land ownership and the household's provision of labour, is seen to be the key to its identity, and central to its continued survival.

It is acknowledged by past rural researchers that the definition of 'family' is also variable. Generally, family farm research has explored the lives of monogamous, heterosexual couples (Whatmore, 1991a). This study considers such definitions as too restrictive, and encompasses a broader notion to cater for households in other configurations, recognising that definitions of 'family' are still evolving (including same sex partnerships). For the purpose of this study, family farming was recognised as something that could include both independent/single women and heterosexual couples. This includes households that may not be the traditional 'nuclear' family, such as single-parent families, and where children may, or may not, reside on the property. The family farm character lies more in the sense that the farm has been transferred through patriarchal inheritance, and is expected to continue to be associated with a family over time, even though the individual generations of the family may differ in configuration.

Moving away from the traditional definition of 'family' caters for the diversity that exists between farm families, and between farm women, and this is an important aspect of social research, something that rigid typologies do not cater for.

As emphasised previously, family farms represent a form of commodity production that has prevailed through into industrialised, Western culture. In attempting to explain the continued existence of family farming within Western agriculture as a sustainable form of production, research has thoroughly documented the survival of family farming as it has entered into an era of increased globalisation and restructuring (Cloke, 1989; Le Heron et al., 1991; Cloke, 1996; Le Heron and Roche, 1999).

Through the late 1970s and 1980s, commentaries of Western agricultural economies and societies drew on Marxist analyses of capitalism (Friedmann, 1978; Goodman and Redclift, 1985). During this era, family farms were perceived by researchers to be complex economic units because they not only produced commodities for a capitalist marketplace; they did it using a combination of waged and unwaged labour, and profit-making values (Friedmann, 1978). As global capitalism increasingly influenced agriculture, and the need for profit accumulation increased, traditional family farm
production was seen to be at the mercy of market driven political and economic policies across a range of scales (Goodman and Redclift, 1985). As a consequence, at the individual farm level, change was endemic, and clearly visible with changing monetary values, commodity prices and inflation (Cloke, 1989; Moran et al., 1993; Cloke, 1996; Johnsen, 1999). However, whilst the use of quantitative, and critical Marxist-inspired research provided useful insights into how family farms endured through increased globalisation and restructuring, these methodologies were unable to document social changes, such as the responses of farm families during times of enormous external change (Johnsen, 1999).

Consequently, some academics recognised that qualitative research was needed to gain an understanding of the social issues at work within a family farm, as a family farm is not only a relationship between the family household and the farm business, but also embodies a whole set of internal relationships (Whatmore, 1991a). In particular, feminist scholars, such as Shorthall (1992), built on the Marxist concept of inequality to explore gender disparities in farm household organisation. Within the growing body of research on family farming, gender became increasingly recognised as a key component of agriculture and farming communities (Whatmore, 1991a; Little and Morris, 2005). As scales of analysis reduced, the individual members of family farms, especially women, became the focus of a growing body of academic research across a range of disciplines.

1.1.2 The significance of farm women on family farms

Women have long participated in family farming. Early research documented their lives by focussing on the gender roles within family farms, and the tasks that women performed (Bouquet, 1982; 1984). More recent research has increasingly recognised that the contribution of women to the family farm household and farm business is crucial for the reproduction of the family farm (Whatmore, 1991a; O'Hara, 1998; Oldrup, 1999; Shortall, 2002), although their work has been largely invisible and unrecognised (Whatmore et al., 1994; Brandth, 2002a).

Traditionally, farming has been seen as ‘men’s work’, whilst women dominated the domestic sphere looking after their children and supporting their spouses (O'Hara, 1998). More recent research has emphasised farm household division of labour inequalities and highlighted the associated gendered power relations (Whatmore, 1991a; Shortall, 1992; Little, 1997a; Kelly and Shortall, 2002). Numerous studies exposed the
unequal gender relations, and documented how women’s unpaid productive and reproductive work helped sustain the family farm (Little, 1997a; O’Hara, 1998; Kelly and Shortall, 2002).

Current literature shows that the position of farm women is still secondary to that of the male farmer, and still widely under-recognised (Bennett, 2004; Heather et al., 2005; Bennett, 2006; Brandth, 2006). Research has noted that irrespective of what women do on the family farm, they are positioned through the naturalisation of men’s and women’s [socially constructed] attributes and abilities. This naturalisation occurs via discourses of masculinity and patriarchy (Liepins, 1998; Saugeres, 2002c). The operation of these discourses maintains the inferior and often invisible position of farm women and legitimises their exclusion from the identity of ‘farmer’. It also places expectations upon them to perform reproductive work, and reduces the attention given to their productive tasks on the family farm (Whatmore, 1991a).

Overall, women remain vital to the survival of family farming through their reproductive and productive contributions; however, their less visible position and minor status appear to be largely unchanged. Not enough is known about the contradiction between the contribution of farm women and their status. Indeed, some feminist researchers have questioned why farm women continue to subscribe to their subservient existence (Brandth, 2002b). Feminists suggest that a farm woman’s discursive positioning and agency should reflect her importance as a key farm household member who facilitates the family farm’s survival (Shortall, 1992). This thesis takes up this issue and seeks to consider the contexts in which farm women live and the responses and actions they select, in an effort to understand why farm women continue to work and live on a family farm when feminist scholars have convincingly demonstrated the existing inequalities. To achieve this, there is also a need to appreciate wider gender issues and theory to explore this problem.

1.2 Wider understandings of context and action from gender studies
Both within and beyond geography, studies of gender and the lives of women in particular have sought to understand the prevalence of gender inequality. There has been a need to understand why women tolerate social relations which lessen their interests to those of men, and the meanings and practices that lead men and women to adopt particular positions to represent themselves (Weedon, 1987). Post-structural approaches have been important in assisting with an increased recognition and
understanding of gender inequalities, with feminist theorists showing that women’s experiences are significantly affected by wider social and cultural constructions and practices concerning gender. These are articulated through the concept of discourse, which is seen as a structuring principle of society, a lens through which to interpret occurrences, trends and events using language in the form of concepts, ideas, norms, arguments and knowledge that give meaning to the world. Discourses are assembled and contested in discursive fields; a concept produced by the French theorist Michel Foucault, whereby discursive fields consist of competing ways to provide meaning to the world and of organising social institutions and processes (Weedon, 1987).

Both geographers and sociologists have shown that gendered discourses are powerful in shaping expectations, conditions and subject positions for farm women (and men) (Brandth and Haugen, 1997; Liepins, 1998; Brandth, 2006). This study extends on these works by exploring the range of discourses that commonly influence the lives of farm women and their subsequent subject positions. Furthermore, with an increased understanding of power inequalities, feminist studies have also been interested in women’s agency (Davies, 1990; Hartman, 1991; Davies and Harre, 2001). A post-structural notion of agency refers to the capacity and ability of an individual to act and carry out their intentions from within their discursive positioning, thus agency implies power (Davies, 1991; Hartman, 1991; McNay, 2000). This thesis adopts this concept of agency to investigate the actions that farm women take in response to discourses that shape their daily lives; exploring the degree of autonomy they possess within the family farming context. This study will be facilitated by three guiding research questions.

1.3 Thesis structure and guiding research questions

This thesis recognises that there is an existing contradiction between the critique of gender in family farming and the lived worlds of farm women (Brandth, 2002b). Past research has focussed on farm women using various frameworks, including theories of gender roles and relations, gender identity and discourse (Brandth, 2002a). However, these have concentrated on farm women as a generic group; documenting what farm women do, how they interact with farm men, and their resulting identities, within the farm household context. Research has also been principally from a feminist, urban-based, academic perspective, setting an agenda that may not correlate with the agendas of farm women. A detailed review of previous knowledge and the relevant concepts is elaborated in Chapter Two.
While this study acknowledges the critique of previous feminists' work (Sachs, 1983; Whatmore, 1991a; Shortall, 1992; O'Hara, 1998; Brandth, 2002b) that has documented the gender inequalities present in farm household organisation, it seeks to gain a better understanding of how this occurs in the lives of individual farm women and how they respond. An in-depth case study approach has been employed to gain a detailed, critical awareness of farm women and the complexities in their lives (O'Hara, 1998; Herbert, 2000; Bennett, 2005; 2006). This has been particularly helpful for exploring the diversity of women's experiences, something which others have increasingly acknowledged needs to happen. For instance, Pratt (2004) emphasises that the analysis of marginalised groups, such as women, must be sensitive to difference. Similarly, Grace and Lennie (1998) noted that the past tendency of perceiving farm women in terms of uniformity was simplistic, as the lives of farm women are complex and diverse.

For this thesis, the research is confined to a detailed study of the discourses and actions of farm women in two regions of Southern New Zealand; South Canterbury and Otago (Figure 1.2). These areas were selected as case-study regions as both have a strong pastoral history (Section 2.2.3). The fieldwork for this research was conducted between October 2004 and June 2005, with a total of thirty-four farm women participants. Each woman's life is also considered to be an individual case-study, to facilitate an in-depth study of their lives in their specific circumstances. These decisions and the wider methodological and implementation choices that shaped this study are outlined in Chapter Three.

Importantly, the diversity of women (and their relationships with men) is recognised so this study includes 27 women farming with male partners (24 of whom participated in this research), and seven women farming independently whereby they have sole operational responsibility for their family farm. Further diversity was gained through ensuring that participants came from a range of farming situations; six farm women reside on extensive, high country sheep stations (2,000+ hectares), eight on semi-extensive, hill country properties (1000-2000 hectares), seventeen on moderately sized properties (200-999 hectares), and three live on small landholdings (<200 hectares). Further participant details are provided in Chapter Three.

1.3.1 Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to gain an understanding of the contexts and actions of farm women. In order to better appreciate their lives, where past feminist literature has
FIGURE 1.2: New Zealand location map showing the study regions of Otago and South Canterbury
suggested they live in unequal and unfair situations, this study considers the circumstances (especially cultural expectations) that frame their lives. Using post-structural theory, these circumstances are understood to be discursive assemblages of different meanings and practices which provide the frameworks through which women live their lives.

To explore these discourses, the first research question asked: *What are the dominant discourses that shape the lives of farm women?* This question enabled an exploration of the principal discourses that influence farm women, identifying which discourses position women within the context of family farming, imbuing them with subjectivities that give meaning to the family farming world and its social structures and processes. These discourses are analysed in Chapter Four.

This study then explores how farm women respond to these discourses. This thesis recognises that there is limited awareness of women's actions in the family farming context. Literature has documented the roles, relations and identities of farm women in response to the unequal gender relations of farm households (Whatmore, 1991a; Shortall, 1992; Bennett, 2005), but rarely reported the responses of women to these inequalities. Likewise, past feminist research has highlighted that farm women are not challenging and changing their discursive inferiority (Brandth, 2002b), but it has not documented what farm women are doing in response to the discourses shaping their lives. Hence, this study has been directed by a second research question: *How do farm women respond to these dominant discourses?* To achieve this, the research employed a dual approach; focussing on the active (work-based) responses of farm women, and also their self-reflective, expressive responses. This has enabled a comparison between what they actively do on (and off) the family farm, and how they express their identities, in response to the subjectivities shaping their lives. The results of these comparisons are interpreted in Chapter Five.

The last theme in this study involved the agency that women possess given their discursive positioning. Past research has emphasised the minor position that farm women possess on family farms, and this is seen to be the product of gender discourses that prevail within the agricultural sector (Liepins, 1998; Brandth, 2006). However, it is assumed by many academics that because of their inferior positioning, farm women have little or no influence into how the family farm is managed. Thus, the last research question guiding this study asked: *How does the discursive positioning of farm women...*
influence their agency? This question has supported an in-depth exploration of farm women's and men's narratives to show the agency women can mobilise on the family farm. These findings are recorded in Chapter Six.

1.3.2 Thesis structure

This thesis is presented in seven chapters that document the lives of farm women. Chapter Two draws on the literature used to inform this study, identifying key concepts that are explored in subsequent chapters. First, the chapter reviews past literature concerning women on family farms, including an assessment of approaches that have observed and positioned them. The chapter then focuses on current theories used to study farm women, including theories of discourse, gender identity and agency.

In Chapter Three, post-structural and feminist methodological approaches are discussed, noting how these methodologies are suitable for investigating the discourses and agency of farm women. This is followed by a review of the qualitative research design, and the application of a case-study approach for this thesis. Lastly, an outline of the phases of the research process is followed by a discussion of researcher positionality and the limitations of this research.

Chapters Four through Six comprise research results. Chapter Four addresses the first research question and focuses on the dominant discourses shaping the lives of farm women. Two key groups of discourses will be explored; those which place farm women into discursively constructed subject positions, such as farmer's wife, or mother, and discourses that provide the circumstances into which they are positioned, such as the masculine-dominated environment of family farming. Chapter Five extends these findings through investigating how farm women respond to these discourses, either via self-reflective, expressive responses or active work responses. Lastly, Chapter Six utilises the findings of both previous chapters by exploring farm women agency, documenting what autonomy a farm woman possesses, given her discursive positioning within the family farm context. These chapters will also highlight the varying lives of individual farm women, emphasising the complex intersection between discourses, responses and agency.

Finally, Chapter Seven synthesises the discussion and findings of this thesis. It reflects on the contributions the thesis has made to academic debate, underlining the affirmations and challenges to previous research, along with its contributions to current
literature. Lastly, it highlights possible future directions which could further develop this particular topic and its inherent themes.
Chapter 2  Literature Review

...Slavery is mild in comparison to what some [farm] women have to endure. The land is well if there are many hands to work it, but I assure you the most prosperous [small] farms are due to the women. The men take the credit but the women do the work...

Anonymous (1889)

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One defined family farming and emphasised this as one of few pre-modern institutions to survive. Part of this survival is attributable to farm women, who, as emphasised in the quote above, are an important, under-recognised member of the family farm, worthy of further study and understanding. This literature chapter presents a conceptual lens through which such a study can occur. First, a brief review of family farming literature will focus on past research approaches and the continued dominance of family farms in the agricultural sector. This will be followed by an in-depth examination of how farm women have been studied internationally including an assessment of how different investigations have observed and positioned them. Subsequent to this will be a historic overview providing an account of the lives of farm women in the New Zealand context. From this foundation, this chapter will then turn to consider the current analytical apparatus being utilised to study farm women, in particular noting theories of discourse, gender identity and agency. Lastly, the chapter will outline how these concepts will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

2.2 Women on family farms

In order to appreciate the circumstances of farm women and their importance on family farms a review of previous research on family farming in Western societies is required. This section will document how early studies largely ignored micro-scale farm family dynamics, thus neglecting key components of the farm unit, in particular farm women (Whatmore, 1991a). This will be followed by an examination of research on farm women and the forms it has taken as social researchers, feminists in particular, have gained a greater understanding of the role farm women play on the family farm, the relationship dynamics that occur within the farm household, and the positions in which farm women are placed.
2.2.1 The family farm

As defined in Chapter One, the family farm is both an economic and social system of operation. The combination of the farm's means of production (i.e. land ownership and the household's provision of labour), is key to its identity, and central to its continued survival. Family farms remain a dominant form of agricultural production, rather than a marginalised transitional phenomenon. As a result, their continuation has posed an interesting dilemma for researchers who have taken various social, economic and political approaches to studying family farming.

In part, this research has focused on the social unit of the family and its ability to 'survive'. Most of the early literature on family farms emphasised the possible subsumption of family farming within capitalist developments of agriculture, a term used to refer to the degree of capitalist penetration into a family farm (Whatmore et al., 1987; Lem, 1988). This perspective suggested that family farming would become comprehensively subsumed within wider agri-food industries (Lem, 1988). But Moran, et al., (1996) noted that subsumption literature neglected the experience of countries such as New Zealand; where family farms remain the dominant form of production, and where different arrangements linking these family farms to the capitalist economy, such as farming co-operatives, are in place.

Despite the subsumption debate, research has documented that many family farm enterprises continue to survive because of their ability to adapt to variables that constantly change their bio-physical, economic, social and political environments (Bouquet, 1982; Johnsen, 1999). It has become evident that the capacity of the farm household to increase and negotiate its level of exploitation facilitates its ability to manage the pressures of increased capitalism and capitalist organisations. In addition, it has also become clearer that through different adaptation strategies, family farms have been able to adjust to internal and external changes, thus protecting themselves from the problems faced by the more inflexible capitalist structures of corporate farms (Whatmore, 1993).

Of primary consideration to rural researchers has been whether family farms can persevere as a form of production within capitalist economies, or whether family farms will disappear as corporate farming increases its adaptability through utilising technology to overcome the constraints of its biophysical foundation, and the uneven demands for labour on farms. In the face of this adversity, this thesis recognises that
family farming is an extremely adaptable mode of production within capitalist economies, which evolves and modifies as internal and external factors change, requiring extreme dexterity and adaptability of farm household members (Whatmore, 1993). Most importantly, and central to this study, is the significance of farm women in sustaining the family farm system of primary production.

2.2.2 Investigating the experience of farm women: an international chronology

A review of how farm women have been studied and viewed in the past is necessary to appreciate the relevance of various theoretical frameworks employed at different times. Figure 2.1 illustrates some of the key attributes of this literature as it has developed over the past four decades. Farm women as a focus for analysis only appeared on the scholarly 'radar' after the mid-1970s. Increasing dissatisfaction by feminist researchers, regarding the approaches of early farm studies, led to changes in the methods and scales of analysis of the research being undertaken on family farms (Bouquet, 1982; Whatmore, 1991a). Early political-economic analysis of family farm responses to restructuring and other changes, such as Friedmann's (1978) research, unsuccessfully accounted for irregularities or differences between farm family members, farm households and enterprises. Too many assumptions were made about how families responded, which led to beliefs that all households and their members, were generic in nature, acting and responding in a similar manner. Critics of this research led to the evolution of new approaches and frameworks of analysis for family farm households and those within them, in particular farm women (Whatmore, 1991a).

Early Marxists approaches, deemed to be more analytical in nature, explored the experiences of farm units' vis-à-vis capitalism. However, these works were relatively gender blind, since Marxists did not deal adequately with the gender inequalities present between members of the household. Researchers treated the family as a unitary entity, accessed through and represented by a single individual - the farmer and head of the household, both masculine defined terms (Whatmore, 1994). Concepts of work and labour within research and the treatment of the 'family' effectively discounted or silenced women's presence and contribution (Whatmore et al., 1994). These flaws meant that key underlying gender relations within the family farm were not being taken into consideration within explanations of how the family operated, how it was structured, or how the family labour processes were being sustained and transformed (Whatmore, 1991a). Crucial to further research was the development of the concept of
1960s - Second Wave of Feminist Fervour

Farm Women Are Largely Invisible

1976 - World Congress of Rural Sociology

Global Restructuring of the Agricultural Sector

Macro Quantitative Analysis

Growth of Feminist Theory in Geography and Sociology

Marxist Theory - developed focus of farm family

Emergence of Gender Role Theory in rural studies

1988 - World Congress of Rural Sociology
Farm Women firmly on the agenda

A growth in research: scholarly work documenting gender relation inequalities within farm families, agricultural industries and organisations, and rural community flourishes

An increased use of gender identity theory to gain an understanding of farm women's identities on and off, the farm

2006 - Traditional farm family patriarchal power relations, in conjunction with external political and economic restructuring, continue to drive family farming. Some contemporary research of farm women recognises that farm women have not identified with feminist ideals of gender equality within this family farming context which is leading to a re-evaluation of farm women, taking into consideration aspects of difference

FIGURE 2.1: A continuum of gender studies development
'gender' as a social division, constructed on cultural rather than biological foundations. This was a significant achievement within the study of women in farming (Whatmore, 1991a; 1994). Women were no longer seen only to be born but they were seen to take up, and negotiate, culturally specific gender positions, although these appeared to disadvantage women and their expectations of farm life.

Initial feminist research on farm women was mainly concerned with gender roles. Gender role theory suggested that women and men learn appropriate gender roles from social norms of behaviour, and from adult role models such as mothers and fathers, who legitimised, maintained and reinforced the learned behaviour (Whatmore, 1994). A descriptive analysis of the roles of farm women was documented, particularly their presence and contribution to family farming through their input to the productive and reproductive spheres (Bouquet, 1982; Sachs, 1983; Little, 1987; Berlan Darque and Gasson, 1991; Gasson and Winter, 1992).

Research into farm women's lives continued to grow during the 1980s, documenting the gender inequalities in farm households, in agricultural industries, agricultural organisations and in rural communities (Sachs, 1983; Fink, 1991; Alston, 1995). In addition, feminist researchers recognised the vital nature of women's domestic and on-farm work to the survival of the family farm. These understandings were supported by a greater appreciation of the unequal gender relations that were shaping the expectations of women on farms. Overall, these findings were finally acknowledging and conveying to others the presence of farm women, and their importance to the survival of family farming (Sachs, 1983; Whatmore, 1991a; O'Hara, 1998; Shortall, 1999; Little and Panelli, 2003). These works drew strongly on socialist feminist theory as they identified family farms as sites where divisions in labour existed and where women were oppressed, and so sought to highlight inequalities present in the power relations between men and women (Bouquet, 1982; Berlan Darque and Gasson, 1991; Whatmore, 1991a; Brandth, 2002a). Obvious gender divisions of labour highlighted that labour processes within the family were not just allocated in terms of tasks, whereby women were more suited to certain activities. Rather, the conditions under which men and women worked were also socially constructed (Whatmore, 1994).

To gain a greater understanding of these 'inequality dynamics', rural feminist scholars developed gender relations theory as a way to critique inequalities occurring in agriculture in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Little and Panelli, 2003). Gender relations
theory challenged the understanding that gender divisions were natural; the product of biological determinism and used by social feminists to explain ongoing processes and relations creating inequalities. This shift of focus from what roles farm women performed to the gender relations underpinning farm family dynamics between key members, represented a move from a theoretically static and limited form of explanation to a dynamic process whereby the domination of men over women was established and maintained (Whatmore, 1991a; 1994; Little, 1997a).

The move from role theory to gender relations theory also coincided with a recognition of the challenges of quantitative analysis. This move was mainly driven by feminist researchers, such as Sachs (1983) and Whatmore (1991a), who recognised the need for qualitative approaches that would enable a greater, more in-depth understanding of inequalities, such as those identified between members of farm households. Feminist geographers, in particular, moved towards intensive qualitative methods of investigation to uncover the social processes and relations of power that lie beneath geographical patterns (McDowell, 1997b). Rural studies reflected this move more widely across gendered geographies.

Of particular importance for feminist researchers at this time were patriarchal relations, a particular form of gender relations referring to uneven power relations between men and women based on expectations, rights and opportunities that advantaged males and disadvantaged females (Shortall, 1992; 1996). By focusing on patriarchal gender relations to analyse farm family households, the micro-scale gender relations played out through the practices of particular households were examined as particular points in a broader field of patriarchal gender relations (Whatmore, 1991a). This enabled feminist researchers to explain and challenge inherent gender inequalities and their resulting divisions, such as the gendered division of labour on farms.

Recognising the socially produced subservience of farm women, as a result of patriarchal gender relations, feminist research has also documented that farm women’s work is largely invisible and undervalued (Sachs, 1983; Alston, 1995). While both men and women are working on the farm, there is a widespread perception that most farmers are men because they are seen as the owner and manager of the family farm, whilst the women’s work, mainly inside the home as caregivers, is not considered to be real work (Brandth, 2002b; Alston, 2004). However, the invisibility of farm women is strongly
contradicted by Almas and Haugen (1991) who suggest that the invisibility of farm women has only been an issue for researchers who are isolated from farming realities.

This thesis recognises that it has been the intention of feminist researchers of farm women to make women and their on-farm endeavours visible, and to reconceptualise and to improve their lives (Sachs, 1983; Whatmore et al., 1994; Shortall, 1999; Brandth, 2002b). This study also considers that feminist theory does not provide a readily transferable theory to the farming sector because academic feminism is still largely derived from an urban background, despite this issue being recognised by other researchers early in the 1990s (Whatmore, 1991a; Grace and Lennie, 1998). Brandth (2002b) further emphasises possible contextual differences, noting that recent research documents how farm women in a Western agricultural context have still not identified with the ideas and politics of feminism, despite their subservient positions within the farming sector being highlighted by previous research. This disjuncture between farm women, academic feminists and the intricacies of farm women’s lives, where women often live in unequal relationships with their partners, forms a key context for this thesis.

In particular, it will continue to use a feminist theoretical approach, despite possible incompatibility issues (which will be discussed more within Chapter Three). But this thesis also questions past feminist practices of uniformly correlating invisibility with oppression. It recognises that the aims of past researchers (such as facilitating change) may have differed from the actual aspirations of the research participants. Thus, in addition to appreciating feminist critiques of inequality, this thesis will endeavour to respect and convey the understandings of farm women who may be content with, or at least accepting of, existing gender conditions. Furthermore, there is a need for a greater critical awareness of the realities and negotiations undertaken by farm women on family farms, focusing on them as individuals operating within a range of temporal, spatial and social dimensions. To gain some understanding of farm women in the New Zealand context, the following section provides an historic overview.

2.2.3 Investigating the experience of New Zealand farm women: a historic overview

The effects of short and long cycles of social and economic change are deeply entrenched in the farming communities of rural New Zealand (Joseph, 1999), as in other advanced communities (Phillips, 1998). As a consequence, cultural, social and
economic processes have persistently interacted to shape the dynamics of farm families and the lives of New Zealand’s farm women. The following sub-section provides a historic overview of farm women in New Zealand. While this current geographic study is from an international perspective, the farm women participants live in the context of rural New Zealand and so a historic outline is fitting.

The contribution of women to family farms in New Zealand has been acknowledged in numerous studies (Benedicksson et al., 1990; Keating and Little, 1994; Fairweather, 1995; Johnsen, 2001). This New Zealand literature reflects international research that has documented the importance of women on family farms and gender divisions in labour on farms in many Western countries (Sachs, 1983; Whatmore, 1991a; Shortall, 1992; Oldrup, 1999; Saugeres, 2002b). However, while New Zealand farm women are geographically isolated from other women, the ideologies and discourses which influence their lives are similar in that they are the product of increased industrialisation and urbanisation throughout the West. As Toynbee (1995, p. 188) notes, “Broad trends in economy and society everywhere generate similar family forms and similar ideologies and are historically specific.”

Within the New Zealand context, Toynbee (1995) identified three key forms of family production arising out of prevailing 19th and 20th century social conditions. They range from the ‘family-based economic unit’, through to the ‘male-provider economic unit’, to the more contemporary ‘dual-earner economy’. The characteristics of family life, and how families earn a living, have clearly had a profound influence on the lives and subject position of New Zealand farm women.

During the mid to late 19th century, New Zealand farm women were members of pre-industrial, subsistence family-based economic units (Toynbee, 1995). Irrespective of their age or gender, all family members contributed to the economic unit. Consequently, as an enterprise the family farm evolved into a social entity of critical importance. Many men had settled in New Zealand with the view of owning their own farms. For this

\[1\] New Zealand’s gender history stands on the shoulders of women’s history, and this has tended to be about Pakeha women, not dealing at all well with differences of class or ethnicity (Daley and Montgomerie, 1999). Consequently, unless women are specifically identified as Maori, they are understood to be of European origins. For the current study a woman’s ethnicity was not considered.

\[2\] Independent ownership was very important as pre-capitalist and pre-industrialist Britain espoused it as being the head of a household, the owner of the means of production and the controller of labour (Toynbee, 1995)
reason, the men who migrated to New Zealand from Britain were absorbed into a young, colonial society with few institutions and restrictions and where high value was placed on personal independence. To prevent their ‘ruin’, by alcohol and gambling, women and family served as a social control mechanism, the ‘natural purity’ of women being seen to counteract the ‘barbarism’ and ‘animal desires’ of frontier men (Phillips, 1987; Toynbee, 1995; Olssen, 1999). These colonial conditions effectively transferred and reinforced homeland gender and hierarchical divisions, but the prevailing circumstances in the colony, particularly gender imbalance, created a situation where young women were in high demand, particularly by farmers who needed a really ‘useful woman’ as a wife (Dalziel, 1977; Toynbee, 1995; Nolan, 2000; Hunter and Riney-Kehrberg, 2002).

‘Useful women’ were at a premium in areas of pastoral growth, particularly in Otago and Canterbury, which led New Zealand’s pastoral expansion during the second half of the 19th century. By the early 1860s the vast majority of the South Island was legally owned by Pakeha settlers after the state facilitated massive land transactions with Maori (McAloon, 2002). Pastoralism spread rapidly through Otago and Canterbury, especially after the establishment of the settlements of Dunedin and Christchurch. Wealth was fundamentally in the land; in the mid-1870s, 60% of the colonial rich were farmers from the lower middle class, with only 25% from upper classes (McAloon, 2002). Sixty percent of farms were family farms, where a middle class work ethic prevailed; they were not solely the ‘idle rich’. As one Otago sheep farmer noted, “A man, to succeed, must be prepared to give up the ... servants he has to attend upon him in England and must rely upon himself” (McAloon, 2002, p. 209). This further increased the demand for wives. A farmer could do without servants, but few farms could go without a woman to manage the household.

A principal reason for accumulating wealth in colonial New Zealand was to ensure the standing of the family and future generations. The ideologies and practices of the colonial wealthy remained aligned to those of the British middle class, with its emphasis on thrift, deferred gratification, self-reliance, steady capital accumulation, and building a family fortune (McAloon, 2002). Within this context the family-based economy and farm women were extremely important, particularly after the Liberal land reforms of the 1890s, when large estates were divided into smaller properties (Eldred-Grigg, 1980). Higher prices for meat, wool, butter and textiles enhanced the economic viability of smaller properties intensively farmed by family units. Few farm women, however,
could afford to express the distaste exhibited by female members of the upper-class women, whose lives were set firmly apart from the grosser aspects of country life. One woman ordered her groom to shift the sheep when she heard bleating from her drawing room. Another woman noted that on her one visit to a wool shed she, “... did not like either its sounds or sights ...” whilst her two companions went very pale (Eldred-Grigg, 1980, p. 91).

The majority of farm women in early New Zealand spent their time in a variety of work around the house and on the farm. They were essential contributors to the success of the family economic unit (Phillips, 1987). The lack of domestic and agricultural technology meant that farming and domestic chores were labour intensive and involved all family members. Farm women did what was needed to ensure the survival of the family farm, including caring for family and livestock, weaving and spinning, brewing ale, preserving meat, fruit and vegetables, milking cows, and working in the fields. There was no clear separation between domestic work and economic production (Phillips, 1987; Hunter and Riney-Kehrberg, 2002). Furthermore, women often raised large families and assumed child rearing responsibilities, feeding, clothing and nurturing not only her children, but also her husband, to ensure that the farm would have its essential family labour. In the family operation of the farm parents were typically assisted by children of their own sex and so children acquired gendered notions of what would be expected of them as adults. Whilst helping their mothers with domestic chores and caring for their younger siblings, daughters trained for their future as farmer’s wives (Hunter and Riney-Kehrberg, 2002). Sons worked with their father, the eldest son in particular was groomed to take over the farm upon the retirement or demise of his father (Toynbee, 1995).

The importance of women and their contribution to family-based economic units shows in the 1874 census; work undertaken within the home for one’s own family was classified as an ‘occupation’ (Toynbee, 1995). A significant change occurred in 1891, when the term ‘occupation’ was defined as ‘paid’ work. Consequently, irrespective of whether or not women’s work status changed, the subject position of farm women changed from being ‘useful producers’ to ‘dutiful dependents’ (Herda, 1991; Toynbee, 1995; Nolan, 2000; Hunter and Riney-Kehrberg, 2002).

This official change of status reflected acceptance of beliefs favouring a woman’s complete economic dependence on her father and/or husband, and the on-going
transition from a ‘family-based economy’ to a ‘male-provider economy’ (Toynbee, 1995). This ideological shift arose from changing social conditions at the time. Migration from Britain to New Zealand transplanted and nurtured ideologies surrounding the position of women. In particular, married women were expected to retreat into the domestic sphere upon marriage with the male head of the household assuming the income-earning responsibilities (Nolan, 2000; Dewson, 2004). This ideology spread through society, including farming communities, despite conflict with rural traditions where women were recognised as playing a significant economic and social role on the family farm. However, the view that married women should stay in the home prevailed as gendered notions of appropriate labour were increasingly accepted within the industrialised communities and colonies of Britain (Nolan, 2000). Conventional wisdom considered that a woman’s increased ability to make decisions through higher education, or to have access to property rights, was seen to desex women, emasculate men and destabilise society (Montgomerie, 1999).

Early in the 20th century lines of womanly behaviour were drawn despite the nation’s heavy dependence on agricultural production from family farms with their household labour (Brooking, 1992). Women were caught between the economic realities, expectations, values and needs of family farming, and the prevailing notions of womanliness and domesticity (Nolan, 2000; Hunter and Riney-Kehrberg, 2002). Increasingly, the distinction between men’s and women’s work was based on the expectation that women should exhibit their femininity and show concern about the effects of strenuous work on their reproductive capabilities. When a young Otago woman admitted to killing a sheep, a local newspaper editor considered that for a young woman to kill a sheep was beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour3 (Hunter and Riney-Kehrberg, 2002).

Phillips (1987) argues that the positional change of farm women in 19th and early 20th century New Zealand grew from a slow process concerning the dominance of the ‘family ideal’. The ‘family ideal’ was transferred from Britain to New Zealand and became the cornerstone of social order and an indicator of a settled, civilised society. It was perceived to be a safe, private, largely nuclear, essentially patriarchal, institution. The ideal was further reinforced when soldiers returned from the horrors of the Great

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3 For a contemporary comparison see Section 4.1.1.
War, and expected to return to the safety of their family home (Phillips, 1987). Furthermore, by law, men controlled the property and had responsibility for the farm as an economic unit and the family income. Men were the breadwinners whilst the non-earning women provided the maternal love that would bind the family (Frank, 1999). As Herda (1991) noted, the strongest traditional roles for farm women were mothering and nurturing, women often sacrificing themselves for their family through denial of their own needs.

The period of extreme crisis following declaration of World War Two produced further, albeit temporary, changes for women. A large number of farm men fought in World War Two, and the shortages in farming labour meant that men were replaced by women, the so-called ‘landgirls’ (Montgomerie, 1999). Essentially the latter enabled farms to sustain production until the men (husbands, fathers and employers) returned. As the 1940s drew to a close, and thousands of servicemen returned home, farm women were expected to return to the domestic spheres. It was thought that rough, war-battered men would be redeemed by loving sweethearts, and that women who had risked their femininity by filling in for men during the war would be re-feminised and re-fashioned by loving men (Montgomerie, 1999). The continued idealisation of roles was also important in quietening social fears about the consequences of wartime violence and mobilisation; homes were seen as places where society could be knitted back together. The real test of the land girls’ patriotic commitment lay in their willingness to exchange the seduction of men’s work for the quieter pleasures of peacetime home-making as the farmer’s wife. For some women, when their temporary wartime freedom was curtailed, this caused anguish as the gendered notions of what farm women should do were further reinforced rather than weakened (Montgomerie, 1999), despite evidence that women could run farms.

The 1950s have been characterised by historians as a return to ‘normality’ following the economic depression of the 1930s and the Second World War (Parker, 1992). For women in rural areas, marriage was the universal goal and most rural women entered the union with set views on the respective roles of man and wife; the woman supporting their husband who was expected to provide the material necessities of life. For her part the woman was expected to place her husband’s and children’s interests before her own (Parker, 1992). During this period the notions of ‘masculinity’ and ‘income provider’ were closely linked, and women did not question the implied superiority associated with men in this. Farm women tried to maintain the façade of a ‘non-working’ woman while
undertaking the multiple roles of wife, mother, homemaker and part-time farm worker. This on-farm work also touched on the nurturing abilities of women, many of whom were assigned calf rearing duties. Their efforts on the farm were seldom reciprocated by their husbands in the home. Meal preparation, dish-washing and drying, house cleaning, child care and laundry were all a ‘woman’s concern’ (Parker, 1992).

The work of New Zealand farm women has remained largely unrecognised. Until a few decades ago farm households remained labour-intensive because farm women could not purchase new household appliances. Frequently this was because their husbands placed investment in farm improvements ahead of new household equipment. As Parker (1992, p.219) has noted, “[Male] Farmers were notoriously reluctant to allow money to be diverted from farm development funds. Farm women learnt quickly that the farm comes first.”

The general subordination of New Zealand women lasted through the baby boom and into the sixties. At this time protesters opposed New Zealand’s involvement in the Vietnam War and women gained confidence through their activist participation. However, women’s rights were scarcely realised until the resurgence of feminism in the 1970s. This renaissance in feminism resulted in female and male feminists asking questions about women’s roles and their supposed inherent links with a woman’s biology (Brookes, 1999). Furthermore, there was a move by urban women away from traditionally female occupations, such as nursing and teaching, into increased participation in non-traditional occupations such as medicine and the law (Brookes, 1999). However, farm women were socially and geographically isolated from these mainly urban social changes (Benedicksson et al., 1990), which represented a shift to Toynbee’s (1995) third family form, the ‘dual-earner economy’.

During the agricultural restructuring of the 1980s, an acceleration in the process of internationalisation forced New Zealand farmers to reduce their on-farm costs and change their labour practices (Wilson, 1995). Farm women became key actors, crucial to the survival of the family farm, because they absorbed much of the impact of change by contributing additional labour, income, emotional support and community activism (Benedicksson et al., 1990; Wilson, 1995; Clifford-Walton et al., 1997; Johnsen, 1999).

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4 For a contemporary comparison view Section 5.1.1.
Despite significant changes and greater input by farm women, they experienced little change to their secondary position in the farm household, remaining largely invisible.

In summary, this historic overview of New Zealand farm women has highlighted how notions of gender and family, as they were shaped in the colonial context, socially constructed their lives and experiences. Women’s lives have been constantly redefined by gendered paradigms of masculinity, femininity and family. These gendered notions have often been related to dramatic events, such as economic depression or war, where women have repeatedly been positioned to maintain New Zealand’s ‘civilised’ society through ensuring the stability of the ‘ideal family’.

Toynbee’s (1995) use of social conditions to identify key forms of family production has been useful in analysing the lives and practices of farm women. Farm women have largely been involved in the ‘family-based production unit’, but the strongly gendered ideals associated with the ‘male-provider economic unit’ have also been imposed on their lives. But, while many urban-based New Zealand women have experienced a further shift to the more contemporary ‘dual-earner economy’, this transition has not been so forthcoming for farm women due to their social and physical isolation.

Furthermore, it is evident that farm women’s experiences have differed. While it is clear that prevailing social views have strongly influenced the accepted activities of women, some have blurred the boundaries of accepted womanly behaviour in the interest of farm and family survival. As a key labour component of family farms, women have assisted with many tasks, but as they are unpaid labour, much of their on-farm work has been deemed invisible and therefore not as open to criticism as it could have been.

Moreover, whilst much historic narrative focuses on the oppression and subordination of women (Daley and Montgomerie, 1999), there is also some evidence that some farm women were content with their lives. Olssen (1999) noted that some women settlers were positively delighted in being able to do a range of jobs, revelling in their freedom from the ornamental role of the Victorian wife. Similarly, Parker (1992) noted that post-war farm women derived immense contentment from living the country life and watching the family grow, imbued with the fundamental belief that the country is a better place to raise children.

This overview has shown that New Zealand farm women have been strongly influenced by gendered notions associated with industrialised Britain. Transposed by settlers, these
ideals originally reflected the requirements of farm women in a family production unit. However, with increased urbanisation and industrialisation, women were increasingly subordinated through the promotion of men as ‘providers’ and women as ‘dependents’. This current study will reflect on whether historic trends prevail whilst focussing on the dominant discourses that shape the lives and experiences of present-day farm women. However, to gain an increased critical awareness of the contemporary lives of New Zealand’s farm women by focussing on them as individuals in an ever-changing landscape, attention to more recent analytical tools is required.

2.3 Recent analytical tools

Contemporary research within feminist geography has proliferated with the emergence of post-structuralism and its support of diverse and multiple forms of knowledge and inquiry. Post-structural understandings of the world focus on language and discourse as the common factor in the formation of social organisation, meaning and power (Weedon, 1987). In particular, this development enabled scholars to gain an understanding of how discourses construct and position individuals as subjects. For feminist studies, post-structuralism has supported analysis of the various practices and meanings situating women within multiple spatial, social and temporal contexts. The following section shows the impact of post-structural approaches while reviewing research on farm women. First, discussion will focus on the use of discourse as a means to understanding the lives of farm women. Then, an examination of gender identities will be made noting how identity theory aids in an appreciation of how farm women negotiate meaning associated with their gender and their lives. Lastly, the section will focus on agency and indicate how notions of agency can be conceptualised in relation to discursive meanings and identities.

2.3.1 Post-structuralism and the importance of discourse

Within post-structural thought, discourse is conceptualised to highlight the workings of language in the organisation of society, social meanings, power, and individual consciousness (Weedon, 1987; Mills, 1997). Despite its frequent employment in a range of disciplines (e.g. geography, sociology, education and psychology), its actual use and definition varies. Mills (1997) argues that the term discourse has perhaps the widest range of possible significance of any term in literary and cultural theory, and yet it is often the term within theoretical texts which is least defined. Within geography, Pratt (1996) suggests that the term discourse is a much abused one, not only meaning a word for ‘talk’ but also a system of statements that construct an object. Bacchi (2005)
contains that the language associated with discourse (discourse, discourses and discursive) has become ubiquitous because it has been loosely used within a range of contexts, and as a result, considerable confusion surrounds its intended meanings. Part of the problem is that whilst there is a vast body of literature on discourse theory, it originates from a diverse range of subjects. Distinctive disciplinary understandings of the term discourse can be found in for example: geography, linguistics, anthropology, social psychology, sociology and politics; areas in which there are also internal disputes about the meaning of the term discourse (Bacchi, 2005).

Despite this diversity, discourse, as it is conceptualised within geography, is commonly associated with the work of Michel Foucault. It is a concept that evolved whilst he was attempting to understand the relationship between language, social institution, subjectivity and power (Weedon, 1987; Mills, 1997). In Foucault’s work, discourses are:

Ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern (Weedon, 1987, p. 108).

Foucault sees that one of the most productive ways of thinking about discourse is as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Mills, 1997). Discourse produces ‘something else’ and its discursive structure can be detected because of the apparent commonality of ideas, behaviour, concepts and such like, and the effects of these ways of thinking and behaving. But discourses do not exist in isolation; they interact with other discourses that can create competition and conflict. As a consequence, issues of dominance emerge along with rival concepts of truth. Some discourses are accorded hegemonic status and are understood to take command over the definition of truth (Brandth, 2002b). Feminist discourse theory draws heavily on Foucault’s work, especially his associated conceptualisation of power, because feminist theory aims to examine power relationships and their inherent inequalities aspiring to identify, analyse and formulate means of resistance or change (MacKenzie, 1992; 1994; Mills, 1997; Liepins, 1998).

This thesis takes the perspective that finding a ‘correct’ definition for discourse is contradictory with the intention of discourse. As a concept, discourse highlights the diverse approaches taken to delineate knowledge. This results in different
understandings, interpretations, meanings and definitions, and so whilst discourse is the product of social contexts, it also contributes to the very social contexts from which it is derived. For the purpose of this thesis, discourse will be defined as an assemblage of ideas, statements of meaning, and practices that are grouped, disseminated and performed to facilitate understanding or to legitimise certain beliefs and understandings. How these are perceived, legitimised, reinforced and maintained will be viewed as the product of interacting, multiple discourses over various temporal, social and spatial settings. This thesis considers that to understand farm women’s lives it is necessary to gain a critical awareness of the discourses and discursive practices that position them is fundamental. Farm women have operated within a multitude of discursive fields across a range of settings, and this is further evident when reviewing wider rural and agricultural literature.

2.3.2 Discourses of rurality and agriculture
Before focussing on farm women per se, an understanding of wider rural and farming contexts is timely. As emphasised in earlier research (Section 2.2.2) when discussing gender role and gender relations theories, farm women, if recognised at all, have frequently been observed in subservient positions within the household and farms. This is the result of the conservative, traditional nature of rural society discourses (Davidoff et al., 1976; Little, 1987), and more recent analyses of rural discourses have broadened our understandings of these contexts.

Discourses within the rural context construct a range of subject positions which are gendered and associated with different activities and capacities (Liepins and Schick, 1998). Morris and Evans (2004) suggest that there is some degree of variation in the interpretation of discourse within agriculture, but acknowledge that there is a degree of commonality amongst discourse-centred accounts of agriculture; two concepts in particular being power and discourse, both important in assisting in the understanding of the organisation and representation of agriculture (Liepins, 1996). Figure 2.2 illustrates the gendered construction of the traditional farm household. Discourses of masculinity provide the dominant meanings and practices which highlight the superior position and status of males within farming, whereas discourses of femininity showcase the subservient position of women. Both sets of discourses appear to not only influence the processes and structures of the household, but also ensure the continuance of family farming over time through the normalisation of discourses of masculinity and patriarchy within agriculture. Thus, farming is constructed throughout Western economies as
Discourses constructing traditional femininity highlight:

- Property ownership: limited, or gained through marrying a farmer
- Division of labour: women are positioned to do on-farm physical work
- Gender identity: women’s identities include ‘farmer’s wife’, ‘housewife’, ‘supporter’, ‘mother’
- Property management: women support the decision maker
- Agricultural organisations: limited opportunities for women

FIGURE 2.2: The influence of traditional gender discourses on farm households
masculine. Over the last century, with technological advances and increased capitalisation and mechanisation, farming has become intrinsically male because cultural constructions of masculinity are articulated around notions of masculine power symbolized by agricultural machinery (Liepins, 1998; Brandth, 2006).

Farming is deemed to be a male domain because the parameters in which the agricultural industry works are dominated by men in marketing, research and educational institutions (Liepins, 1998; Saugeres, 2002c). Having established that gendered discourses in the agricultural sector operate across different social, economic and organisational structures, the next section will focus on how these rural and agricultural discourses influence the identity of farm women.

2.3.3 Discourse and gender identity

Gender identity has become a conceptual tool through which feminist researchers account for the social construction of gender, and the way dominant and alternative identities and practices are accommodated and sustained, or contested and transformed (Whatmore, 1994). Beyond rural and agricultural studies, Hetherington (1998) emphasises that identity is “done” through discourse and through space via dynamic processes of formation and expression. So, in the case of farm women, feminine farming identities are constructed through discourses and expression via numerous personal or cultural practices and spheres (Liepins, 1998; Morris and Evans, 2001; Brandth, 2002b; Heather et al., 2005). Furthermore, Hetherington highlights that identity is about both similarity and difference, and is articulated through the relationship between belonging, recognition or identification.

Little (2002a; 2002b) stresses that ‘difference’ within the feminist articulation of gender identity has led to a documentation of the diversity of rural gendered identities, emphasising the individualised and varied experiences of gender. This has enabled scholarship to move beyond problematic universal, or homogenous, categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’. Another expression of difference has been documented by Oldrup (1999), who argues that gender identity is expressed in varying spatial forms. She differentiates between the rural settings, which are associated with traditional, static ideologies (and identities), and urban areas, which are associated with the modern, hence ‘traditional farm women’ and ‘modern urban women’. Overall, gender identity theory has enabled social researchers to explore beyond static, generic, gender categories, thus enabling a
richer focus on the different colourful, multi-faceted lives, identities and experiences of farm women and men.

**The construction of gender identities for farm women**

Using the concept of identity, farm women are perceived to be the product of many varied and changing discourses and practices in which they participate. Some of these are explicitly agricultural discourses, while others stem from broader rural or social contexts (Liepins, 1998; Oldrup, 1999; Heather et al., 2005). Oldrup (1999) suggests identity is the result of interaction between a woman’s earlier identities and her present identities. It is a constantly evolving phenomenon involving multiple experiences, discourses and forms of identity. In short, identity is never a finished or single product, but a dynamic composite always in progress.

Earlier literature emphasised farm woman gender identity as the product of two main approaches. First, the gender division of labour within family farms, whereby a woman is assigned work based on her ‘female’ gender which is strongly tied to expectations of women as caregivers and nurturers (Whatmore, 1991a; Heather et al., 2005). Second, more recent literature has documented how farm woman identity is constituted through cultural discourse and the focus of this has mainly been on rural media representations (Liepins, 1996; Morris and Evans, 2001).

Theories of gender identity reject notions of natural gender divisions. Within the farming context, traditional gendered identities of what it is to be ‘male’ and ‘female’ have been viewed as natural, unequal and unchangeable; the fixed opposites in a gender dichotomy (Heather et al., 2005). These beliefs have been deeply entrenched and embedded in farming life and practice, whereby the ‘good male farmer’ is constructed by his physical power and economic strength as the tough, hard working outdoors man, in charge of his business and environment; whilst the ‘good farm woman’ is constituted as a compliant, subservient helpmate: a caring, nurturing, domestic woman who is expected to care for her children, husband, extended family members and community (Little, 1997a; Liepins, 1998; Morris and Evans, 2001; Heather et al., 2005).

Central to the understanding of farm women identity are the intersecting discourses that define masculinity and patriarchy and farming in close association. First, discourses of masculinity are intimately articulated with traditional farming discourses. As previously emphasised, the discursive representation of male bodies within a farming context
maintains and legitimates the position of men as farmers and farm women as subordinate (Saugeres, 2002b). Second, patriarchy as a construction that normalises male control is a discourse actively practised via the patrilineral transfer of land from generation to generation. This has been practised for centuries and shows no real signs of abating in contemporary or post-modernist times (Shortall, 1992; Alston, 1995; O'Hara, 1998). Patriarchy as a process operates differently in public and private spheres, through different economic, social, and political practices and structures (Weedon, 1987; Walby, 1990; McDowell, 1999), but in Western agriculture, as Whatmore (1991a) and Shorthall (1999) documented, the control of property and the associated status related to ownership and authority are crucial to constructing discursive meanings about patriarchy and the relative positions and opportunity of farm women and men. As land transfer is usually gender based, the male identity as farmer is tied to land ownership and the physical productive work they are seen to be doing (Brandth, 2002a). As a consequence, a range of social and economic benefits are accrued due to the status of landowner/farmer, which means that male ‘farmers’ end up in a privileged position in relation to women (Liepins, 1998). Men are constructed as being the head of the household and farm business, the principal income earner and primary decision maker, thus family farm ownership provides males with a source of power, status and prestige. O‘Toole and McGarvey (2003) note that these traditional male discourses are evident in many aspects of local power relations; males holding dominant positions in organisations such as president, even if a number of women are present. Thus, while the focus of this thesis is on farm women it is important to recognise that uneven gendered discourses operate more broadly within a range of social, political, cultural and economic spheres.

Within the rural context, these patriarchal ideals about gender continue to dominate farming discourses (Heather et al., 2005). Farming has long been documented as men’s work, whilst women are constructed as the family members who run the home and raise the children (O’Hara, 1998; Bennett, 2005; Heather et al., 2005). It has been argued that the position and identity of farm women are tied to their marital contract, whereby traditionally women are perceived to assume the identity of farmer’s wife (Whatmore, 1994; Shortall., 1999; Brandth, 2002a). With this identity comes the responsibility for the household and family, a position that lacks a strong occupational identity as biological functions are tied to social roles and gender identity. The traditional farm household division of labour in which women operate, perpetuates the woman’s inferior
identity, further legitimised by discourses of ‘wifehood’ and ‘motherhood’. Consequently, a farm woman is perceived to be working for her partner, whilst he is supporting the family in the role of ‘farmer’ (Shortall, 1996; O'Hara, 1998; Heather et al., 2005).

Research has also shown that in addition to discourses of masculinity and patriarchy, family farming discourses strongly shape the identity of farm women (Brandth, 2002b). These are particularly powerful and help perpetuate the subordinate position and identities women often experience. As emphasised in Section 2.2, a farm woman’s contribution is critical to a family farm’s survival as a mode of production, yet they remain largely invisible. Research shows, however, that women often accept this in the interest of the family farm (Kelly and Shortall, 2002; Brandth, 2002b), and as a consequence insist on self exploitation and deprivation to ensure the survival of the family farm (Shortall, 2002; Bennett, 2004). This contradicts the basic premise of feminist research as noted earlier, but it is also being recognised that farm women live within a specific economic reality, and that fighting for their own needs within the context of family farming would undermine the struggle to sustain the viability of the farm and that would be selfish (Grace and Lennie, 1998; Heather et al., 2005).

In summary, a review of gender and farming studies indicates that gendered identities are formed in great measure via the dominant discourses concerning patriarchal relations, masculinity and family farming. A farm woman’s identities frequently reflect the expectations associated with these discourses, i.e. where she is constructed as a mother, caregiver, cook, and housewife. Her identities may change as she progresses through different stages in life, but she is still likely to be framed by dominant discourses as a traditional ‘farm woman’. One focus of this thesis is to investigate how women respond to these discourses, documenting both the active and self reflective responses of women who work to facilitate the family farms continuation, despite the hardships and subservient positioning it brings to their own lives.

**Defining their own gender identity**

Research highlights the difficulties that farm women experience when defining their identity, as many are reluctant to describe themselves as farmers because this is a label traditionally reserved for men (Liepins, 2000). Key identities on a farm, such as ‘farmer’ and ‘owner/operator’, are strongly associated with dominant ideas of rural masculinity and therefore are problematic for women. Oldrup (1999) notes though that
some younger women are trying to distance themselves from the 'traditional' label of 'farm woman' because of its association with traditional and constrained expectations about women. In contrast, they prefer to be identified as 'women on farms'. But, this reflects the diverse spheres and identities they experience in their everyday life external to the farming environs; the alternative discourses providing these women with a sense of fulfilment (O'Hara, 1998), rather than their willingness to challenge customary gender identities. Moreover, it is also noted by Oldrup (1999) that in Denmark there are very few signs of competing discourses to reconstitute the identity of farm women, and so its traditional associations will prevail. Likewise, other research, including studies of Canadian farm women by MacKenzie (1992) and French farm women by Saugeres (2002b), showed that women who are claiming the identity of farmer are perceived to be radicals, outside of the normally accepted identities for women, thus reinforcing that the dominance of traditional constructions in farming are very strong.

Family farms are an occupational site whereby men 'farm' and women 'help', and so their work is not constructed as of primary importance (Berlan Darque, 1988; Saugeres, 2002a; Heather et al., 2005). Consequently, farm women have also found it difficult to define what they do as 'farm work', or defining what makes a good female farmer, discounting much of their labour as irrelevant and unimportant in sustaining the family farm (Saugeres, 2002a). By not acknowledging their contribution, farm women reinforce their invisible identity. This contributes to perceptions that women on farms are defined by their biology and their marital contract, irrespective of what they do on the farm within the reproductive and productive spheres (Whatmore, 1991a). Moreover, Shorthall (1992) has argued that patriarchal power relations cause women to believe that their subservient place is right and natural, and therefore exercise their own power to reinforce and perpetuate it themselves.

Related to the reticence of farm women to identify themselves as 'farmers' is the reluctance of women to associate themselves with feminist interests. 'Feminist' is a label that creates contentious issues for rural women (Grace and Lennie, 1998), but this is not to deny that some farm women do not believe in feminist theory or alternative identities for women. However, they see actions as more important than labels, and feel that feminist concerns of equality within family farming are just too narrow given other priorities, such as the survival of the family farm (Heather et al., 2005). These findings are important for highlighting how the identities and opportunities for women are contextualised (i.e. as less important) in relation to wider discourses and values about
family farming and the maintenance of this socio-economic feature in rural societies. Defining identity within traditional norms also provides women with stability within the farming community. Heather, et al. (2005), Grace and Lennie (1998) and Pini (2003) emphasise that being known as a feminist in a rural community can conflict with more acceptable identities such as ‘farmer’s wife’ and ‘mother’, and because farm women depend on community goodwill and friendship, alienation from other farm women is not an acceptable risk. In addition, other research has shown that women who take on masculine identities also risk alienation because they are performing tasks outside of their ‘traditional realm’, therefore risking having their femininity questioned (Brandth, 2002b; Saugeres, 2002b). Women taking on non-traditional work normally associated with men (such as driving tractors) are contesting the ‘normal’ regime, which can evoke hostility from other farm women. In short, traditional ancillary identities of farm women as helper, carer and so forth, are so entrenched that any form of different behaviour by farm women results in alienation, even by their own peers (Shortall, 1992; Alston and Wilkinson, 1998).

In summary, farm women struggle with defining their gender identities. Past research has shown that within their reality, there is a plethora of daily experiences framed by dominant discourses which place expectations on who they are and what they do. In accepting these expectations and taking on the associated gender identities, farm women maintain the dynamics of family farming, reinforcing their own subservient identities, whilst ensuring the continuation of the family farm. In taking on an identity outside of their ‘traditional’ parameters, women risk alienation from their families and other farm women. Nevertheless, farm women are becoming increasingly aware of other opportunities via non-farming discourses. The following sub-section reviews some of the research exploring the lives of women who have gained off-farm employment. This once more reflects that farm women are not a uniform social group; they are all individuals operating within different circumstances which are producing diverse opportunities by which to navigate different gender identities.

**Alternative gender identities via off-farm work**

The opportunity for off-farm work provides women with an opportunity for another external, independent identity associated with that of their vocation (e.g. nurse), rather than that of a farm woman, which emphasises household chores and farm helper (O'Hara, 1998; Heather et al., 2005). Oldrup (1999) observed that women who work off-farm exist in a ‘contradictory reality’. As a consequence of off-farm employment,
women are involved in different discourses that may enhance their identity and provide status; whilst alternatively on the farm they are still defined as a ‘farmer’s wife’, operating within an inherently conservative, male dominated environment. However, this contradictory reality does not necessarily widen identity options for women. Indeed, the implication of off-farm work by farm women has little impact on their identities, or those of their husbands, due to the ingrained gender identities of farming. Research notes that there is little evidence to suggest any redistribution of tasks or identities if a woman works off-farm, such as a renegotiation of childcare roles, household work or on-farm responsibilities (Kelly and Shortall, 2002; Bennett, 2004). The on-farm labour division remains the same whereby the ‘farmer’s wife’ combines her additional off-farm identities with her on-farm identities, whilst her male spouse continues to assume the masculine, farmer identity (Argent, 1999; Heather et al., 2005). Moreover, studies indicate that men are reluctant to relinquish their gendered responsibilities and status of being the main income provider; uncomfortable with having to lose the ‘breadwinner’ role, or by doing ‘women’s work’ (Argent, 1999; Kelly and Shortall, 2002; Miewald and McCann, 2004; Heather et al., 2005). Similarly, Bennett (2004) notes there is little evidence indicating that men will assume more domestic chores if the woman works off the farm, thus reinforcing that some aspects of the gender order are very resistant to change. Bennett (2004, p. 147) documents this as a “…crisis of masculinities... whereby men continue to identify themselves through the patriarchal structures that shape family farming...” Male farmers perceive themselves as the men of the land, the independent bosses of their own destiny, and are unable to adapt to change.

As a consequence of these embedded farming discourses and resulting gender identities, farm women working off-farm not only subsidise the household and the farm business economically, they maintain the identity of their husband as the ‘farmer’ (Oldrup, 1999; Shortall, 2002; Heather et al., 2005). In effect, farm women, in their capacity as a ‘farmer’s wife’, are doing what they can (on and off-farm) to ensure that their male spouse can maintain his ‘farmer’ status, thus contributing to traditional gender identities and maintaining long-standing patriarchal hierarchies (Teather, 1996; Kelly and Shortall, 2002). In short, farm women are not working for themselves; they are working for the farm and the family, and their key gender identities reflect this (Heather et al., 2005).

This sub-section has reviewed contradictory issues for farm women’s identities. The research on non-farm related work and occupational identities indicates how important it is for some women to have an independent identity, not attached to the farm nor other
farm members. Such off-farm work supports other identities based on their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, existing research also highlights the disjuncture between these independent identities and the farm based traditional ones. This conundrum is further expressed by a review of whether farm women identities are achieved, or are assigned by others within the family farming context.

**Gender identity – assigned or achieved?**

A good deal of the literature to date emphasises that farm women have little predominance over, or ability to negotiate within, their constituted gender identities. Oldrup (1999) reinforces this, emphasising that farm women are positioned in identities where they have no actual control over their lives. But, Oldrup also recognises that whilst farm women are discursively positioned into subordinate identities, they maintain these positions though various actions they perform as active and knowledgeable actors who give shape to their lives – albeit in a constrained context. Heather, et al’s (2005, p. 93) study of farm women in rural Canada reinforces the contention that farm women are not completely submissive of their situation, noting:

> They knew they deserved recognition and respect for what they did, but said that those rights came last - they would address them “later” because “you, you come last.” For the present they were focused on what needed to be done, not because they did not question their gender roles, but because their buy-in to the rural and farm lifestyle was of greater importance.

There appears to be both an acceptance and a resistance by farm women to the circumstances in which they are situated. Importantly, research is increasingly recognising that farm women understand that their gender identities are contextualised by unequal social power relations, but through their own prioritisation of family and the farming lifestyle are reproducing the subordination and oppression associated with their positioning. But whether or not their responses are the result of the subjectivities present in farming discourses and practices of gender is still not clear, and warrants further investigation.

One way to further explore this issue of gender identity response rests in the way identities are analysed. In this study, a distinction will be made between the majority of identities that women perform, fulfil and present that are primarily ‘assigned’ via dominant discourses. The ‘farm woman’ has little control over the identities associated with being a farm woman. Indeed, as past research has noted, the farm woman is a super-identity which includes and infers a range of diverse (but expected) identities that
support the farm, farmer and family. In contrast, there appears to be little opportunity for farm women to ‘achieve’ other identities independent of farm activities or personnel. Literature also indicates, however, that many women accept their assigned identities within their farming lifestyle. Their scale of focus is the family farm and not themselves, so in order to achieve their broader goals, most farm women subscribe to their assigned identities; only a few express independence by achieving identities reflecting aspects of themselves external to their farm context. The significance and experience of these rarer ‘achieved’ identities will therefore be a secondary focus of analysis in this study.

**Gender identity summary**

Conceptualisation of gender identity has enabled researchers, informed by post-structuralism, to gain a greater understanding of the multiple identities of farm women and masculinity and femininity within the specific farming context. These identities are understood to be the product of culturally specific discourses, from a range of different contexts, through various dimensions. Research has highlighted that farm women often lack control over the circumstances in which they operate with so many of their identities being assigned based on their gender; the product of entrenched and traditional gender association within farming. Recent literature notes however, that farm women are aware of their constrained frameworks, and are in fact perpetuating many of these structures constraining them because of their prioritisation of other factors. There is increased recognition by feminist researchers that some farm women are regularly responding to their discursive positioning and identities in ways that contradict feminist ideals of equality and change (Brandth, 2002b). The challenge is to establish a more nuanced and detailed understanding of why they are doing so, whilst recognising that they are knowledgeable and astute agents of their own destiny.

This thesis aims to document the dominant discourses which position farm women and how they respond to these discourses, whether it is through recognition of their identities or through more expressive and active means. In addition, it will consider why farm women respond as they do to their discursive positioning, thus building on the research findings that farm women are knowledgeable individuals who operate within specific contexts. Lastly, this thesis will also explore ‘agency’ in addition to gender identity, to gain an understanding of the degree to which women can act upon and express themselves within the discursive and practical contexts of farming reality.

Consideration of notions of agency is thus the final contemporary analytical tool to be considered in this chapter.
2.3.4 Discourse and agency

The concept of agency

From a post-structuralist perspective, 'agency' is a concept usually associated with an individual's autonomy, or capacity to act, from a position or location within the discourses forming our social world (Davies, 1991; Kettle, 2005). Agency involves power and the ability 'to do' (Hartman, 1991). In this way, agency implies that subjects of discourse are not static, inert or passive victims of discourses or discursive positioning. Instead, attention to agency highlights how individuals actively orientate and position themselves within the range of contradictory discursive subject possibilities that exist in their lives; thus possessing the capabilities for independent reflection and action (McNay, 2000; Davies and Harre, 2001; Panelli and Pini, 2005).

Agency has been a significant theme in feminist thought on gender identity because within post-structural theory, the presumption that gender identity is discursively constructed infers that it is also variable (McNay, 2003). The conceptualisation of gender identities as resilient, but also changeable, prompted a rethinking of agency in terms of gender norms and the possibilities for resistance, subversion and emancipation (McNay, 2000). Therefore a person's 'agency' is important, because an individual's ability to act or choose from within their discursively produced subject positioning and gender identity, reinforces that they are a thinking, feeling person capable of conforming to or resisting discourse, discursive structures, social practices and social relations, and also able to assess and make decisions based on their perception of the options available (Weedon, 1987; Liepins and Schick, 1998).

Davies (2004, p. 3) emphasises:

Agency is never freedom from discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognise that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted. It is the freedom to recognise multiple readings such that no discursive practice, or positioning within it by powerful others, can capture and control one's identity.

While there are likely to be critical limits to the reality of such "...freedom..." in farm women's lives, this conceptualisation of agency is helpful for the current study in highlighting the relations between agency and positioning within discourses. How agency is performed depends on the individual's subject position and what choices they have made with the discourses available. This is never a cohesive, complete or uniform
process because of the multiple and contradictory discourses which shape peoples’ lives (Weedon, 1987). Moreover, as a social geography study, this research will show how expressions of agency will also be contingent on the diversity of contexts in which farm women find themselves.

Agency therefore is not unilaterally available to all, nor is the choice to gain agency, because some discursive practices exclude particular people or categories of people, such as women. Discursive practices constitute some individuals with agency, and therefore the opportunity to speak and be heard; to refuse any particular discourse or one’s positioning within it, choose between discourses, or to modify one set of discourses and discursive practices through the influence of another set (Davies, 1990). Indeed, some traditional purveyors of agency have emphasised that women in particular are discursively constituted as non-agents (Smith, 1987 cited in Davies, 1990). If they do participate in exclusionary discursive frameworks, they are choosing only to be supporters of other agents, not as agents themselves. However, Davies’ (1990) critique of this traditionalists’ sense of agency emphasised that women would have, or would make, access to discursive practices which positioned them as potential agents, or provided them access to the practices which defined them as agents or non-agents. Weedon (1987) reinforces this, theorising women as thinking, feeling subjects and social agents.

If a woman has access to alternative discursive practices and the means to mobilise them, such a choice could be said to be compatible with a sense of self as an agent (Davies, 1990). However, Davies (1991) also notes that some choices are actually ‘forced choices’ whereby the subject’s positioning within particular discourses makes the ‘chosen’ line of action the only possible action, not because there are no other options, but because they have been subjectively constituted through their placement within that discourse to want that line of action. Therefore, alternative positioning can only be brought about by an individual’s awareness of the constitutional nature of their discursive positioning, personal knowledge and skills, the ability to use relevant discourses and to be recognised as to be legitimately doing so. Furthermore, alternative positioning can only be gained by having a desire to possess agency and the assurance to position themselves so they can make choices, carry them through and accept the responsibility for doing so. This qualified sense of agency as not simply ‘freedom’ but also as ‘constrained choice’, is helpful for framing the current study where the degree of
autonomy to enact agency may be limited for farm women because of the dominance of certain discourses previously discussed (Section 2.3.2).

**Agency in a farming context**

Using this approach to agency, farm women may be conceived as gaining agency when they recognise they have been discursively positioned and how they are able to resist or challenge their positioning. This recognition facilitates the identification of opportunities to gain access to other potentially more advantageous discourses which, combined with personal knowledge and skills, enables women to gain agency and legitimacy. Kettle (2005) would argue that this potential action reflects how farm women, who are positioned in a certain way within a given discursive framework, could work consciously and strategically to resist and reconstruct a powerful, rather than marginalised, position for themselves. But, Heather et al., (2005) would also emphasise that the actions of women are conditioned by their gendered identities and by the subjectivities embedded in rural discourses and practices of gender that dominate these two aspects. Prevailing gender ideology does not prevent alternative practices, but it does shape responses to them as women’s different subject positions within discursive structures could lead to responses of acceptance or resistance (O'Hara, 1998; Heather et al., 2005). This contextual qualification of ‘what is possible’ will be an important feature of analysis in this study, particularly when exploring research question two which focusses on how farm women respond to their discursive positioning (Chapter Five).

As emphasised earlier, farming is a highly traditional industry that involves meanings, concepts and practices which produce perceived truths about farming and the people involved (Liepins, 2000). It is not only based on economic, political and scientific principles, but it is also reproduced through normalised social subjectivities that position men as key subjects on the farm and within farming institutions, whilst women are largely marginalised in the home (Whatmore, 1991a; Liepins, 1996; O'Hara, 1998; Oldrup, 1999; Liepins, 2000; Brandth, 2002b; Heather et al., 2005). In the case of farm women, they most often speak from the positions made available within the farming discourse collectives and through the recognised discursive practices used by each collective. Hegemonic farming discourses are so woven into farm women’s subjectivity that they powerfully frame what is possible for women within their lives.
This thesis aims to document how the discursive positioning of farm women influences their levels of agency. As emphasised in Section 2.2, the lives of farm women are carried out within a framework of traditional discourses and discursive practices which are reinforced, legitimised and maintained on a daily basis across a range of spatial, temporal and social dimensions. Given this constrained context, this study will also investigate what agency, if any, farm women possess and whether this agency reflects their importance on the family farm. The ability of farm women to make and execute choices within the family farming context will also be examined, along with their perception of their discursive positioning and their willingness to have or to make choices. Furthermore, their levels of agency will be examined within the contexts of their relationship with their partner, and in the broader context of the family farm.

2.4 Conclusions
A review of the literature fundamental to this thesis has revealed two key themes. First, an understanding of family farming as a surviving form of primary production and social reproduction is central, because inherent within its social and economic structure are a range of discourses that strongly influence the lives of farm women. Second, farm women as an analytic category have become increasingly important from an academic, social feminists’ perspective, as research at the micro scale has enabled a greater understanding of their lives via gender roles and relations theories. However, more recent investigations, using discourse, gender identity and agency as tools of analysis, have increasingly shown that the understandings gained about farm women need to be critically examined in terms of farm women’s lived realities; not from urban, feminist, academics’ points of view.

As documented in Section 2.2.1, family farming dominates Western agriculture, and continues to do so because the family units are able to adapt to a multitude of social, economic, political and physical changes. Central to their survival is the focus on family, utilising its skills, knowledge and physical labour as the key means of production on the property, and reproduction of the socio-economic entity. Control over the means of production is paramount too, to ensure the continuation of the family farm through to the next generation.

Over time, the ideological basis of farming and family farming has remained relatively stable (even in the face of vast technological, economic and ecological changes). Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 highlighted how entrenched beliefs about what men and
women do on farms have produced strongly gendered regimes of operation, whereby
gender identities reflect the dominant discourses of patriarchy, masculinity and family
farming. There is a strong inference that family farms have continued to survive through
the generations because of their traditional structure and discourses.

The second, key theme in the literature informing this thesis centres on farm women. This literature emphasises two aspects: that they are central to the survival of the family farm, and they are usually subservient within the family household structure. This thesis focusses on how their positioning is the product of the dominant discourses within the farming sector and the family farm. While Section 2.3 outlined previous work in this area, a more in-depth exploration of this discursive process and implications forms the basis of the subsequent results chapters (Chapters Four to Six).

Furthermore, recent research has indicated that farm women are knowledgeable and
proactive individuals, albeit within constrained contexts. Some authors are beginning to
show how women may perpetuate their subservient discursive positioning and identities
to ensure the continuation of the family farm. Why farm women are willing to do this
merits further investigation because they are clearly not inert subjects, passively
accepting their circumstances; instead they are making choices which are actively shape
their lives.

Literature focussing on farm women also highlights a divergence between academic
research and the lives of farm women. The literature shows different views of gender
(relations) where feminist academics have critiqued relations that disadvantage farm
women, while the farm women themselves appear to be more accepting of their circumstances. Moreover, the scale of analysis of research over time has changed from a
broad farm sector focus to a more specific farm member focus, in an attempt to gain an
understanding of the gendered organisation of farming and the experiences of farm
women. Importantly, however, farm women appear to be living their lives at the
household level and not at the individual level. Concentrating on themselves at the
individual level does not take into account their lived realities, as they see that self-
focus is egocentric within the broader context of the family farm. This thesis will centre
on the farm women within the family farming context, across different social, temporal
and spatial dimensions, recognising that their varied lives are diverse, vibrant and
complex; aspects not acknowledged when a study is too narrow in its scale of analysis.
Further research is required to critically examine the lives of farm women at the level
upon which they focus, i.e. from their perspective, not what feminist academics believe, or assume, a farm woman's perspective should be. While concentrating on individual identity and agency may be most effective for feminist-orientated women who wish to change the lives and opportunities of farm women, the realities and choices for many farm women emphasise how their lives and choices are very closely bound to the wider circumstances of their household and farm – this therefore needs to be the core level of inquiry.

The following thesis is structured to provide a greater understanding of the lives of farm women using their narratives and those of their partners. Following on from the Methodology chapter, there will be three results chapters which build on the key themes discussed in the literature. Chapter Four will focus on the dominant discourses that shape the lives of the women, focusing in particular on the discursive structures within the farming sector and on the family farm. Using theories of discourse, which highlight the notions from Section 2.3.2, the positioning of farm women through their narratives will provide the framework for this chapter. Chapter Five will focus on how farm women respond to these discourses; whether this is through active, work responses such as getting off-farm employment, or self-reflective, expressive means through defining their own identities. Discourse analysis and gender identity theory, drawing on concepts of gender identity explored in Section 2.3.3, will provide a framework to examine their responses. Lastly, conceptualisations of discourse and agency will provide a framework to analyse the agency that farm women have. In addressing the implications of their positioning, Chapter Six adopts the notions of post-structural agency (Section 2.3.4) to understand agency expressed by farm women, both as individuals and in relation to their partner (where present) and the family farm.

Overall, a review of the literature has provided an understanding of how farm women have been studied within the context of farming and the family farm. Over time scholars' foci have moved from fixed, generic categories of understanding to socially constructed frameworks by which to examine their lives. Different theories have also provided elements for a framework by which to investigate farm women. Farm women live within a range of influential discursive contexts, and their discursive positioning and reactions to their positioning reinforce this. Further investigation is needed, however, to appreciate how farm women perceive their positioning, and their willingness and ability, or lack thereof, to negotiate their lives. The following chapter
Chapter Two outlines the methodological approaches, research design and methods employed to explore the three research questions guiding this study.
Chapter 3 Methodology

The previous chapter reviewed the literature regarding farm women on family farms, and set out the conceptual framework through which this thesis investigated the three research questions posed in Section 1.3.1. Complementing that conceptual context, this chapter will outline the methodologies underlying the research approach and specific mechanisms employed in this study. Initially, the chapter will discuss post-structural and feminist approaches, noting that these methodologies are appropriate for investigating the discourse and agency of farm women (Section 3.1). Subsequent discussion will consider the advantages of a qualitative research design, and the merit in applying a case study approach (Section 3.2). Section 3.3 will introduce each phase of the research process, documenting the specific methods and decisions surrounding data collection, processing, analysis and reporting. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with a review of the limitations associated with the study, a discussion of reflexivity and an acknowledgment of positionality.

3.1 Methodological approaches: post-structuralism and feminism

Post-structural approaches are fundamentally suspicious of any universal truths claimed by science (including social sciences). In contrast, post-structural perspectives seek to break down pre-existing normalised structures of understanding (Shurmer-Smith, 2002). Many geographers have embraced post-structural approaches as they have endeavoured to gain in-depth understandings of specific issues, as opposed to extensive numerical findings of 'universal' conditions. This includes recent research on farm women, which has primarily utilised qualitative methods from predominantly feminist, and post-structuralist perspectives (Whatmore, 1991a; Bennett, 2006).

Most post-structuralist thought originated in France in the late 1960s, with Michel Foucault acknowledged as one of the most significant thinkers influencing contemporary geographers (Shurmer-Smith, 2002). From Foucault, geographers have developed an interest in discourse and discursive practices, whereby language and the articulation of meaning are understood to frame people’s experiences of the world and its power structures (Panelli, 2004). These frameworks of knowledge are seen to provide boundaries which can be critiqued for the way they encourage people to think along approved, normalised lines (Shurmer-Smith, 2002). Thus, being able to
Chapter Three

Methodology

deconstruct the frameworks to acknowledge and interpret the multitude of subjectivities, identities and experiences which may prevail has enabled geographers to gain a greater understanding and critical awareness of people’s everyday social worlds and lived realities (Dwyer and Limb, 2001).

There is a high degree of overlap between post-structuralism and contemporary forms of feminism in the form of opinion, objectives and method; the difference being that feminist research is more concerned with, and for, women (Ekinsmyth, 2002). Feminist geographers, in particular, critiqued positivist quantitative research, increasingly recognising that ‘true scientific beliefs’ were socially and culturally produced, and frequently gendered in choice of topics and methods (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). The resulting marginalisation of women compelled feminist researchers to challenge existing traditions. For example, McDowell (1997a, p. 382) argued that:

> Doing feminist geography means looking at the actions and meanings of gendered people, at their histories, personalities and biographies, at the meanings of place to them, at the different ways in which spaces are gendered and how this affects people’s understanding of themselves as women.

Thus feminist geographers have endeavoured to recognise how women are positioned within different societal frameworks, being critical of the unequal power relations within these, and the processes and people which reinforce these inequalities.

This thesis employs a post-structural feminist approach because it places emphasis on the diverse construction of the social world of farm women, providing an avenue through which to deconstruct their dynamic and multi-faceted lives. In adopting this approach, this research recognises and acknowledges that farm women live in a socially constructed and gendered world. The study involves aspects of feminist research because it focuses on farm women and aims to provide a greater critical awareness of their unequally gendered reality from their perspective. Furthermore, this study wishes to give value to their lives. However, in contrast to past feminist rural studies (Sachs, 1983; Shortall, 1999), the study does not claim an agenda to instigate or initiate change within family farm gender relations. For example, Shortall (1992, p.448) noted that, “It is necessary to identify inequalities and biases in order to make a realistic attempt at restructuring the situation where they [farm women] exist.” This thesis acknowledges that farm women may not wish for social change despite the discrimination present in their lives. While this may be challenging for some forms of feminism, it suggests that
silencing...” (Alston and Wilkinson, 1998, p.405), because farm women were largely, “… victims with little room for them to shape and interpret themselves and their own lives.” (Brandth, 2002b, p.186). Farm women were urged to take action and work towards the egalitarian ideologies of their feminist researchers.

However, with increased feminist examination into the lives of farm women, feminist methodology was questioned, in particular its disparity with the realities of women’s lives on family farms (Brandth, 2002b). Feminism was perceived to be an urban phenomenon which had never gained a foothold in the farming areas (Brandth and Haugen, 1997; Pini, 2003). For this reason, aspects of feminist theory have not been readily transferable to the farming sector since it is largely informed by scholars from an urban research context.

Inherent in the early literature on farm women is an anticipation of change in the direction of greater gender equality. There is an implicit assumption within farm women research that equitable gender relations will end once the traditional and static agricultural sector reaches a higher stage of development, paralleling that of a progressive and changing urban society (Brandth, 2002a; 2002b). However, ideological differences exist over the issue of power relations between urban-based researchers and the rural women the researchers are working with to bring about change. Grace and Lennie (1998, p.361) suggest that feminist understandings of farm women as an oppressed group is not necessarily how the women perceive themselves, concluding that, “Feminism has become associated with an image of women as victims and rural women reject that label.” Heather et al. (2005, p.95) reinforce this understanding with their research into Canadian farm women, explaining that:

Women were the visible victims of economic structures and political decisions that were also destroying family farms and rural communities in Alberta, although those women would refute the victim label fiercely. They were, after all, coping.

Brandth (2002b, p.113) reinforces that this divide between the perspectives of researchers and farm women is the result of its origins:

Feminism is rooted in modernist ideas of emancipation and justice and tries to devise strategies for change. However, pursuing these goals is particularly challenging when as the case with farm women, the research subjects do not share the same objectives. Many women do not find themselves oppressed or victims in everyday life situations.
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Research indicates that the refusal of farm women to comply with the victim stereotype is one aspect of farm women’s rejection of feminism (Grace and Lennie, 1998), an issue which has continued to puzzled feminist researchers (O’Hara, 1998; Brandth, 2002a). In trying to answer why farm women have not aligned themselves with feminist goals of emancipation and equality, Grace and Lennie (1998) suggest that feminist criticisms of traditional nuclear families is seen as a threat to the family consciousness of farm women. Alston (1995, p.23) noted that for feminism to be perceived as, “... being hostile towards men is unacceptable in a system that depends on a high degree of cooperation.” Consequently, feminism is viewed as a threat to farm women rather than a liberating force. Women are committed to the survival of the farm and the family, not their own fulfilment (Grace and Lennie, 1998; Kelly and Shortall, 2002; Heather et al., 2005), which on occasion has led to “...blaming the victim...” because farm women accept (or comply with) many of the sources of exploitation (Shortall, 1992, p. 448). Rather than criticise the actions of farm women, this study suggests that these responses should be examined in an effort to gain a clearer understanding of the factors shaping farm women’s lives, without the intent of changing them.

As scholars have become more aware of the diversity within the group ‘farm women’, there is an increased acknowledgement that the oppression of farm women will not be experienced by the women themselves in the same way as it looks from an external, feminist perspective, and that the identities and experiences of women are expressed in many different ways. Brandth (2002b, p.115) explains:

I would expect farm women’s relationship to feminism to be individual and collective, heterogeneous, contingent, ambivalent, complex and embedded within various specificities of rural contexts.

This current study emphasises that researchers need to regard family farming as a specific context whereby business relations are not separate from family; unpaid work is not separate from paid; and that there is a high degree of cooperation required between spouses to ensure the farm survives. If this means farm women operate from supposedly ‘oppressed’ positions then researchers need to work with that reality rather than against it. There is a need for feminist theory and practice to accommodate women’s resistance to patriarchal structures and the specificity of local conditions and cultures.” (O’Hara, 1998). Furthermore, there is a need to recognise agriculture as a contemporary context without assuming things will change, or should change, in a modern linear way
Chapter Three

Methodology

(Brandth, 2002b). These approaches have provided some guidance for this current study.

Overall, the challenge for this research is to ensure that it has considered and reflected the diversity, multiple experiences and agendas of farm women that derive from individual contexts. Farm women’s lives need to be heard, and accepted, rather than women being perceived as needy subjects of oppression who require social change. This study acknowledges the many gendered inequalities women face, but these are explored within the context of the lived realities of farm women and their articulated choices and interests. Furthermore, this thesis recognises the disjuncture between farm women and feminist researchers, and suggests that it is the product of the various specificities within the women’s particular farming contexts, and so aims to contribute to the qualitative case-based study needed in this regard.

3.2 A qualitative case study research design

Post-structural, qualitative methodologies support research design and data collection that seeks to gain in-depth understandings about people. Qualitative research moves away from quantitative assumptions that anything worth studying must be able to be observed and counted (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). The focus of qualitative research involves seeking a detailed appreciation of human behaviour, embracing lived experience through a reflection on, and interpretation of, the understandings, experiences and shared meanings of peoples within their everyday realities (Dwyer and Limb, 2001). Qualitative research facilitates the exploration of feelings, understandings and knowledge of others through interactive techniques such as in-depth interviews, and these methods are increasingly being used to enable geographers to gain an insight into complex processes which shape everyday life (Whatmore, 1991a; Bennett, 2004; Price and Evans, 2006). Smith (2001) reinforces these contentions, claiming that qualitative approaches identify the relevance and importance of everyday ‘folk’ and their perspectives on the practicalities of everyday life through in-depth studies focussing on diverse forms of positionality and power relations. These approaches recognise and build contextual and interpretative understandings. Thus qualitative research makes possible the examination of the social world not as a fixed predictable space, but an assemblage of competing social constructions, representations and performances.

This thesis will use a qualitative approach to explore the discourses and agency of farm women, for it will enable the study to acknowledge, document and interpret the
complex, multi-faceted dimensions of farm women’s lives, experiences and senses of self. However, this study is not purely a qualitative undertaking. As will be explained in Section 3.3, in-depth interviews along with a postal survey and record sheets were used to gather data. This reflects previous literature which noted that, in addition to an increased awareness of farm women, there have been parallel methodological changes where researchers have moved from strictly quantitative methodologies, through to qualitative methodologies, through to a mixture of both (Dwyer and Limb, 2001). However, it is emphasised that the narratives of the farm women, gained through intensive in-depth interviews, are the main feature ‘voice’ for this study. Additional quantitative information provided background detail on the participants, along with quantifiable material to support interview findings.

A growth of qualitative research in geography has produced a proliferation of interview and case-based investigation, especially in feminist studies (Whatmore, 1991a; Valentine, 1993; Winchester, 1999). Furthermore, many geographers have used a case study approach to gain detailed, in-depth understandings of participants (Winchester, 1999; Herbert, 2000). A case-study approach enables a greater insight to be gained into the motives and actions of individual farmers, without removing them from the contexts in which they live and work (Shucksmith, 1983). Despite criticisms about the approach’s lack of scientific basis and integrity and an inability to make generalisations due to limited sample sizes (Herbert, 2000), case-studies still represent a valid intensive study method for gaining in-depth understandings in particular situations (Cloke et al., 1991). Critiques of this approach also focus on how the narrow focus may preclude the transferral of findings to other settings (Herbert, 2000) where extensive research methods, searching for regularities and differences amongst a large number of individuals, are seen to be more representative of wider society. But, these extensive methods are seen to exclude essential factors useful to explain human behaviour, which diminishes their explanatory power (Sayer, 1992).

This study recognises that the representation and value of data lie in its ability to reveal the causal mechanisms that underpin human attitude, experience and actions (Sayer, 1992), and has adopted the case-study approach to develop a greater understanding of the experiences and actions of individual women within the broader contexts of agriculture and family farming. Included in this study will be an explication of the broader contextual realities that constitute the settings in which farm women live. This will enable the uniqueness of each woman’s case to be understood in context, as the
value of these findings will rest on the diversity of the farm women participants and their responses to the specificities present within the family farm context. Simultaneously, the study will enable a greater critical awareness of the daily lives of farm women from their perspective, and how they are connected to broader structures and frameworks that create, or prevent, the realisation of different opportunities and possibilities in their lives.

Finally, this study has adopted a two-tier case-study approach. Rather than undertake a more superficial national survey of all New Zealand farm women, two specific case-study areas were selected to enable an in-depth study of individual farm women to occur. This particular context of family farming in this study has been investigated in two neighbouring regions of New Zealand’s South Island: Otago and South Canterbury (Figure 3.1). These two areas collectively cover nearly one-third of the South Island, and are dominated by a mountainous landscape and a history of extensive high country pastoral farming, traditionally structured as family farm units.

3.3 Research methods
The specific research methods engaged in this thesis reflect the post-structuralist feminist approaches outlined earlier. This study employed qualitative research techniques, primarily in the form of in-depth interviews, as these were best suited for this type of study. In addition, financial and temporal constraints prevented any participatory or observational based techniques. In an ideal situation, extended farm visits and observation, such as those used by Whatmore (1991a) and Bennett (2006), may have provided a rich source of additional observations, but they were beyond the scope of this study.

The following section will outline how the participant group was identified, the ethics procedure, followed by the key phases of research, each stage seeking to uphold the integrity of the participants’ experiences. Lastly, the limitations experienced and the researcher’s reflexive considerations and positionality will be discussed.

3.3.1 Identifying a research population
Having selected an appropriate region for study (noted in Section 3.2), the specific study population was derived from a multi-method approach aimed at securing a diverse range of women. These women were sourced from a range of contacts including organisations such as Rural Women New Zealand, Federated Farmers and the Department of Land and Survey Information. In addition, personal contacts in the
FIGURE 3.1: Farm women case study sites
farming community led to other farm women through a snowballing tactic. Further names were obtained from current New Zealand Electoral Roll. Multiple sources were utilised to ensure a broad range of women were contacted, not just those who belong to specific organisations. Their contact details (postal address and telephone number) were obtained from telephone directories. Through these diverse processes, letters of introduction and the postal survey were sent to 76 potential farm women. In all, 34 farm women agreed to participate in the study. Seven of the women were responsible for farming their property independently, whilst the remaining 27 farmed in partnership. All women had to be living on a family farm. These were pastoral farms and ranged in size from 22 to 22,000 hectares. Accessibility ranged from being very close to an urban centre to being over an hour out of a small rural township via a rough, gravel road. Further details on farm women participants and their partners (where present) are given in Section 3.3.5.

3.3.2 Ethics

While feminists and others in geography increasingly reflect on the importance of ethical research practices (Hay and Foley, 1998; Proctor, 1998; McNay, 2003), this study has also operated within a specific institutional context and viewing of ethics. Thus, in accordance with the University of Otago's ethical approval requirements for research involving human participants, a category 'A' ethics approval was sought, and was approved by the University's Ethics Committee in August 2004. This ensured that issues of confidentiality, informed consent and the participant's right to withdraw if requested were observed. Furthermore, the intended uses of the data gathered and data storage were in-line with policy requirements. All participants were sent introductory letters, ethics guidelines and consent forms which were signed prior to their involvement in the study, as per policy regulations. Copies of the ethics application, letters and consent form are included in Appendix A.

3.3.3 Data collection

The data collection methods used in this thesis occurred in three phases (Table 3.1). These activities were employed to facilitate the collection and compilation of data from farm women and their partners (where present) via a postal survey, interviews of the farm couples together, and separate interviews of both spouses.
Table 3.1: Phases of research for partnered and independent farm women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Phase (Aims and features)</th>
<th>Women in partnership with men</th>
<th>Independent farm women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial postal contact and survey; gathering background family and farm information via structured survey</td>
<td>Letter and survey sent to farm women</td>
<td>Letter and survey sent to farm women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview One: Initial interview covering farm context, farm succession, labour allocation and decision-making</td>
<td>Conducted as a couple, including structured interview questions, independent work/record sheets, and open discussion on key themes</td>
<td>Interviews with independent women were combined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Two: In-depth discussion of farm women identity, recognition, family farming, on and off-farm work, influence of partners</td>
<td>Conducted separately with individual women and men. Each partner was asked the same questions.</td>
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</table>

The farm survey

The initial postal contact survey was employed to introduce the study and provide contextual information on each farm woman and her family farm (Appendix B). The survey was divided into two parts. First, it collected information on farm characteristics including farm location, size, length of ownership, commodity production (stock and crop types), and any diversification which had occurred. Second, the survey gathered household characteristics data including the age and educational qualifications of the farm household, forms of labour used on the property, the working days of the farm woman (and her partner if present) and their main sources of income over the last thirty years. The data gained from these surveys also provided background details to contextualise the initial interviews.

Interview preparation

Prior to the interviews being undertaken, pilot interviews were conducted to establish how the postal survey and the semi-structured interview format would work. Issues focussed on included: interview length, appropriateness of the wording in the survey and interview questions, clarity of the questions, the sequence of the questions and the practical workings of having combined and separate interviews. The pilots were very useful, highlighting issues to be aware of when embarking upon the formal interview process and clarifying question format and structure. Once the interview themes and questions were refined, the actual interview process proceeded.
When preparing for the formal interviews each interview was scheduled at the participant’s convenience in their home. This ensured that interviewees felt relaxed in their surroundings and removed any extra inconvenience for them, such as travelling to another site. Gaining an audience with male farmers proved difficult at times as they were frequently out on the farm. Consequently, most of the combined interviews were held during a meal time when the men came in to the farm house, and this was then followed by the separate interviews. For some couples, it meant another visit due to time constraints or other commitments, and as many men were unable to be interviewed during the daytime, these interviews were conducted at night.

In-depth semi-structured interviews

The key data collection method employed in this thesis was in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used because they take on a conversational form, whereby dialogue between the interviewed and the researcher ebbs and flows through a range of researcher prompted issues, or forays into other matters. These latter topics, unanticipated by the researcher, provide rich additional insights and information (Valentine, 2001; Bennett, 2002). The value of such interviews and the resulting narratives lies in their capacity to expose differences, contradictions and complex, unique experiences (Somers, 1994; Bennett, 2002); the stories of everyday individuals which are central to this thesis.

While the use of in-depth interviews in geography proliferates, so do a number of questions and concerns surrounding the technique and its complex set of personal, political and place-based processes (Aitken, 2001). Not only can interviews take different forms depending on the aims, background, skills, and theoretical positions of the interviewer, there are other processes involving where interviews are held; who is interviewed, the gender relations within the interview, and interpersonal communicative dynamics that influence the interview practice (O'Hara, 1998; Aitken, 2001; Bennett, 2002).

For this research, an in-depth awareness of the lives of farm women (and their partners where present) was sought and this information was gathered in combined and separate interviews. Interviews provided the information required to gain an understanding of how farm women view themselves and their lives. Interviews enabled these understandings to be gathered, using and respecting the specific language and meanings of the women and their partners as much as possible. After an initial interview with
farm couples (where women were farming in partnership with men), separate interviews were conducted to remove the influence of the other partner, thus adding to the richness of the data by providing differences and contradictions.

The two interview formats were based on key themes. Table 3.2 shows how the interviews followed a similar structure for both partnered and independent women. The first interview asked participants about their backgrounds, the family's involvement in the farm and the future of their family farm (Appendix C). In addition, questions enquired about family farm diversification possibilities, farm expenditure, task allocation and decision making priorities. For these latter themes, in the case of partnered women, both spouses filled in record sheets individually to enable findings to be made based on male and female perceptions across key areas of farming operation and management. Independent farm women also filled in the record sheets, which had been slightly modified to reflect their circumstances. The second interviews were less structured for both partnered farming couples and independent farm women (Appendix D). Each party in a farming couple was interviewed separately. Key themes were discussed, and these included: family farming in the 21st century, the recognition of women in family farming, influences in the lives of farm women, how each partner affects the other, and off-farm work.

Interview implementation

While conducting these interviews, this study focussed on consistency to ensure that each interviewee received the same information and was asked the same questions. Hence, a common procedure was followed. Upon arrival, and after an exchange of pleasantries, the focus of the study and how it was being achieved was explained to the participants. This was followed by a reiteration of the ethics associated with the interview process. During this initial discussion all participants were given the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. Once the research had been explained, along with an outline of the researcher's personal involvement and experiences in farming, interviewees were more comfortable, perceiving the researcher as a woman with a farming background rather than just an urban-based female academic.
TABLE 3.2: Interview aims and features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Features</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview One – partnered women</td>
<td>A combined interview to document aspects of the farm, family, future directions and to gain male and female perspectives via record sheets.</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview questions on five themes:</td>
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<td>- Family farm ownership</td>
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<td>- Farm diversification</td>
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<td>- Intergenerational farming</td>
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<td>- Gender differences within family farming</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Farming income</td>
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<td>Record sheets for each partner on:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Diversification possibilities</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Expenditure ratings</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Task prioritisation and allocation</td>
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<td>- Decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview Two – partnered women and men</td>
<td>A semi-structured interview conducted with each partner separately to gain male and female views on family farming and their respective partners.</td>
<td>Interview questions administered to men and women covering four key themes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The survival of family farming in the 21st century</td>
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<td>- Gaining off-farm work</td>
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<td>- The recognition of women in family farming</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- External influences shaping the lives of farm women</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- How each partner influences, and is influenced by, their spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined interview with independent farming women</td>
<td>An interview to document aspects of the woman’s farm, family, future directions and perspectives via record sheets.</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview questions on five themes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Family farm ownership</td>
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<td>- Farm diversification</td>
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<td>- Intergenerational farming</td>
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<td>- Gender differences within family farming</td>
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<td>- Farming income</td>
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<td>Record sheets on:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Diversification possibilities</td>
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<td>- Expenditure ratings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Task prioritisation and allocation</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- Decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview questions covering four key themes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The survival of family farming in the 21st century</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Gaining off-farm work</td>
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<td>- The recognition of women in family farming</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- External influences shaping the lives of farm women</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How each partner influences, and is influenced by, their spouse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60
The decision to record the interviews was also made taking into account the experiences of previous research, even while recognising that other researchers had documented shortcomings of this method. O'Hara (1998) decided not to record her interviews of Irish farm women, taking notes during the interview rather than have participants reacting adversely to the presence of a tape recorder. Furthermore, she noted that key statements were often made when the tape was switched off, as participants realised they were not on record. However, for the current research, the decision to record interviews was guided by the aim of the research which was to gain a critical awareness and deeper understanding of the discourses and agency shaping the lives of farm women through their language, meanings and understandings.

Recording the interviews provided the dialogue verbatim, removing the need to take detailed notes which can interfere with the quality of the listening by the researcher, along with discussion facilitation and the rapport which can build up between the interviewer and interviewee. However, some brief notes were taken to document the body language and demeanour of the interview subjects as this can rarely be appreciated easily in sound recording or transcription of words alone. As Leonard (2003) emphasised, the interviewer can gain a rich source of information through non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expression and other body language.

This study recognised that an appreciation of possible tensions and compromises between partners was required by the researcher when recording, as an interview has the potential to make some internal changes to the partner's relationship (Aitken, 2001). Specifically, some of the male partners in this study did not share the same enthusiasm and expectations about the research as their spouse, and had in fact been strongly encouraged to participate, albeit begrudgingly, by their partner. Moreover, these combined interviews also introduced complex power dynamics whereby it was recognised that the comments by one partner may be tempered, or even stopped, by the language tone, actual words or body language of their partner. Consequently, individual record sheets were deployed throughout interview one to circumvent this problem, enabling spouses to respond to written questions without the influence of their partner.

To further reduce the potential, undue influence of partners, separate interviews covering a range of themes were conducted to gain a clearer understanding of the lives of farm women, administered away from the other partner to prevent interjections, coercion, or anxiety caused by being possibly overheard. As with Aitken's (1998)
‘Family Fantasies’ study, cited in Aitken (2001), every assurance of anonymity was given to participants, stating that what they said about their partner was confidential, and that when the final work was completed, they would not be identifiable. It was also recognised that some women may find talking about their partners stressful, reflecting Pini’s (2004) findings that some women resented being questioned separately because it was perceived by them to be questioning their husband’s capabilities as a farmer, and also a waste of time because he was responsible for everything. To try and alleviate this women, and their partners, were informed about the content of interview themes prior to discussions, and were reminded that they could stop the interview at any stage if they were uncomfortable with the interview content.

The decision to interview couples separately was important because it enabled understandings to be gained from both farm women and men without spousal influence during the interview. Studying farm women in isolation has prevailed over the last couple of decades, and so it is the inclusion of the male perspective in this research that makes this thesis distinctive. This study sought to assess farm women’s agency, and so (where present) a male partner’s perspective was required to achieve this, whereas in contrast, Miewald’s and McCann’s (2004) study of the struggles between men and women unsuccessfully employed third person analysis relying on quotes from women talking about what their spouse thought, or felt. This thesis considers that any research which includes complex gender relations, as in the family farm context, benefits from the inclusion of data from both men and women, to gain deeper understanding of the disparities or commonalities between them. For independent women, interviews one and two were combined. These women were very relaxed and eager to participate. As with the partnered interviews, these interviews were recorded, the only alterations to the interviews related to questions regarding partners on record sheets and in personal influences discussion.

3.3.4 Data processing and analysis
This study involved a range of data processing and analysis phases. Initial processing involved summarising quantitative data which provided background information. First, postal surveys were manually synthesised prior to interviews being scheduled. Basic farm and family characteristics were recorded to enable the interviews to be case specific. Second, upon the completion of the first interviews, the record sheets were tabulated, reviewed and compared. The summary tables provided findings that were used to support farm women’s narratives and those of their partners (if present). The
third stage of processing utilised the qualitative data and involved the transcription of interviews into word processing files. These were then downloaded into NVivo,\(^1\) a computer based qualitative research analysis tool (Bazeley and Richards, 2000). Preliminary key codes were established, based on the themes of the three research questions guiding the study: discourses, responses and agency. Within each of the key code themes, further codes were created to enable specific aspects of narratives to be highlighted based on the questions and discussions in the semi-structured interviews. As the coding process progressed, further modification occurred if it became evident that new material was emerging from the data. Whilst it was evident that many themes reflected the findings of previous research, the codes had to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate unexpected or new results.

As this study places a strong emphasis on using the narratives of farm women and men, extensive quotes have been used in the reporting process (Section 3.3.5). The NVivo software enabled the data to be managed and shaped to facilitate the identification and analysis of these quotes. Furthermore, the software enabled the material to be worked through repeatedly to ensure that the context in which quotes were made was maintained through their interpretation and reporting.

3.3.5 Reporting

The primary reporting of this study rests in the form of this thesis. This thesis is a ‘snap shot’ of farm women’s lives, heard via their voices at one moment in time. It is a compilation of findings based on the research questions asked, interpreted and presented by a female academic. In identifying the dominant discourses shaping the lives of farm women, discourse analysis did not focus on the silences, or the particular constructs of discourses. Instead, analytic attentions were given to the language and the words spoken by the interviewees, as it were these that reflected the critical awareness of women to their own lives. The reporting process has tried to maintain the integrity of the direct quotes made by farm women and men, with the aim of ensuring that their language and meanings are preserved (Winchester, 1996; 2000). Direct quotes are identifiable by the use of double quotation marks, either within the text if it was a short quote or separated from the main text if longer than three lines.

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\(^1\) NVivo is a software application to enable researchers to strategically think about, and gain insight into large volumes of qualitative data. Computer software analysis tools have become more acceptable just as statistical programmes are used for quantitative analysis (Bazeley and Richards, 2000).
Conventions of confidentiality have been maintained throughout the reporting process in order to protect the anonymity of participants. Likewise, all properties were assigned codes, and interviewees were assigned pseudonyms to maintain privacy. Furthermore, specific information regarding location and careers has been modified in some cases to prevent participant identification especially within individual cameos. Table 3.3 provides a detailed overview of the farm women participants, illustrating the diversity present within the group of farm women. Each woman heralds from a distinctive farm family, and an appreciation of these specific contexts is required to realise the richness of their narratives which are dispersed throughout the thesis. For example, Jean, a married woman in her fifties who lives on an extensive high country sheep station surrounded by mountains, located 45 minutes from the nearest small settlement; Louise, a solo-mother of two in her early thirties who farms a lowland property in Central Otago; and Lorraine, a woman in her fifties, who has five children and works off the farm whilst still being responsible for the livestock production on the family farm and the farm household. These women participants, united as a group of farm women participating in an academic study, are a wonderfully diverse cohort, and whilst confidentiality requirements do remove some of the ability to convey this plentiful variety, the table and their narratives convey the kaleidoscope of contexts in which they live.

A further sense of diversity is conveyed in body language and demeanour of the women. These observations complement the narratives reported in this thesis. Thus, since the body language and emotional demeanour of respondents was noted this investigation ensured quotes were analysed and interpreted, along with the manner in which they were voiced. This provided a clearer perspective of what subjects were conveying. Tears, laughter, anger, frustration and tension were all evident during the research interview process. These included: the look of distaste when Sandra (Section 5.1.1) described dirty and smelly on-farm chores; the expression of joy as Fiona described her ‘special needs lambs’ (Section 5.1.1); the sadness expressed by Jackie as she considered her husband’s rejection of the homestead as a productive part of the farm (Section 6.1.2); and Jo’s pent-up frustration and anger as she recalled her family’s rejection of her in the succession process because she was a ‘girl’ (Section 5.3).
### TABLE 3.3: Farm women participant information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias Female</th>
<th>Alias Male</th>
<th>Farm Woman Name</th>
<th>Age F</th>
<th>Age M</th>
<th>Size ha</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Farm Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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<td>sheep</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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<td>sheep</td>
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<tr>
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<td>LV</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Ind. Operator-s</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1190</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
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<td>Connie</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Ind. Operator-m</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethel</td>
<td>Peter</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<td>Coastal</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
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<td>Click</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Peter</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Couy</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>500</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edna</td>
<td>Gordon</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>276</td>
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<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1322</td>
<td>S. Canterbury</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Ind. Operator-m</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>S. Canterbury</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Warwick</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>S. Canterbury</td>
<td>sheep/cropping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyin</td>
<td>Ebb</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>S. Canterbury</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bea</td>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
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<td>sheep/beeef</td>
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<td>Barry</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>S. Canterbury</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Ind. Operator-s</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>S. Canterbury</td>
<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngaiire</td>
<td>Erland</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>S. Canterbury</td>
<td>beef/sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>S. Canterbury</td>
<td>sheep</td>
</tr>
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<td>Thomas</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>430</td>
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<tr>
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<td>55</td>
<td>11,200</td>
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<td>UKN</td>
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<td>Barb</td>
<td>Posa</td>
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<td>Loraine</td>
<td>Alex</td>
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<td>Scott</td>
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<td>Frank</td>
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<td>Jean</td>
<td>George</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10,000</td>
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<td>sheep/beeef</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Numbers**
- 34 farm women interviewed; 23 farm couples interviewed; 23 farm men interviewed
- 7 independent female operators
- 6 male partners unwilling/unobtainable

**Farm woman type**
- Partnered: farming in a marital partnership
- Ind. Operator-s: independent female operator (single)
- Ind. Operator-m: independent female operator (married)
- (their partners chose not to participate as they are not involved in the farming operation)

**Age**
- NA = not applicable (where the female is farming independently)
- UKN = unknown

Source: Postal survey (October – December 2004)
they were powerful and busy men, who had expertise and a superior knowledge of the agricultural context that she was investigating, thus treating her as someone who needed educating within their masculine world. Whilst not all male farmers responded in this manner during this study, it was evident that some men saw the interviews as an encumbrance that did not warrant their time or thought. Despite careful cajoling, many men appeared to be uncomfortable about discussing their wife or the discursive complexities which shape her life, although they were more engaging if the discussion turned to the practicalities of farming, such as stock management and tractors. Furthermore, sensing the reluctance of male interviewees during the interview process produced interviewer nervousness which detracted at times from the interpersonal dynamics affecting the ability to question and respond. This reflects difficulties that Bennett (2002) encountered in her studies of farm women and their families. Moreover, there were also the limitations surrounding the self-selected sample. The stories and experiences of those invited women who did not volunteer remain untold. There may be many reasons for this, but it is sobering to consider some of the unequal gender issues that may behind some of their silences.

Limitations were also encountered within the data analysis and reporting processes. By simultaneously trying to convey the dynamism of the women’s lives whilst maintaining their anonymity, copious nuances were lost. Many of the things that the women do are case-specific and identifiable because their uniqueness is part of their character. Consequently, compromise resulted in discussion which was at times, less vibrant and informative than it could have been despite aspects of body language and demeanour being noted. Moreover, whilst the narratives are an extremely important aspect of this study, the words would have a greater impact if they were presented in the full context in which they were given, thus providing a complete sensory experience. By using a thesis to report research findings, in complying with ethical requirements, and focusing most on the women’s own narratives, these extra dimensions and aspects of the lives of the farm women studied are nearly lost. However, capturing their words is still highly informative and provides a very important insight into the complexity and diversity of their lives as farm women.

Overall, the main limitations of this work concerned the practical implementation of interviews, maintaining participant anonymity whilst trying to convey the intricacy of their lives and, most importantly, coping with interviewer-interviewee interactions. This thesis acknowledges that the female gender of the researcher, along with the gender
focus of the study under investigation within a masculine-dominated industry, produced difficulties when interviewing males. However, noting this difficulty further reinforces how women are positioned by subjectivities within the family farming context, irrespective of whether they are the male farmer's wife, or a female researcher interviewing them.

3.4.2 Positionality

Critically reflecting upon the design of this study has also provided an opportunity to practise reflexivity and consider positionality. As noted above, being a female researcher, interviewing men and women about a gender-based topic, within the masculine world of family farming, brought forth limitations. My identity as a female, urban-based academic was relevant because it introduced interviewer/interviewee power dynamics and a perception that I was an outsider because I reside in an urban context. But as the following discussion will show, a range of other issues also shaped this study.

First, reflexive conduct of my study enabled me to recognise many dilemmas encountered whilst planning, conducting and completing the research. Reflexivity is the term used to denote the process whereby the researcher considers their role in the research process and its findings (Ekinsmyth, 2002). The researcher's personal circumstances are acknowledged rather than dismissed as inadmissible to the research process. As there is no such thing as a non-biased or impartial observation, being conscious of a researcher's approach, their values and why they conducted the research in the manner in which they did, is central to discussing the research (Tolich and Davidson, 1999; Phillips and Pugh, 2000). Every observation researchers make, whether it be within a quantitative or qualitative format, is a function of what has happened in their past as this has directed the topic selection; aims of research; method of data collection; method of analysis; data interpretation and where results are published (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). Thus, reflexivity is key to understanding.

With regard to this study, while aspects of a post-structuralist feminist approach have been employed, it is not this researcher's aim to pass judgement on the inequalities present in the lives of farm women. This has been an active form of academic positioning. Consequently, the focus has been consciously placed on how the women operate within their specific circumstances. This reflects a commitment to gain an understanding of how women in farming view themselves in their own language, not the researcher's. Hopefully, a more accurate portrayal of farm women discourses and
agency will be the result. Furthermore, there are no pretences that this research will improve the lives of farm women, because they may be content with their current identity and position. The value of this research comes from gaining a greater critical awareness of farm women’s lives, not a judgement of their lives as a precursor to change.

My positionality in this research is also the product of both farming and gender experiences. My interest in the topic had its origins in weekends and holidays spent on farms of my family and friends. During these times I was surrounded by farmers and farmer’s wives, whom I observed, and later reflected on, who carried out different tasks and where people were spatially allocated. As a young woman who loved to be out on the farm, I was an anomaly, as both my mother and grandmother had no interest in the farm and spent their time inside performing domestic activities. Guided by my grandfather, I became adept at a range of ‘simple’ farm tasks, although I was not taught to shear sheep as that was deemed a ‘male’ job. My grandfather referred to me as a ‘little tomboy’ as I did not reflect the expectations put on me as a female, much to my grandmother’s horror. Both my dress sense and attitude were frowned upon because they reflected male perspectives and expectations. Consequently, there were times of frustration when I was not considered for jobs because of my gender, such as driving the tractor. Furthermore, despite the many years I spent working on the farm with livestock and smaller machinery (albeit in a part-time sense), I was never encouraged to be a farmer. On occasions comments were made that I needed to “marry a farmer” if I wanted that lifestyle, but the option of owning and operating my own property was never considered or mentioned.

These experiences led to a greater awareness of the lives of women within the masculine environment of farming. In hindsight, I experienced considerable positioning as a young woman by my immediate family and extended family. Their constructs of what young women should do on farms reflected traditional farming discourses. Only my grandfather showed me as a girl that some discourses could be challenged, although, he too would not have encouraged an adult woman to become a full-time farmer, evident by the fact that neither of his daughters were encouraged to take over the family farm.

Overall, my part-time rural upbringing provided me with some wonderful farming adventures. It also provided me with a greater empathy for rural and farming families,
as they work through difficult times in order to ensure the survival of the family farm, coping with the pressures associated with problems like drought, fly-strike, low lambing percentages and meagre wool cheques. My experiences also revealed the lives of the farm women in my family who always had the meals on the table when the men came in off the farm, baked dozens of scones for the shearing gang in the middle of a hot December summer, gained off-farm work to pay for goods the farm could not provide for, and mustered steers on the hill country in a raging storm. These women coped with social and physical isolation, aggressive partners when things were tough, and worries when children were sick and a long way from the doctor. Furthermore, on reflection, these women appeared to have little choice in their daily lives as they were required to comply with whatever was required of them to ensure that the farm survived, despite the hardships incurred on them. Trying to understand why these women in my life lived like this provided the impetus for me to study the lives of farm women and gain a deeper understanding of the discourses which position them, their responses to these and their resulting agency. The results of this activity are now presented in the following three chapters.
Chapter 4  Dominant Discourses that Shape the Lives of Farm Women

While Chapter Three showed the materially diverse contexts in which the research participants live in Southern New Zealand, this chapter turns to address the first research question guiding this thesis. This chapter explores the dominant discourses which shape the lives of these women, specifically interpreting the narratives of farm women to gain an understanding of the dominant discourses at play. Initially the chapter focuses on the foremost discourses which position farm women in diverse ways (Section 4.1). The sequence of discourses discussed in this chapter reflects the life-stages of many farm women, moving from constructions of femininity and domesticity first encountered as a young girl, through to constructions of motherhood in adulthood. The subsequent discussion in Section 4.2, considers the discourses contextualising the positions and experiences of farm women within the family farming sector. Whilst these first two sections itemise specific characteristics and implications of separate discourses, the reality of a farm woman's life is far more complex. Thus, Section 4.3 shows how multiple discourses affect women's lives and presents analyses of two individual farm women. This section aims to demonstrate the composite and contrasting ways the previously identified discourses are engaged in different farm women's lives. This diversity is then further expanded in Chapter Five.

4.1 Discourses positioning farm women

As outlined in Chapter Two, this thesis employs a post-structuralist approach by understanding discourse as a concept that utilises the workings of language to analyse social organisation, social meanings, power and individual consciousness. Furthermore, discourses are recognised by this study as important in terms of influencing how individuals think and act. Hence, this chapter will examine the discursive themes that shape the lives of farm women, based on the specific narratives they express. Having analysed the interview narratives, it is evident that the lives of farm women are shaped by five sets of dominant discourses that have their foundations in broader discursive fields\(^1\). Cumulatively, these interact and operate across various contexts over a range of

\(^1\) See Section 1.2. For the purpose of this research, discourses are understood as assembled and contested in discursive fields which consist of competing ways to provide meaning to the world and of organising social institutions and processes.
social, spatial and temporal dimensions. As with any individual, a farm woman’s subject positions emerge from a diverse range of experiences and discursive conditions over time (Oldrup, 1999; Heather et al., 2005). Although Brandth (2002b) notes this can create issues of dominance conflict when some dominant discourses will be articulated and given key status as ‘the truth’, for instance, the male identity of farmers.

For farm women in this study, the dominant discourses are derived from four discursive sites of origin including: the farm business\(^2\), the farming community\(^3\), the farm household\(^4\) and their own personal biography\(^5\) (Figure 4.1). The sites of origin have constructed and modified discourses from broader discursive fields to reflect the specificities and complexities of family farming and where discourses are reinforced, played out, negotiated and contested by farm women. The discourses contain assemblages of ideas, statements of meaning and practices. These are grouped, disseminated and performed to facilitate understanding, or to legitimise certain beliefs about the positions and experiences of women within the family farming context. Living on a family farm poses specific conditions for farm women through established meanings and practices regarding ownership, the farm household division of labour, as well as the meanings associated with the concepts of work and leisure (Oldrup, 1999). Many of these discourses have become normalised within family farming, particularly those that position women because of their gender.

### 4.1.1 Discourses of femininity and gendered embodiment

This section will demonstrate how discourses of femininity and embodiment shape the lives of farm women and discursively position them as lesser members of the farm household. As summarised in Figure 4.2, farm women in this study have been subjected to these discourses throughout their lives, initially learning gendered expectations from their childhood and then later via broader farming and social contexts. As the following analysis will demonstrate, their upbringing has played a crucial role in constructing discursive meanings that women understand and practise. However, as the diagram shows, it is not only a woman’s personal biography which imparts femininity and

\(^2\) The farm business refers to the family enterprise business and its links with service and commodity consumers and providers within the regional, national and global agricultural sectors.

\(^3\) The farming community refers to other people who share farming as their income generator and lifestyle. This occurs on a range of scales from the local to regional and national scales.

\(^4\) The farm household is the current family unit of the farm woman on the family farm. For most women, this consists of their husband and children (who may or may not live at home).

\(^5\) The farm woman’s personal biography refers to her life story, in particular her childhood and upbringing. It includes events, experiences, expectations and understandings from these key formative years.
FIGURE 4.1: Dominant discursive fields and sites of origin for discourses positioning a farm woman

Key: F = Farm woman; PB = Personal biography; FB = Farm business; FC = Farming community; FH = Farm household

Discursive fields ... Sites of origin
FIGURE 4.2: The sites of origin for discourses of femininity and embodiment positioning a farm woman
embodiment subjectivities; these are also reinforced through her current farm household organisation and the farming community. Collectively these discursively situate women into gender-aligned, inferior subject positions.

The first set of discourses positioning farm women are those of femininity. Social and cultural discourses regarding women have constructed meanings and practices around an overarching characteristic associated with womanhood, commonly identified as femininity. Traditional meanings and practices of femininity construct women as physically weaker than men, compliant, emotional, nurturing, dependent, supportive, humble, modest, and sensitive, with strong links to practices of motherhood and homemaking (Tong, 1992; Morris and Evans, 2001; Brandth, 2006). Within the family farming context, traditional constructions of femininity are also realised through the positioning of women as the lesser partner within the traditional farm household division of labour (Oldrup, 1999; Saugeres, 2002b; Heather et al., 2005).

This study confirms the existing literature and highlights the significance of early role models for farm women in constructing what it means to be a woman. Josie recalled with pleasure her mother’s femininity, stating:

Mum was an amazing lady because she was a wonderful homemaker and a very soft and loving person. But she had a great inner strength and she was a people person, so we always had people coming and going and it was just wonderful and she did everything beautifully.

Josie emphasised her mother’s softness and how she “...did everything beautifully”, all qualities associated with a feminine woman. Josie’s mother reflects the traditional meanings of femininity and her positioning in the homestead as a homemaker, a point further explored in Section 4.1.2.

In contrast, another woman recalled how expressions of femininity placed her at a disadvantage within the family, which resulted in her modifying her own practices as a ‘farm girl’. As a young girl, Jean remembered that overt demonstrations of feminine emotion, such as crying or complaining, would confirm to her male siblings that she

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6 This thesis recognises that ‘traditional constructions’ of farm women and farm households have changed over time in Western agriculture. Both historians and sociologists have shown that rural women have been increasingly positioned inside the home, particularly with increased modernisation and political change which reduced the visibility and recognition of their outdoors, physical work (Adams, 1994; Bouquet, 1982; Hunter, 2004). Consequently, farm women were increasingly positioned by patriarchal expectations about domestic life and spaces (Adams, 1994; Davidoff et al., 1976).
was a girl and she should not be out on the farm. She explained with a degree of resoluteness:

When I was a kid I just had to get stuck in and never grizzle about anything. I remember riding out in [the] freezing cold [with] frozen hands and just wanting to cry with the pain, [but not doing so] because if you did, they'd never take you again because, you know, you're a girl.

Jean realised that explicit displays of femininity reinforced her inferiority and inadequacy as a 'girl'. This underlines how constructions of femininity that discursively position farm women as the weaker gender are learned from childhood. They strongly influence how females perceive the work they should do, as this is aligned with the understanding that their bodies are physically weaker and therefore not able to undertake hard, manual outdoors labour.

Incorporating these notions of what women should, or should not do, because of their femaleness, are discourses of gendered embodiment. Brandth (2006) considers that the dominant relationship that women have with their bodies is discursively and culturally mediated through representations of idealised femininity. Little (2003) also notes this in wider readings of hetero-normative femininity in rural societies. These discourses involve meanings, expectations and practices that idealise feminine women as those working inside the family home. Existing research has shown how farm men are seen as physically stronger and more capable of lifting heavy weights and are able to work hard outside all day (Saucerés, 2002a; Little and Morris, 2005). Alternatively, farm women are seen as physically weaker; not able to deal with the daily rigours of practical outside farm work because they lack the masculine attributes, such as strength, form and size, that are defined as central to farming (Saucerés, 2002b; Brandth, 2006). Furthermore, the ways in which the bodies of men and women are gendered, and how this is represented by farm men and women, legitimates and maintains farm women in secondary positions (Saucerés, 2002a).

This study also shows that discourses of gendered embodiment influence the actions and work of some Southern farm women. The following narratives highlight how the physicality of women prevents them from undertaking some on-farm work, substantiating beliefs that women are weaker. However, it does not stop them from being farmers, as independent farmer Fiona commented:

I think physically, women can do most things but not everything. If you're not in a position to employ contractors and you've physically got to do it all
yourself, some jobs physically are bloody hard. If I employ someone to work on the farm, I employ a man because I want his physical strength.

Despite attempting to do most things, Fiona admitted that her lack of physical strength necessitates the employment of contractors or workers for their strength. This indicates that she recognises her body’s physical limitations and manages the problem. Similarly, Kate (who also farms independently) emphasised, “However hard women may try; they just haven’t got the body and physical heart to be able to do some things that men can do.” For these two independent women their narratives are based on experience. They articulate narratives of embodied femininity, specifically acknowledging their physical limitations, but they do not see these as insurmountable, nor do they see themselves as inferior farmers as a result. They show that women can farm independently because they have worked around their physical abilities by utilising other labour, techniques or equipment. This reflects Brandth’s (2006) findings that women use their bodies via technique to accommodate the perceived weakness of their bodies, thus they lift using their head.

In contrast Jackie, who is a traditional farmer’s wife, expressed a different form of femininity and gendered embodiment. She emphasised that women should not undertake farm work because of possible implications for childbirth. She commented:

If women choose to have babies, and they’ve done an awful lot of heavy lifting, some women don’t get pregnant or they have a hard time. It’s because they have abused their bodies, done a lot of that heavy farm work, and I think it catches up on them.

Jackie is linking women’s childbirth capabilities and the appropriateness of undertaking physical hard work (nearly inferring that farm women are too delicate), emphasising that heavy farm work can jeopardise the reproductive abilities of women. She appears to have adopted traditional embodiment discourses whereby women are best suited to the reproductive sphere, whilst men undertake primary production.

For a number of farm men, their beliefs about femininity and gendered embodiment automatically position women as a farm helper because they consider that women do not have the physical strength associated with that of the traditional male farmer. Neil stated, “Men and women are made up differently ... women are not as physically strong as men.” Similarly, Simon stated, “I see the equality of farming as not doing the same; we just can’t do the same things because we are built differently.” Simon, in particular, emphasises the physical power difference between men and women, suggesting it
removes the potential for gender equality on the family farm. Likewise, Ross emphasises the physical strength needed to do some on-farm jobs. He commented, “Just the sheer physical attributes (of a man versus a woman) needed when throwing a hay bale, tipping a ram, killing a sheep, you know things like that. I don’t think I would like to see Barb going out and doing them.”

Ross stresses the strength disparity and his aversion to Barb’s carrying out tasks on the farm that are physically demanding and unpleasant. Not only is Barb’s discursive positioning being determined by her perceived lack of physical strength, it is also being influenced by her husband’s cultural values that her femininity is threatened if she has to contend with killing livestock. The notion of a woman killing a sheep contradicts his views of femininity, which more closely parallel discourses asserting women’s ‘softness’ and ‘beauty’. He uses verbs such as ‘tipping’ and ‘throwing’ to emphasise how powerful the tasks are.

Overall, it is evident that the discourses of femininity and embodiment are strongly related, placing strong expectations on women to reflect traditional meanings and practices associated with womanhood. Consequently, farm women are discursively positioned as supportive helpers and not farmers, because they are perceived to be physically and emotionally inferior to men. However, the presence of independent farm women in family farming demonstrates that these discourses can be challenged. The examples of Fiona and Kate discussed in this section indicate that some women work around such discourses. For the majority of women, however, it appears that discourses of femininity and gendered embodiment discursively construct them as lesser members of the farm household, confined to positions of servitude and domesticity.

### 4.1.2 Discourses of domesticity

Closely linked with discourses of femininity and embodiment are discourses of domesticity, the second set of dominant discourses apparent in this study. Figure 4.3 shows that domesticity constructs are mainly derived via a woman’s personal biography and farm household. These discursively position females into the home as subservient, gentle girls and women who cook and clean. This study shows that farm women experience these subjectivities from a young age through observing their mothers whose practices laid the foundation of what was expected domestically of them as a ‘girl’. Fiona described her mother’s work, “Mum was always busy in the house, cooking and cleaning and having the house run beautifully.” In addition to recalling her mother’s
FIGURE 4.3: The sites of origin for discourses of domesticity positioning a farm woman
tasks, she noted the “beautiful” way this was done. Similarly, Marilyn recalled, “My mother was the quiet one who stayed at home in the kitchen and did the work.” Once again, her mother was the homemaker, and exhibited the feminine characteristic of being “quiet”. Lastly, Louise remembered, “My mother wasn’t into the ‘girls can do anything’ sort of thing. She was into preparing meals and keeping kids clean.” As with the previous two narratives, Louise highlighted the domestic activities of her mother, along with the suggestion that her mother did not believe in girls being able to do anything else, reflecting her beliefs of gender aligned positions within the household.

Overall, these narratives from farm women recalling their mothers help to emphasise the domestic responsibilities of their early discursive role models. They highlight how important personal biography has been in conveying domesticity constructs. The farm women in this study were exposed to, and learned from, the subject position of their mother; her responsibilities as a home-maker, and the meanings and practices aligned with that. These are further reinforced through the constructs of wife and motherhood.

4.1.3 Discourses of care-giving

The third set of discourses that position farm women involves notions of care-giving, including discourses of motherhood and wifehood. In this analysis, a distinction is made between discourses of domesticity and care-giving. Domesticity allows analysis of construction of the household labour values, while care-giving enables consideration of the relations and emotions women navigate when positioned as wives, mothers and community carers. The specific sites and positions associated with care-giving discourses are shown in Figure 4.4. These discourses are derived from and played out in the spheres of personal biography, farm household and farm community. This section will demonstrate that these discourses further reinforce and complement the previous subject positions of women noted in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

In addition to the influence of a woman’s upbringing, the farming community places significant expectations on women to extend the caring activities aligned with them to motherhood, wifehood and to the community (Heather et al., 2005). As with discourses of femininity and embodiment, care-giving discourses reinforce beliefs regarding the skills, abilities and attributes of a woman based on values attributed to her gender and natal capabilities. Inherently linked with a woman’s ability to give birth are the associated feminine care-giving qualities, including the capacity to be maternal and nurturing. Most importantly, motherhood is seen to be a complex juxtaposition between
FIGURE 4.4: The sites of origin for discourses of care-giving positioning a farm woman

Discourses:
Care-giving, Motherhood, Wifehood

Discursive positions:
Mother, wife, care-giver, nurturer, educator, community volunteer, daughter, daughter-in-law

F = farm woman
social expectations and biological abilities; a complicated, rich, ambivalent, vexing, joyous activity which is biological, natural, social, symbolic and emotional (Tong, 1992). Furthermore, discourses of wifehood build on these nurturing and caring capabilities by positioning farm women as the farmer's wife, who supports and assists the 'farmer' to run the family farm (Saugeres, 2002b; Bennett, 2005).

Historically, in Western agricultural societies, there is a clear expectation that a farm woman's primary position and responsibility should be as a full-time caregiver, wife and mother irrespective of their skills, knowledge or previous work experience, or the other requests for them to work physically on farms (Bouquet, 1982; Whatmore, 1991a). In this present study, farm women reinforce these historic expectations, outlining both the key elements of motherhood discourses and the implications for their own lives (Table 4.1). These include the challenges and self-sacrifice associated with care-giving and motherhood responsibilities, and the apparently all-absorbing commitment that motherhood requires of farm women.

The following narratives highlight the primacy of motherhood, and the implications care-giving has for farm women's lives. They demonstrate that when the children are young, women frequently experience a sense of expectation with regard to giving up their own personal lives to comply with discursive expectations that women are the main caregivers and mothers, and ought to remain in the home. Bea reflected both of these expectations. She believed that at least one parent should be at home with the child(ren), and as she is the farmer's wife, positioned in the home, it was her responsibility. Both Astrid and Jo emphasised that when the children were young, farm women are totally committed to them, without energy and time to do anything else. Similarly, Barb and Linda expressed how they were unable to participate in 'real things' due to their commitment to looking after their children. Linda also exhibits the strength of devotion she has to her children, by not leaving them to do anything that may compromise their standard of care.

Jean and Jo expressed their frustration with how childcare intrudes on their involvement with farm work, highlighting that for those women who do have an input into on-farm tasks, remaining inside to nurture their children is very restrictive. Jo had to cope with conflicting discourses; on one hand as an independent farmer she had on-farm work to complete, whilst on the other hand as a mother, she had care-giving responsibilities that took priority.
TABLE 4.1: Narratives highlighting key elements within discourses of care-giving and motherhood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Theme</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary caregiver</td>
<td>I see when they’re little it’s crucial to have mum or dad at home with them ... for me I was at home and I was their number one caregiver up until they went to school.</td>
<td>Bea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All absorbing responsibility</td>
<td>You don’t have the energy to do anything else. When people have young children you just live for them and that’s just what happens.</td>
<td>Astrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of motherhood</td>
<td>You go through a period when they’re little and you’re just focussed on [them], not a lot of time for yourself. You’re just focussed on them. It’s only recently, probably in the last year to 18 months that I’ve made a real effort to go and do real things.</td>
<td>Barb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority of children over self and/or farm</td>
<td>That’s just who I was then [a mother] having kids; it was damn inconvenient and quite frustrating. I had to stay inside while they had an afternoon sleep and I can remember how frustrating that was. I actually learned to knit and starting reading Mills and Boon because I had to stay inside... it was hard.</td>
<td>Jo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We can’t stop farming to get more further education, it’s just impossible and I can’t, I won’t leave my kids to do that sort of thing. I’ve seen women who do that [and] I don’t think that’s appropriate. If you’re going to have kids, you make a good job of them and then you can do what you want.</td>
<td>Linda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I remember leaving in the middle of mustering once because the kids were due home on the school bus and so we had to walk away from the sheep and then go back out the next day and start the job again.</td>
<td>Jean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview two (October 2004 – June 2005)

One male farmer reinforced the problem that Jo highlighted, emphasising that when women are inside with the children, their involvement with the farm reduces. Warwick explained:

As a young farmer with a family, somebody’s got to go home early and meet the kids off the school bus and think about a meal. It tends to be the women that take on that role, but when they are heavily involved in raising family it is very easy for them to not have the freedom to do the on-farm thing that they maybe historically did in the early part of the marriage. It’s easy for them to lose touch of the day-to-day things.

This highlights the expectations of care-giving discourses and how they remove farm women from the business sphere of the farm. Women miss out on being involved in the decision making, day-to-day running, and the interaction that is involved in running a
property. As a consequence, farm women are removed from alternative discourses that circulate in the broader social and economic sphere of farming and the farming community. This removes exposure to discourses that could provide other meanings and practices for women to align with, thus restricting them to the dominant discourses that reinforce their suitability for motherhood, wifehood and homemaking.

Reinforcing the discourses of motherhood and wifehood are farm males. This study shows that men also strongly articulate these discourses, emphasising that a farm woman’s life purpose is to have children. One male farmer, Martin, when asked about his wife, Raewyn, being a mother of five children, replied, “Well, it was her idea to have five anyway...yeah, she’s always been very much that way.” One can interpret, “that way” as referring to her ‘mothering’ capabilities and tendencies which explain (for this male farmer) the size of their family. Another male farmer, Peter, feminised the kinship relations with children when narrating his wife’s position as mother, commenting that, “… her life was her children, looking after her children.” In essence, Peter is distancing himself from the position of care-giver by emphasising that the children are “hers”, thus reinforcing the affinity women have with nurturing and care-giving.

Similarly, Malcolm emphasised his wife’s natural tendencies towards motherhood commenting, “Her interests revolve largely around the four offspring. She doesn’t have that love of land, or love of the enterprise that I have.” He emphasised that Christine’s primary focus is solely maternal, whilst he underlined his own very masculine foci, the land, and the business, interests that his wife Christine has ‘no love for’ at all. Malcolm’s narration reflects how he perceives the subject position of women to be mothers and care-givers and not farmers, as they lack an affinity and love for the land that males have. This reinforces Saugeres (2002a) findings that farmers can only be male, because only men have natural connection with the land, which legitimises their mastery over nature and women.

In addition to fulfilling care-giving expectations associated with discourses of motherhood, farm women also have a responsibility to care for and support their husband. Brian’s narrative highlights the position of a farmer’s wife from a male perspective. He commented, “You have got to have support of females on the farm, [otherwise] it just wouldn’t work. I wouldn’t personally be [farming] by myself unless I had a supportive wife to help out or come home to.” Brian’s positioning of farm women
as helpers and supporters in the homestead reinforces Saugere's (2002a) findings, documenting the perception of a farm wife as a woman who helps and supports her husband on the farm.

Overall, care-giving discourses reinforce and complement the discourses of femininity, embodiment and domesticity, positioning women as the care-givers and nurturers on the family farm. Discourses of motherhood and wifehood appear to be based on a woman's biological ability to reproduce, and the supposed maternal and social caring instincts associated with that. This study stresses how becoming a mother dominates a farm woman’s life. Constructions of motherhood and wifehood reflect these notions of self-sacrifice whereby women put their lives on hold to ensure the successful social reproduction of the family farm. Consequently, in addition to being spatially confined inside the home, they are less likely to participate in on-farm activities, have time to themselves, or pursue individual interests or ambitions.

4.2 Discourses contextualising the positioning and experiences of farm women

The previous section of this chapter showed the dominant discourses that directly impose a range of expectations upon the women, relegating them to inferior positions where they face unequal opportunities and conditions. Reinforcing and maintaining these positions are further sets of equally dominant discourses which contextualise women's lives. The following section will focus on these discourses, namely those constructing meanings and practices associated with family farming, patriarchy, and farming masculinity (summarised in Figure 4.5). These discourses contextualise the positions and experiences of farm women whereby they not only have to fulfil the expectations of their subject positions; women have to do so within the constructs of the contexts in which they live.

4.2.1 Discourses of family farming and patriarchy

The first set of discourses which contextualise the lives of farm women are those concerning family farming. These construct meanings about family responsibility, economic survival, and historical land tenure. Together they position women as responsible for the reproduction of the family farm as a social form (Whatmore, 1991a; O'Hara, 1998; Heather et al., 2005). The generic patterns of Western agriculture are reflected in New Zealand whereby family farming remains the dominant form of farming (Moran et al., 1996) with families owning and providing the key means of
FIGURE 4:5: Discourses contextualising the key sites of origin and the positions of a farm woman

Contextualising discourses of Family Farming & Patriarchy highlight:
- The traditional family unit
- Family heritage
- Family farm succession
- Family farm identity
- Family farm continuation

Contextualising discourses of Masculinity highlight:
- Men doing outdoors rugged work
- Male physical strength
- Male power
- Control over women and the land

Key
F – Farm woman
FC – Farming community
FH – Farm household
PB – Personal biography
FB – Farm business
production (Moran et al., 1993; Gray, 1998). As a consequence, the reproduction of these means of production and their economic survival places expectations on all farm household members to work together to facilitate the family farm’s continuation. To accomplish this, discourses of family farming have constructed and maintained frameworks of meaning and practices that strongly influence and facilitate the future of the family farm.

**The importance of the family unit**

The first set of meanings contained in family farming discourses focus on the family. The unity and continuation of the social and economic aspects of the family are central to family farming discourses. This is shown through the narratives of research participants who place strong emphasis on the family unit. Joy (an independent farm woman) stated that, “Certainly as far as I am concerned, the family is the main thing.” Similarly, partnered farm woman Lorraine explained, “The family is our centre thing. Part of getting married was that we were going to be a family. And farming is not just a business it is a way of life.” For both women, irrespective of whether they farm independently or in partnership, the family is a very important central focus.

Furthermore, the importance of battling for survival as a family is emphasised by farm women. Barb clarified, “When times are tough you just stick it out, because you can’t imagine being anywhere else or doing anything else. This is where you want to be and I think that’s what gives a family farm its strength”. Barb really stressed that a family farm’s strength comes from the work that the family undertakes to facilitate survival during the tough times. Likewise, Jackie emphasised the accord of her family commenting, “Having the family lifestyle is important, just being able to work together and continuing to have the common goal that you want to be here.” Raewyn also stressed the family component of the family farm saying, “I like the satisfaction of working as a family. I think that’s the essence of a family farm that you actually work together.” Similarly, Lois stated, “It’s a real team effort and you discuss things ... I mean if you really own it then you are totally dedicated to it.” All of these women are emphasising the strength of family and the notion of togetherness within the family farming lifestyle.

Barb, Jackie, Raewyn and Lois, are all women who married onto a family farm that has been owned by their partner’s family for at least two generations. Their narrations

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7 The majority of farm women in this study (71%) married a farmer from an established family farm.
emphasise the importance of the family working together as a team, especially in tough times. This highlights how farm women who marry onto an established family unit make a commitment to their adopted ‘family’. As ‘daughters-in-law’, they are surrounded by the male’s family heritage that is not originally their own, but they display a dedication to the new family; working hard to uphold its tradition and continuance, becoming passionate about family and the family farming lifestyle.

Unfortunately, the move onto their partner’s family farm has posed difficulties for some farm women. Narrations from the current study highlight the emotions involved for young women embarking on a new phase of their life by marrying and shifting onto the family farm of her spouse\(^8\). Barb was a young woman of twenty when she married and moved onto the established family farm of her husband, a property that has been in the family for nearly 100 years. She explained:

The family was a big influence really and there was pressure. Everybody is watching everybody else in the family, and what’s going on. I was pretty daunted by my in-laws when I first arrived.

Barb’s narrative emphasised the stress associated with being watched by family members who were possibly assessing whether she complied with family expectations. Similarly, Alice stressed the influence her mother-in-law had in influencing her experiences as a young farmer’s wife on her husband’s family’s station. She observed:

When we were first married, Terry and I spent nine years living up in the wee cottage, while Terry’s parents lived in the homestead. I was very influenced by my mother-in-law. I wouldn’t open my mouth then; I was very much under her thumb really.

Alice also highlighted how as a young married couple they were consigned to the wee cottage positioning them down the family hierarchy, whilst her in-laws maintained their dominant status by residing in the station’s homestead. She reflected Oldrup’s (1999) findings that some farm women regret moving onto the family farm as a consequence of marrying their husband, as they have no choice in how they live or what their home is like. Likewise, Bennett’s (2006) Dorset farm-kitchen study emphasised that the mother-in-law, as the senior woman in the farm family hierarchy, wielded substantial control through her management of accounts and consumption practices; power that she was keen to preserve.

\(^8\) This thesis did not focus on farm women’s emotional geographies, but considers it an area of research which warrants further investigation (see Chapter Seven).
For some farm women, they have been additionally positioned by the marginalisation of their father-in-law. In this study, Linda reflected on how her father-in-law discursively positions her as a useless, lowly woman who should be in the home undertaking domestic activities, not out on the farm which she farms with her partner. Bordering on tears she explained:

I got to a point where I absolutely had no confidence in myself as a person. He said, ‘You’re only a woman. You can’t do real farm work. I’m not paying you.’ That was really demoralising. I’d go out and do work and not get paid for it; I wasn’t accepted as a valuable asset to the farm.

Linda’s father-in-law conveyed and reinforced her subordinate, peripheral position within the family farm both discursively and materially. By refusing to pay her for work, her contribution to the farm was undervalued. As a consequence, she left the farm for off-farm employment. This complements O’Hara’s (1998) findings that Irish farm women felt one of the most important sources of farm women’s empowerment was their involvement with non-farm work. Linda’s experience also reflects Bennett’s (2006) farm-kitchen study where a woman’s father-in-law marginalised her socially and spatially. Despite working in her kitchen space, the daughter-in-law was inferiorised by his presence and status, along with artefacts that symbolised the male tenureship of the family farm over time.

Overall, the ‘family’ aspect of discourses of family farming construct meanings associated with togetherness, teamwork and a commonality of aims, which provide a strong foundation on which the family farm works to survive. Most farm women express that the family is the important component of the family farm, although it is also evident that moving onto an already established family farm can be problematic. Despite these difficulties, it is evident that farm women adopt the prevailing family farming discourses in order to become part of the family unit, working together to ensure that the farm survives. Moreover, to ensure that they become and remain part of the family, farm women sacrifice their own individual career and interests, as these become subsumed by the importance of the family farm. This reflects the findings of Heather et al. (2005) and Oldrup (1999) whose respective Canadian and Danish studies demonstrated that women perceive themselves to be selfish if they focus on their own needs and ambitions, as family farming is not a place for self-actualisation.
Chapter Four

Discourses

The significance of family farm heritage
As previously noted, many farm women in this study have married into an established family farm which has a long history of tenure, and where the importance of farm and family history are intertwined. Specifically in this study, the narratives of farm women resonate with themes emphasising family tradition, pride, responsibility, sustainability, durability and strength (Table 4.2). These themes are strongly embedded in family farming discourses, thus contextualising how farm women view the past and the future of their partner’s family farm.

Specifically these narrations show strong meanings and practices associated with the acknowledgment of forefathers, and the responsibilities associated with maintaining the family farm for the next generation. Some of these families have been on the farm for nearly one hundred years, so the pride they have in their family farm is immense. They reinforce that specific contextual subjectivities are imposed on farm woman as they join an historic family farm, committing them to expectations of family durability and strength for the future transfer of the property.

However, not all women emphasise a positive commitment to historic family farming. Pam’s narrative highlights the negative aspects of intergenerational transfer, whereby the family remains on the property, sacrificing their quality of life by subscribing to harsh work and living conditions to ensure that the farm remains viable for the future. For the majority of women, however, their focus is on ensuring that the farm remains in the family, ready for the traditional transfer to the sons. Consequently, discourses of patriarchy are a further contextual discourse closely entwined with family farming.

Patriarchal discourses
Discourses of patriarchy highlight the normalised gender inequalities which prevail within the family farming context, particularly with regard to intergenerational land transfer and the dominant position of men in farming (Shortall, 1992). For farm women in this study, these discourses are derived from the farming community, farm household and the personal biography of women. The latter is particularly important, especially if the women grew up with male siblings on a farm.

Narratives from some farm women document how girls are discursively positioned as secondary to their brothers, which produces strong senses of injustice and inferiority as a result. For instance, Jean indicated that she had an early understanding of her lowly status, acknowledging there was no chance of being a farmer on her parent’s family
farm. She explained, “I knew I never had a chance of being a farmer on the home place because the boys always get the chances. No, I wasn’t catered for … the boys got the place.” Likewise, Alice experienced a lack of encouragement because of her gender. She commented, “My parents didn’t really encourage me. I was always seen as the sister in the family, and my mother and father weren’t interested in my activities and succession wasn’t equal. No!” Similarly, Jo recognised that her family’s understanding of her gender prevented her from inheriting the family farm, despite her extensive and proven skills as a farmer. With a hint of anger Jo elaborated:

I was the girl on the farm, and I knew I was not going to inherit any farm and yet I was a very good farmer, extremely good with livestock and probably the best farm manager and staff manager that they had. [But] I could see that… because I was the girl, I wasn’t going to get anything [because of] family influence.

All three women highlight their early resignation to their lowly subject position because of their families’ continued engagement with discourses and subjectivities assorted with patriarchy. Alice’s family divided their large sheep station into two, enabling each of her brothers to own a high country station, whereas she received nothing, indicative of the patriarchal gender bias narrated throughout this study. Likewise, Jo was not catered for when the farm transfer to her brothers occurred, something that continues to cause her angst in her relationships with her male siblings thirty years later. Experiences such as these reflect other research findings that have highlighted patriarchy and the issues of power and dominance within the farm family, preventing or at least restricting the involvement of daughters in family farming (O’Hara, 1998; Shortall, 1999; Saugeres, 2002a; Heather et al., 2005).

Reflecting on discourses of family farming and patriarchy
Overall, discourses of family and patriarchy construct meanings and practices which contextualise the lives of farm women throughout their lives. Specifically, this study shows that there is a strong discursive emphasis placed on the continuation of the family and the farm (particularly family farms with an established heritage). Farm women upon marriage appear to make both a commitment to their husband and to ensuring the continuation of the farm for future generations. Positioned as wife, mother, homemaker, and helpmate, farm women are not only working to preserve the traditions and the legacy of the past; they are toiling to facilitate the future transfer of the family farm. As with the consequences of care-giving and motherhood discourses, women are once again sacrificing their own interests and goals. This indicates that women are prepared
to perpetuate their own subordinate positioning to facilitate the broader goals of the family, thus reflecting the findings of Kelly and Shortall (2002) and Heather et al. (2005) whose research highlighted that farm women forsake themselves to facilitate the survival of the family farm.

Furthermore, patriarchal discourses, also experienced from an early age, construct meanings and practices which position women as inferior within the family farming context. Women learn through experience that the patriarchal beliefs practised by their families relegate them to a secondary position, irrespective of their skills and knowledge. By default, their gender renders them inferior. In the past, land transfer has been the forum whereby women particularly feel marginalised as they are not considered as potential managers/owners of the family farm because of their female gender.

4.2.2 Discourses of masculinity
The second set of contextual discourses identified in this study are those constructing masculinity. This section identifies core themes within these discourses that contain meanings and practices surrounding farming masculinity, and which further contextualise the positions and experiences of farm women.

Farming communities have habitually been dominated by discourses highlighting a traditional, conservative and masculine society (Little and Austin, 1996). Male farmers epitomise masculine stereotypes that champion farm men as tough, strong, rugged men who operate large machines and work hard on their land from dawn to dusk (Saugeres, 2002a; 2002b; Brandth, 2006). These images are perpetuated through different media showing rural men driving large tractors (Liepins, 1996; Morris and Evans, 2001; Brandth, 2006). These discourses epitomise the fervently held beliefs that farm men, in their roles as fathers, father in laws, husbands, brothers and sons, are the farmers. Men are portrayed as providing the physical and emotional strength; they are the strong male component, the boss, who is crucial to the farm’s current and future success.

Specifically, discourses of masculinity emphasise the work and the dominant position of males in family farming. They complement and reinforce discourses of patriarchy. Josie elucidated how as boys, males are groomed as future farmers:

The generation that Thomas belongs to have this absolutely strong desire that that farm must be passed on to their son. From a little boy they’re told, “You’re going to take over the farm if that’s what you want.” And so that
belief system is hugely strong. That's the strongest motivation, the belief system that the son will take over and the father has that in his mind.

This narration articulates the strong masculine desire to have male offspring follow in the father's footsteps fulfilling masculine constructs, linking into not only notions of patriarchy but also aspects of family continuance and responsibility. This study demonstrates that both boys and girls are subject to discourses of masculinity from an early age, whereby boys are recipients of what it means to be a male in the farming community - strong, bold and forceful; whilst their sisters receive from their mothers in particular the meanings associated with being a farm girl - soft, gentle, feminine and domesticated (Section 4.1). Barb summarised the masculine stereotyping within the farming context when asked how having boys influenced her life. She replied, "I haven't got a girl to take to ballet." Barb's response highlights how ballet is associated with discourses of femininity, expressing grace and beauty and not suitable for rugged males. Barb's comment also underlines, that as the sole woman in the household, her 'feminine' interests isolate her.

In addition, discourses of masculinity emphasise the importance of the farm and the land in a male farmer's life, whereby the farm comes first (Saugeres, 2002a). Farm women acknowledge these masculine priorities and the impact on their own lives. Lois was reconciled as explained, "I think the biggest [thing], the main one is, as far as Neil is concerned, the farm comes first." Similarly, Jean copes with the farm dominating her partner's life:

It's him doing his thing with the farm. I mean, I've always been there to work and to help, but it is him doing his thing. He said years ago, that the first thing in his life was his farm ... anything else comes after the farm.

Specifically, these narrations highlight the priority of the farm and the land in the life of men, whilst women are positioned to focus on the family. For Lois, it is her husband's family farm and his priority is to ensure that it continues on to the next generation. For Jean, the farm represents a male bastion of ownership and control. Jean fulfils her position as a farmer's wife by always being there to work and help her husband "do his thing", but she takes second place to "his" farm. Both women are discursively positioned as secondary to the farm through the masculine contextualisation of farming.

Masculine notions of financial control further reinforce the farm woman's secondary position in relation to the farm. Women elucidate how the farm takes fiscal priority over
the household. As a traditional farmer’s wife, Ngaire struggles to maintain her home in a beautiful condition. She explained, “I see it as just part of trying to get ahead, but trying to get ahead is quite difficult because the men keep doing development on the farm. I’ve just tidied [i.e. redecorated] this room up a bit, but I waited 20+ years for that!” Likewise, Jackie looked upset as she commented that, “Simon would rather spend the money back into the actual farm. Not in the house area. The house area is the non-productive part of the farm.” Both women reflect on the masculine preference to allocate spending to the farm over the home. Jackie’s narration in particular highlights Simon’s perception of her workspace as non-productive, invalidating not only her place of work but also the activities that she undertakes. This reflects Saugeres (2002b) findings that men construct their masculine identities in relation to women and what women do and where they do it is both dismissed and inferiorised. This practice of prioritising the farm over the homestead further positions women as inferior and subordinate within the family farming context.

Farm women appear to be resigned to these masculine meanings and practices that shape their lives. Furthermore, they acknowledge that living in a masculine dominated environment influences how they think and act. Barb explained:

I live in a very male world and it sort of creeps up on you. I’m so used to being around men that’s the way I think, and that doesn’t mean that I don’t enjoy women’s company, but I’m just used to being around males.

Barb’s comment highlights the presence of discourse conflict in her life. In one way she is the product of discourses of femininity, domesticity, motherhood and embodiment, but in another way she suggested that due to masculine influences she is thinking like a male. Similarly, Marilyn articulated how masculinity dominates her environment:

I think along male lines rather than female lines. I think that’s probably the biggest influence. There’s the male perspective there all the time. [This is] probably because I also grew up in a completely male, dominated house. So I have never known anything different. I think we do need a little bit more equality in this place now, recognition of what the woman does because it is so male dominated…but that’s probably a bit of my own fault, because it’s easier for me to just get on and do it than change them.

Marilyn suggested that the prevalence of masculine discourses is due to her upbringing and her current male-dominated family. However, she also acknowledged that it is easier to comply with masculine meanings and practices rather than challenge them. This reinforces the secondary status of women and the discourses that position them.
Both Barb’s and Marilyn’s narratives highlight key themes within the farm household and farming sector. Farm women, despite being discursively positioned to be feminine and homely, frequently find themselves dominated by masculine constructs resulting in discursive conflict. Both women stress that they are used to being in a male’s world which is influencing the way they think. However, they have fulfilled the discursive expectations of a traditional farm woman by being a farmer’s wife and a mother. Within their current context, discourses of masculinity prevail because both women are reluctant to overtly challenge the masculine dominance. Consequently, this maintains their subordinate positioning in relation to the male contingent of their households.

Overall, discourses of masculinity contextualise the positions and experiences of farm women because they shape the dominant expectations of how male farmers should act and what is possible for women in terms of their behaviour and work on the farm. Meanings and practices associated with discourses of masculinity are derived from a range of discursive fields and cumulatively, in the family farm context, they reinforce the lesser position of farm women. In some farm families, notions of masculinity are so dominant that women suggest that their own behaviour and thoughts are reflecting male lines. Significantly though, there is recognition by women that complying with masculine practices and meanings is far easier than trying to get their men folk to subscribe to other, arguably more feminine, discursive approaches. This once again reinforces the masculine domination of the farming contexts.

4.3 Intersecting discourses in women’s lives
Following the detailed reading of the positioning and contextualising discourses provided in the previous sections, this chapter now turns to consider how these discourses interweave into unique composite patterns in the lives of individual farm women. The results of this research show that farm women are not affected by discourses uniformly. Indeed, although farm women experience discourses that are all derived from the same sites of origin, they influence each woman differently.

A sense of this diversity is visually summarised in Figure 4.6. Conceptually based on a reading of the narratives and time spent with the participant farm women, this figure shows how the same five sets of discourse shape the lives of farm women differently. Some women, like Jackie and Sandra, are strongly influenced by the meanings and practices associated with particular discourses of domesticity, whilst others, like Jean and Jo, are not. This figure also shows that two key discourses have a strong influence
FIGURE 4.6: Different patterns of discursive influence for farm women (Source: Interviews one and two)
on all of the research participants; the positioning discourses of care-giving, and the contextualising discourses of family farming. Both of these frames of meaning place expectations of self-sacrifice on farm women, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds. Overall, positioning and contextualising discourses intersect women's lives in contrasting and continually dynamic ways. Figure 4.6 conveys some sense of the impact of these discourses for women as narrated during the 2004/2005 fieldwork.

A further way to highlight the uniqueness and dynamism of intersecting discourses is provided in the case analysis of individual farm women. The remainder of this section will focus on the lives of two women and will demonstrate how their distinctive experiences and actions have shaped and been shaped, by the dominant discourses identified throughout the chapter. First, the section will focus on Ngaire, a traditional farmer's wife. Second, the section will then focus on Kate, an independent farmer. Comparing a partnered woman with an independent woman will highlight both similarities and differences; how the same dominant discourses have varyingly influenced their lives.

4.3.1 Ngaire: a traditional farmer's wife

Ngaire is a woman in her early fifties, who is married to Brian. They have a son and daughter in their twenties and they farm a 600 hectare sheep and beef hill country property inland from Timaru. Travelling to town takes 40 minutes by car, and in winter they can be snowbound on their farm. Ngaire's life can be understood as affected by all of the dominant positioning and contextualising discourses, especially those of femininity and domesticity. Smartly attired with full make up, she looked like an international business woman rather than a participant in a farm interview. Her home is immaculate, and Ngaire is a very pleasant and welcoming woman, speaking in a very eloquent manner about what she does in the home. At times though, she was obviously frustrated that she could not afford to do the things that her urban-based friends were doing, such as overseas travel, holiday homes and expensive cars. Ngaire was the perfect hostess, presenting a beautiful lunch, although she was very embarrassed about showing her older styled, yet spotless, kitchen and noticeably annoyed at having to wait to modernise her kitchen because of on-farm developments. Ngaire clearly struggles with her farming lifestyle but she is committed because her husband is a farmer.
Ngaire is a competent, hard working woman. She possesses strong beliefs about how she should live her life and these reflect the dominant discourses that have shaped her life. Both of Ngaire’s parents were brought up on farms, fulfilling the traditional farming subject positions of farmer and farmer’s wife. Ngaire explained:

They’d both come from farms, both my mother and father, and it was always accepted that a woman’s place was at home, cooking and feeding men. I’ve been brought up to that; the traditional sort of country life.

In her formative years, Ngaire was influenced by discourses of femininity and domesticity associated with her mother. Her mother’s life was focussed on the home, fulfilling a subservient position of cook and caregiver to the men. Ngaire mirrors these discursive patterns, commenting:

I don’t do ‘farming’. No ...I feed everybody that comes on to the place. I mean anything inside the farm gate, I do. And I look after this big house. You know women do like to have a nice home, particularly out here because I spend hours in it. There always has to be food in the house. I have one day a week probably where I cook and bake, and that’s just food for men; there’s always men popping in for cups of tea.

This comment reflects the parallel positions of Ngaire and her mother. Ngaire is spatially situated in the house, as she does not do on-farm activities. Within the temporal dimension she is located there for hours. Ngaire’s emphasis on having a ‘nice’ home also reflects aesthetic elements associated with dominant discourses of femininity, and her focus is on cooking, baking and preserving, (ensuring that there is food in the kitchen to feed the men) which reflects discourses of domesticity. Complementing discourses of domesticity, Ngaire also articulates the constructs of care-giving and wifehood discourses via her position as a farmer’s wife who supports and nurtures her husband. She explained:

I feel that country women play such a big part because it’s not only feeding men and looking after the house, it’s the company. When Brian comes in he’s exhausted, he’s freezing as he’s come down from the top of the farm on a farm bike. He’s doing hard physical work and he’s not getting any younger. And so when he comes in, the meal’s prepared, the house is tidy and it’s warm. I think if the hub of the house isn’t right, then the farm is not right.

Ngaire’s narration emphasised her commitment to care-giving subjectivities, providing support along with food and warmth to Brian. Her actions reinforce her position as his supporter and nurturer, whilst Brian, who has been undertaking hard, physical work in
freezing conditions, consolidates his masculinity and position as the farmer. Furthermore, when asked why she was living on a farm, Ngaire replied, “I married a farmer!” This reinforces her commitment to Brian as his wife, not the lifestyle to which he is committed to.

Motherhood discourses have also influenced Ngaire. As a traditional farmer’s wife and mother, she sacrificed her career to look after the children. She commented:

I had a career but I gave that away when I had children. I chose to be at home with the children. But then I became so busy, there’s no way I could see that I could get out to work anyway. By the time the children grew up it was too late for me to go and train to do something else.

By complying with the constructs of motherhood Ngaire surrendered other opportunities including previous and current career options. Her commitment to motherhood was very high, as emphasised by Brian:

She was always keen to have children and she has been a very devoted mother and still is a very devoted mother. It’s given her a real focus I think, she spent a lot of time with them when they were young and still does. So it’s been a very popular thing.

Brian reflects his masculine expectation that Ngaire, as a woman, needed a maternal focus in her life and her children provided this. Furthermore, discourses of family farming and patriarchy have also influenced Ngaire’s life as she is committed to remaining on the property, so that her son has an opportunity to farm if he chooses to. She explained:

Motherhood has made me focus more on staying on the farm and making it work rather than selling out. It was pretty tempting to sell out and not to have to worry about money again. But because of [our son] Greg, I feel if Brian and I can keep this farm going it will give Greg an opportunity to farm. Nowadays, I don’t see there are many opportunities for children to get onto a farm.

Ngaire’s narrative highlights patriarchal subjectivities through her focus on Greg inheriting the farm. She reinforced these when explaining how their farm succession will occur, “Well definitely not equal shares. We have talked about that. If Stacey [our daughter] was to get half the farm, it would be financially too difficult for Greg to farm. So that’s not an option.”

*To maintain Ngaire’s anonymity, her specific career has been withheld.*
Besides the powerful effect of discourses surrounding family farming and patriarchy, discourses of embodiment prevent Ngaire and Brian from perceiving their daughter as a farmer. Brian reinforced the physical inadequacies of women, noting:

I think the physical ability required in this type of farming that we’re doing on this property would be a hindrance for my daughter... because of the physical aspect it is not always practical for a woman to have an input in certain tasks, but that is a physical thing.

Similarly, Ngaire considers farming to be too difficult for Stacey, although she acknowledges that she would be a good farmer, saying:

Stacey would actually make a very good farmer. She loves the farm but as Brian said, only if it was a flat farm and it was straightforward; I think it’s too difficult for her as a female.

Ngaire and Brian reflect notions of embodiment by discounting their daughter’s ability to farm because she is a woman, and by constructing their son as the farmer.

Overall, all of the key discourses identified in this chapter are evident in Ngaire’s life and these have cumulatively positioned her as a traditional farmer’s wife. In her formative years, the meanings and practices associated with her mother constructed a strong framework regarding womanhood, wifehood and motherhood. These were reinforced in adulthood via her partner, so Ngaire’s focus increased on care-giving and domestic activities; not on her own career or interests. This reflects the findings of Bennett’s (2005; 2006) British studies, which emphasised that farm women reiterate the discourse of patriarchal family farming and place the family and the farm at the centre of their lives. Similarly, Heather et al.’s. (2005) Canada study documented that farm women run the home and raise the children, they don’t work for themselves but for the farm and the family. Finally, Ngaire’s case demonstrates that discourses positioning and contextualising Ngaire’s life are also at work powerfully framing the next generation of women’s lives. Arguably, the discourses are as influential for her daughter’s farming opportunities and expectations as they have been for Ngaire.

4.3.2 Kate: an independent farmer
Kate is a woman in her fifties living and farming independently. She has three children, aged between seventeen and twenty-four. She farms a 1400 hectare sheep and beef property north of Dunedin, which has been in her family for nearly 100 years. Kate has been married and farmed with her husband on various farms around the South Island. At
the time of this study, Kate was divorced, living alone and farming her own family farm. Kate’s life can be understood as unevenly affected by the dominant positioning and contextualising discourses. Some discourses, such as motherhood, are very influential while others are not. When compared with Ngaire’s, this case study shows how women of the same generation may be affected quite differently by the dominant discourses in family farming.

Kate is a rugged looking woman, her face weather-beaten, her hands gnarled from years of farm work and stained from her years of smoking. Wearing a worn faded bush shirt, shorts and holey boot socks, she smelt of hay. Kate was initially uncomfortable about discussing her own achievements as a farm woman and very modest about the fact she owned and ran her own extensive property. She is not used to being the focus of attention, reluctant at times to acknowledge that she possesses a range of business and farming skills which enable her to competently run her own property. As the interview progressed she relaxed and displayed a keen sense of humour. Kate is enormously proud of her children, and her farm, conveying these emotions with a smile and sense of pride in her voice.

Kate learned independence from an early age through the early loss of her mother, which meant that unlike Ngaire, she did not have a strong role model to convey meanings and practices associated with discourses of femininity, domesticity and care-giving. Kate explained with a sense of loss:

I never had a mother to talk to. I think mothers are more understanding as girls grow older. In many ways I’ve missed out on things but I mean I just had to carry on, what else could I do?

Furthermore, traditional patriarchal transfer was not practised on her family farm, which led to Kate acquiring the property. Cumulatively, the absence of dominant examples of femininity, domesticity, and patriarchal discourses within her upbringing has enabled Kate to lead an independent farmer’s life, despite the fact she is a woman.

Kate has been married and therefore she has been influenced by the care-giving expectations associated with the discursive position of farmer’s wife within farming communities. Now, as an independent, divorced woman, she muses that people expect her to be looking for another husband. Kate commented, “It’s funny when you are divorced, you’re supposed to be a woman on your own who’s always looking out for some mere male. So you have to be very careful who you deal with and how you deal
with them.” Social expectations position Kate as a single woman and therefore in need of a husband. Whilst responses to discourses will be discussed fully in Chapter Five, it is worth noting here that Kate has to modify her behaviour as a result of these expectations. Kate’s experience reflects those of independent French farm women studied by Saugeres (2002b), who were expected to have the assistance of a male in their lives if they were farming, or if there was not a male in their lives, they were not conforming to the normalised constructs of heterosexual femininity.

In the absence of a husband, domestic chores in Kate’s household are of secondary importance. She explained:

Well, because I am here now on my own, housework’s of secondary importance. But then again, it comes to a point when you’ve got to take a look at your house and think, ‘Christ, I had better do something!’

Without a husband, Kate demonstrates that a woman may not be as influenced by domesticity discourses and need not focus solely on domestic labour. This suggests that if she was still married, there would be the discursive expectation that as a wife and home-maker she would prioritise domestic work as important, ensuring (like Ngaire does) that her husband (the ‘farmer’) returned from his tough day on the farm to a tidy house with a warm meal on the table.

Kate has not been strongly influenced by discourses of domesticity and femininity. But discourses of care-giving, especially motherhood subjectivities, have influenced her life. Kate has three children and care-giving discursive expectations have influenced, and continue to influence, her life. When her first two children were young she lived on an isolated station with no electricity, relying on a power generator and wood range for warmth, power and cooking facilities. In addition to coping with these hardships, she was the children’s main caregiver and teacher. When asked how she coped with having children in such a remote area, Kate commented:

You just have to, end of story. I mean Jeanette [my daughter] was on correspondence and you just had to be organised to know what you’re doing. I mean you just can’t trot down to the supermarket every day; you may only get out every three or four weeks. So when you do you just have to buy it and be organised.

Correspondence school was used when necessary.
Kate’s management of her inland station experience with children demonstrates her capabilities and compliance to motherhood discourses as their main caregiver. Coping with educating and caring for her children meant that she had to be very organised within the home.

Now that the children are older and she has returned to farm her family farm, Kate has had to contend with the intersection of contradicting discourses. Her position of farmer conflicts with the discursive constructs of a mother. In an effort to do justice to both she has had to compromise. Kate explained with pride:

I wouldn’t be without my kids. But I probably haven’t spent enough time with my children, doing things with them, because farming is my income and during the last three to four years, when I’ve been on my own, it [the farm] has had to come first.

Kate’s experience highlights the difficulties of combining two essential subjectivities associated with traditional farm household: the ‘farmer’s wife’, responsible for family reproduction, and the ‘farmer’, responsible for primary production. For Kate, having to compromise the discursive expectations of both positions has led to regrets, particularly with regard to motherhood. But she has demonstrated that women can be mothers and farmers, thus accepting some, but not all, aspects of the dominant discourses in her life.

Overall, each of the key discourses identified in this chapter are evident in Kate’s life, but some discourses have had a stronger influence than others. Figure 4.7 graphically summarises the diversity between Kate and Ngaire. Conceptually based on the reading of their narratives, figure 4.7 shows how the same five sets of discourses have variably shaped their lives. In contrast to Ngaire, who faced major influences of all five discourses, Kate’s experience is more varied. Strong examples of meanings and practices associated with discourses of domesticity, femininity and embodiment were absent in Kate’s formative years. Consequently, her lack of familiarity with some of the constructs associated with farm women did not restrict her to solely fulfil the supportive positions. While she did fulfil care-giving expectations (by becoming a wife, homemaker and mother) and expectations associated with family farming (by ensuring that her property provided a secure income for her family), she did not comply with discourses of femininity, embodiment and domesticity, which emphasise that females should not be farmers. As a determined, hard working farmer Kate has negotiated and compromised between different subjectivities, demonstrating that women can farm independently whilst being a mother.
FIGURE 4.7: Differences patterns of discursive influence for two farm women (Source: Interviews one and two)
4.4 Conclusions
This chapter has focussed on the first research question guiding this thesis. In doing so it has identified two groups of dominant discourses that shape the lives of farm women in this study. These have been categorised as positioning and contextualising discourses.

Firstly, in Section 4.1 three sets of dominant discourses were shown to discursively position Southern farm women. Discourses of femininity, domesticity and care-giving place farm women into a range of subject positions including: a farmer’s wife, a homemaker, a helpmate and a mother. These discourses have been revealed to operate as gendered socio-cultural meanings, understandings and practices. Discourses of femininity (including gendered embodiment) reinforce the idea that women are physically and emotionally inferior to men, and should conform to expectations of gentleness and softness. Complementing these discourses, subjectivities present in discourses of domesticity position women inside the home performing menial household tasks because they are not strong enough to undertake outdoors physical labour. Lastly, discourses of care-giving (including motherhood and wifehood), reinforce discourses of femininity because notions of maternal gentleness and softness complement a woman’s capacity to give birth and nurture offspring, thus positioning her to be the main care-giver in the family. Cumulatively, these discursive meanings and practices exclude farm women from positions of power, consigning them to secondary positions located in supposedly non-essential spheres of the farm such as the kitchen. As this chapter has illustrated, these positions are continually reinforced, legitimised and maintained by practices of marriage, land transfer and motherhood.

Most importantly, this study has shown that these positioning discourses are not influencing all farm women uniformly. As emphasised in Chapters Two and Three, this thesis focusses on farm women as a heterogeneous group. It is important to note that dominant discourses do not influence farm women homogeneously; degrees of difference occur depending of the lived realities of each individual farm woman. By focussing on different types of farm women, this study has highlighted the diversity between farm women. Independent farm women, such as Jo, Joy, Fiona and Louise, show that dominant discourses that suggest women cannot farm independently do not overtly influence their lives. They are farming successfully, irrespective of contemporary discursive norms. Similarly, they are less likely to be influenced by other discourses, such as femininity and domesticity. Working outside with stock and machinery requires these farm women to wear appropriate clothing, and they are less
likely to focus on feminine defining adornments such as makeup. Likewise, for partnered women such as Barb and Sandra, who work both on the farm and in the home, they exhibit varying patterns of effect as discourses of femininity and embodiment are challenged by the expectation to assist with on-farm work. Conversely, traditional farmers' wives, such as Lois and Ngaire, are more likely to represent the conventional constructions of femininity by their dress and deportment.

Significantly too, this study has identified that one set of positioning discourses associated with care-giving and motherhood, has influenced the entire farm women cohort in this study. Irrespective of whether women farm independently or in partnership, farm women consider motherhood to be very important and conform to the expectations placed upon them by their family and the farming community.

The second set of key discourses identified in this study are contextualising discourses. As outlined in Section 4.2, these include discourses of family farming, patriarchy and masculinity which contextualise the positions and experiences of farm women through their dominance and normalisation within the farming sector. Family farming discourses emphasise how farm women put aside personal ambition to fulfil family goals for current and future generations. For the majority of these families, the pride associated with long-term tenure puts pressure on the incumbent family to ensure that the farm remains in the family in perpetuity. Consequently, the women who marry onto the property adopt the established practices that bring to bear expectations of producing heirs and working for the family cause.

Coupled with the dominance of discourses concerning family farming and farm-based patriarchy are discourses of masculinity, which permeate and shape the daily lives of farm women. Masculinity discourses reinforce ideas about the types of work that women are best suited for, based on notions of physiological appropriateness, relegating them to menial, secondary tasks, thus reinforcing their inferior position. In addition, discourses of masculinity influence family farm priorities whereby land-based farming activities appear to take precedence over other aspects of the family farm. In contrast, domestic activities and materials, associated with the 'non-productive', women's spheres of the family farm, are not as important. Inherent within these contextualising discourses are notions of power and control, which further relegate women to subordinate positions - necessitating that they sacrifice their own options for male and family needs.
Overall, this chapter demonstrates that positioning discourses are very important as they impart normalised constructs situating farm women into secondary positions (Section 4.1). These positions are further reinforced, legitimised and maintained by contextualising discourses that situate the complexities and specificities within family farming (Section 4.2). These are all firmly embedded within the farming ethos, positioning women as a farmer's wife, a mother, a helpmate, a cook, a cleaner and a supporter, but not as a 'farmer'. Furthermore, contextualising discourses surround women in constructs replete with meanings and practices which reinforce and legitimise male dominance and mastery over the land and women. Thus, marrying into an established family farm requires a woman to comply with these discourses, necessitating the sacrifice of her own ambitions, interests and status to facilitate the future of the family farm.

Importantly, whilst this thesis shows that all women are affected by the dominant discourses identified in this chapter, the degree to which women are influenced by each of the discourses varies, as demonstrated in Section 4.3. This variation reinforces that future farm women research needs to take into account the vibrant and complex lives of individual farm women to ensure that findings reflect the diversity present within the group and the dynamics of the discursive frames that surround them.

Having established the sets of dominant discourses that shape the lives of farm women, it is evident that there are two key themes to be addressed and this will be achieved in subsequent chapters. Chapter Five will address the first key theme by investigating how farm women respond to these dominant discourses. Following on, Chapter Six will look at the second key theme documenting the varying agency of farm women across an assortment of contexts.
Chapter 5  Farm Women’s Responses

The previous chapter showed the diversity of discourses that position and contextualise the lives of farm women in the Southern region of New Zealand. Cumulatively, these discourses place farm women in inferior positions on their family farms, yet women are not passive in this process. Consequently, this chapter turns to the second research question guiding this thesis and explores how farm women respond to these dominant discourses.

Two key forms of responses by farm women are identified in this study. First, the active responses of farm women participants will be investigated through exploring their work both on and off the farm. This investigation will demonstrate how the work and practices that farm women undertake act to support, accept, challenge or modify the dominant discourses positioning them (Section 5.1). The second response under investigation involves reflective and expressive responses. Section 5.2 will analyse how farm women navigate and express their identity in relation to the dominant discourses. As introduced in Chapter Two, gender identity theory will provide a conceptual frame for exploring and analysing the social construction of gender identity and the resulting dominant and alternative identities and practices that are navigated and/or contested by farm women. In analysing their responses, the degree to which women can act and make decisions from contrasting positions will also become evident. The ability of a farm woman to act in response to her discursive positioning represents her ‘agency’, and this foreshadows the focus of Chapter Six, where the influence of farm women’s discursive positioning on their agency will be explored.

5.1 Active responses to dominant discourses

As highlighted in Chapter Four, there is a diverse range of dominant discourses shaping the lives of farm women. Cumulatively, these discourses frame expectations that farm women are the primary care-giver, maintaining the family home and working on the farm when required. The discourses also position women as invisible contributors to the family farm because ‘women’s work’ is of secondary importance. But this study has also investigated the consequences of these discourses, believing that women are neither mute nor passive participants in this discursive world. Analysis of field data indicates
that farm women have responded actively to these discourses in two main ways. This section will show first, that women respond via the different types and amounts of work they undertake on the family farm. Second, it will demonstrate women’s responses in choosing to work, or not work, off-farm.

5.1.1 On-farm work as an active response to dominant discourses

The first theme under exploration is the active on-farm responses of farm women to specific discourses shaping their lives. Farm women’s on-farm work is already well documented in the literature as crucially important to family farms (Whatmore, 1991a; Alston, 1995; Brandth, 2002a; Saugeres, 2002a). This contribution is seen by most within the family farming context as a support role, whereby women fulfil real and discursive positions by carrying out jobs of secondary importance to ensure the farm’s survival. In the New Zealand context, Chapter Four showed how discourses of domesticity, femininity, embodiment and care-giving position farm women within the home as the domestic worker and caregiver, and construct these women as available for intermittent on-farm work when required.

All of the women interviewees in this study are primarily accountable for the domestic and care-giving responsibilities on their family farm. This is indicative of their commitment to ensuring that the family farm survives and how they respond to family farming discourses. But, there is some variation in the responses, as the following sub-sections illustrate.

**Domestic on-farm work**

The first key area of responsibility for farm women is the home. As emphasised in Section 4.2, women are discursively positioned as the domestic worker on family farms. They are exposed to domesticity discourses from childhood; this being reinforced via other discourses such as discourses of femininity, embodiment and masculinity. Maintaining a household is a very important component of a farm, but it is under-recognised by many within the farming, and broader, communities.

Responding to discourses of domesticity, farm women take up the constructed expectations and contribute the most to household labour. The difference in the level of input to the household\(^1\) between farm women and farm men is shown in Figure 5.1. In response to discourses of domesticity, all farm women in this study have a full-time level of input into the household, reflecting strongly their discursive positioning. In

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\(^1\) Household input - indoors tasks such as housework, cooking, laundry, and care-giving.
contrast, no farm men indicated that their level of input was full-time. However, 44% of men did indicate that they had regular, part-time input into the household chores.

![Household labour input by gender](image)

**FIGURE 5.1: Household labour input by gender**
Source: Interview one, question 11 (October 2004 – June 2005)

Farm women in this study generally accept the discursive expectations by being responsible for household responsibilities. One farm woman, Sandra, clarified her approach to housework, demonstrating her specific response to domestic subjectivities. She explained:

> I know that I have to do the basics to make me comfortable. I always like to have the dishes done, and I always cook the meals, and I like to have the bed made to go to bed and the washing done. You know just those things that are important to me.

Sandra considered domestic work to be an important focus within the home, her main sphere of operation. Sandra portrayed the position of a traditional ‘farmer’s wife’, one who has clear boundaries regarding what she as a farm woman and what Bill, her husband, should do. She laughed as she elaborated:

> There are lots of [farm] things that as a woman I wouldn’t want to do. Bill says, “You wouldn’t want to do that job.” I say to Bill, “Well, you wouldn’t want to come in and do the ironing and the washing every day”. You know the boring jobs, cooking the meals every day. They are all boring jobs that

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2 Based on the mannerisms of men as they responded to this question their recorded input response was likely to be an exaggeration of their actual household contribution.
are mostly thought of as women’s jobs. Same as I wouldn’t want to go out and dag shitty bums, and things like that, because I think they’re men’s jobs.

Sandra considered that some of her jobs are boring, and she constructed them as ‘women’s work’; but she still carried them out in preference to farm jobs. Sandra would not like to go and dag sheep; a ‘dirty’ job that she considers to be ‘men’s work’, once again reflecting her acceptance of her positioning via discourses of domesticity and femininity.

In addition to traditional discourses positioning farm women, this study also shows that farm women are responsible for the household because they lack the resources to negotiate the division of labour. Seventy-one percent of the partnered farm women in this study married into an established family farm unit, which supports Kelly and Shortall’s (2002) findings that the amount of housework that Irish farm women do, reflects their limited resources. This is because most farm women have entered farming through marriage and have settled on their husband’s family farm. This suggests that dominant discourses, in conjunction with their insufficient access to resources, determines that women are responsible for household chores.

In summary, farm women are complying with domestic discourses. All of the women interviewed assume the domestic responsibilities on the family farm as they have been positioned to do so. Whilst some men assist occasionally, the gendered association of household work as ‘women’s work’ strongly influences who in the family performs the domestic responsibilities.

**Care-giving work on-farm**

In addition to discourses of domesticity, femininity and embodiment, other discourses that strongly influence the positioning of farm women are care-giving discourses constructing motherhood and wifehood. Central to a farm woman’s discursive positioning are her nurturing, supportive positions (e.g. wife and mother). As explained in Chapter Four, farm women are positioned to be the key care-givers within the family, subject to the expectations of bearing and raising children and caring for her family (Table 4.1). The consequences of these expectations can be analysed by considering the care-giving responses the women make.

The commitment of farm households in this study to having a family is evident when comparing their family characteristics with New Zealand families. Ninety-four percent of farm families in this study have children, with an average family size of 2.9 children.
In contrast, only 60% of New Zealand families have children, with an average of 1.9 children (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a). Both the higher occurrence and number of children within the farm households of this study reinforces the focus of family farming on children and the resulting expectations placed on women to reproduce the family unit. In addition, responses to these discourses highlight how women forsake other aspects of their lives to focus specifically on the children. For instance, Barb explained how her life revolves around the requirements of her two sons:

I mean I guess now the kids are at school a wee bit during the day, I’ve got more opportunity to choose how I do stuff because the kids aren’t there. [But] as soon as you want to do anything, it’s quite hard to get anything done within 9am and 3pm.

Ross, Barb’s husband, supports this, commenting that:

It’s tied Barb up because she has is constantly running them to school, backwards and forwards, and that sort of stuffs her whole day up doing that.

Barb and Ross expressed similar responses to the children. Their two boys are educated in town involving a 40-60 minute drive, twice a day. Her commitment to taking them to school reinforces her response to motherhood expectations, although both Barb and Ross emphasise that it does reduce her ability to perform other on-farm tasks.

Similar acceptance of caring expectations is shown by Lois, who stressed that having children was “…always part of the grand plan.” But, as Neil, her husband, highlighted, “Lois can’t do much on the farm; the children come first and the farm comes pretty much second.” Their comments emphasise the juxtaposition between motherhood and family farming discourses, whereby having children as a means to reproduce the family farm, was part of their ‘grand’ family plan, although it also removes her contribution to other work and on-farm needs.

In complying with and accepting these motherhood expectations, many farm women find that they are also sacrificing their other interests to fulfil their care-giving responsibilities. Many women struggle with this, as Pam explained with a grimace on her face:

You go from being someone who has a life, and a job or a career, and is recognised as an individual, to being the mother, and you just become invisible, and I really grappled with that.
Pam emphasised that by submitting to motherhood discourses, women become somebody’s mother. They are not considered as an individual within their own right, which reinforces how all-absorbing being a mother is. Given these narratives, farm women appear to subscribe fully to discourses of motherhood, whereby they bear and raise children to reproduce the family farm, irrespective of how this response disrupts other work in their lives.

**Practical on-farm responses**

To further understand how women are responding to the discourses shaping their lives it is necessary to document their active on-farm responses. In addition to household and care-giving responsibilities, farm women fulfil very important practical on-farm contributions undertaking tasks involving stock and land management, such as lambing supervision, hay making, fencing, weeding, animal husbandry, drenching, culling, crutching, dagging and mustering. This is generally understood to be in a supportive capacity; however, it is clear that women provide a significant on-farm input to their family farms (Figure 5.2).

This study shows that 40% of the farm women participants work on the farm full-time. In addition, another 20% indicated that their on-farm input was regular/part-time. Nearly 100% of male participants contribute a full-time input onto the farm. Significantly, farm women are contributing to practical on-farm work, in addition to their full-time input to household responsibilities. This demonstrates that they are complying with key discourses in their lives by fulfilling at least one and a half, to two, full-time jobs (homemaker, mother and farmer).

The level of on-farm work by farm women reflects how they are responding to the discourses that shape their lives. First, in performing practical on-farm work, women are rejecting notions of femininity, gender embodiment and domesticity. They are outside undertaking farm work that is traditionally perceived as ‘men’s work’ and not feminine or ‘women’s work’. Second, discourses of masculinity and family farming place women in the home and do not subscribe to the belief that women are farmers. Going beyond domestic spaces and onto the farm suggests that women are challenging aspects of these discourses too. Lastly, discourses of gender embodiment emphasise the physical weakness of women which prevents them from performing on-farm tasks. Thus, by doing on-farm work, women are defying these constructs by not complying fully with the bodily expectations of them.
In noting these responses and the apparent discursive challenges and conflicts, this study further demonstrates that some discourses require women to reject aspects of other selective discourses. For example, by working on the farm women are challenging discourses of domesticity and femininity, but they are working on the farm to ensure its survival, thereby complying with the more dominant discourses of family farming. If farm survival strategy requires farm women to work on the farm as unpaid labour, then they comply. Joy explained:

I think, a lot of people look down on women... they think that they’re only slaves really, that’s what they think, they do not realise the important role the women have played in keeping it together.

Joy’s comment highlighted the perception that farm women are inferior and powerless. But in this study, women articulated how they choose to respond to their lowly discursive positioning by carrying out work and commitments to ensure that the farm survives, despite little or no recognition. Barb supported this by outlining her position on the farm and the range of tasks she undertakes to fulfil family farming expectations:

I can list [my jobs] right down to dogsbody. You know you can give a whole range of jobs and I do the work. Some of my day is spent being a mother, and some of my day is spent being a business-person in the administration role that I do. People don’t realise. I feed the men at lunch-
time and that’s a cooked meal. You know by the time I do school runs, cook a meal and then turn around and do the school run, [people] have no idea what my contribution is, what is involved.

Barb performs a broad range of tasks on her family farm, responding to a range of discourses. In addition to complying with domestic discourses (cooking meals), she responds to motherhood discourses (doing the school run and being a mum), and then completes farm administration work that fulfils a secretarial position in line with feminine discourses. In her own mind she identifies with being a “dogsbody”, which literally describes a person who runs errands and completes boring jobs for others (Deverson, 1998). The most dominant discourses that Barb is responding to are family farming discourses. Her husband grew up on the property that has been in his family for nearly four generations. Barb is expected to contribute to its survival and continuation through performing a range of on-farm jobs. This demonstrates responses that challenge aspects of some discourses (e.g. femininity), whilst complying with others by doing a multiplicity of menial tasks (e.g. family farming).

Overall, farm women in this study challenge selective discourses to fulfil expectations of the most dominant (family farming) discourses, and the practical on-farm work they involve. The majority of women indicated that their level of input is part or full-time, which illustrates that farm women are fulfilling a broad range of discursive expectations as a means to ensure the continuation of the family farm.

**Stock work responses**

For some farm women, their practical on-farm work is also informed by meanings and experiences associated with discourses of motherhood. In particular, when farm women deal with pregnant stock and the birthing process, their stock management methods are strongly informed by maternal experiences. For instance, Lorraine emphasises that the process of giving birth has enabled her to have more empathy with her pregnant livestock:

> Just shifting heavily pregnant [ewes] or doing anything with a heavily pregnant animal, you know, you remember what it was like carrying them [children].

Lorraine goes on to emphasise other aspects of her stock management methods that are influenced by her own pregnancies:
Being pregnant influenced me a lot because you just realise how frigging uncomfortable it is and here you've got all these pregnant ewes out there [and you are] pushing them up the road and making them do this and that ... [remembering that] you can't breathe because there's no room in there and all the rest of it. That's really mellowed me out a lot; I care for my pregnant ewes a lot more. You see [male] cockies 'hoozling' them up the road and honestly the ewes have no room to breathe.

Lorraine's comments stress the empathy that the experience of birth gives to women working with pregnant stock. Lorraine also suggested that the ignorance of males to the experience of pregnancy causes them to be too tough on their pregnant stock, which puts stress on the animals. Louise reinforced Lorraine's observation regarding male farmers stating, "I notice the way they treat their animals when they are lambing them, and they've got no idea how sore it is." This demonstrates that women transfer experiences, practices and meanings associated with pregnancy and motherhood to stock management. Saugere's (2002b) study suggested that a woman's perceived weakness is reinforced by her maternal abilities, aligning 'frail physiologies' with naturally caring for pregnant stock and the newborn. However, this study contends that natural capabilities and experiences, in conjunction with discursive influences, enables women to be better stock managers because of their empathy with the processes that breeding stock go through; something that male farmers have little affinity with.

Differences between the way partnered farm women and farm men treat their animals' highlight their diverse life experiences. Once again, this could exhibit a female's response to maternal discourses and experiences. Linda explained:

I think being a female, that maternal thing of caring for things. I do see things differently from Warwick. I always growl at him if he doesn’t have water with him and how he moves stock when they’re pregnant. I would say to him just slow them down a bit.

Linda also highlighted how the difference in approach between Warwick and herself produced different results:

When I fed the heifers for a year, the cow farmer who took them back said they were so quiet in the shed, he just took them in and milked them the first day. When Warwick had looked after them, they were jumpy because he just rushes around and does the job.

Linda suggested that maternal attributes and experiences assist women in raising young livestock. As a result, farm women are also more likely to take the responsibility for rearing calves and lambs. Doug (who is involved in Friesian breeding organisations)

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reinforces this saying that, "...the majority of calves reared in New Zealand are reared by females."

In addition to dealing with pregnant stock and their offspring, farm women appear to approach their overall stock management differently. Fiona noted that her stock management differed to male farmers, and she suggested that it is because she is a female. She is an independent farmer, so she is able to enforce her management methods. Fiona explains:

Another thing I do which men wouldn't do is I have a special needs paddock. I mean I had 1700 lambs this year and you're always going to get a dozen or so that are small and pathetic. I always carefully pick them out and put them into this little paddock and at the end of the day I get about $100 [each] for them in September. I mean, under a huge stressful situation, those lambs would die. So I guess it's a female thing.

Fiona’s special needs paddock emphasises her acceptance of motherhood and femininity practices through nurturing and caring for the weak lambs. However, she also emphasised that she is a 'farmer' who has to survive economically, by highlighting the net worth of each of those rescued lambs. Fiona also suggests that her management system is the product of her gender; which suggests that male farmers would be unlikely to have a special needs paddock. Furthermore, she hinted that her gender is a handicap because of its influence on some of her daily stock management decisions:

I think I'd rather shift stock a day too soon than a day too late. Like if I go perhaps half a day early, they all 'baa' and run to the gate. I think as a woman I'm inclined to go, 'Oh I'll open the gate for you today', which is probably a bit weak.

In acknowledging her preference to shift stock early, she reflects a mother's need to feed and nurture her young. Fiona saw this as a weakness, which in itself reinforces the dominant belief that women cannot be true farmers because of their feminine attributes pertaining to being caring, emotionally softer and weaker than male farmers (Saugeres, 2002b).

5.1.2 Gaining off-farm work (or not)
Section 5.1.1 has shown how farm women actively respond to their discursive positioning by performing on-farm work. These responses generally involved farm women accepting the dominant discourses, in order to facilitate the continuation of the
family farm. The following section will focus on the active responses of either gaining off-farm work, or choosing not to pursue this option.

Seven of the 34 women interviewees have undertaken paid, off-farm employment since marrying a farmer. This response increases their levels of self-sacrifice because whilst still subscribing to the discursive positions associated with farm women, their off-farm work becomes an extra commitment. Past research has shown that there is no renegotiation of domestic responsibilities or gender roles if farm women gain off-farm work, as men resist changes in the division of labour by conforming to what constitutes women’s and men’s work (Kelly and Shortall, 2002; Saugeres, 2002a; Alston, 2004; Bennett, 2004; Miewald and McCann, 2004). Consequently, farm women have to be very organised to fulfil self-imposed expectations, and those placed on them by their family, their partners, the farm, their employer and the farming community. If a woman gains off-farm work, her on-farm and household responsibilities are added to her new work expectations. Marie illustrated this challenge as she outlined her daily workload commitments to ensure that she could work off-farm:

Sometimes I’d go to work at six in the morning. The worst one was when I was working until 11 at night, which is pretty hard because you worked all morning [at home] before you went to work. It was hard but it worked well. I enjoyed those years. I’m pleased I did it because it was extra income when the children were at school and they got opportunities they probably wouldn’t have had.

Marie also emphasised her response to motherhood discourses, working to ensure that her children received additional opportunities despite the hardship it placed upon her. The extra income provided revenue for the children, removing the financial responsibility for their boarding school education away from the farm, thus enabling farm income to be reinvested in the property.

Jean’s response also emphasised the long hours that she was prepared to commit to enable her to work off-farm:

I would be up at 4 o’clock in the morning getting everything organised for the boys for the day, like food and everything. Then I’d get home at night and I’d be working into the night just because I’ve been away all day.

Jean reflects her compliance with domesticity discourses because she focussed on ensuring that the preparations for the ‘boys’ were completed before she went to work. As a woman, she was not expecting the men to prepare their lunches or gear themselves.
Subsequently, upon her return from off-farm work, she infers that nothing would have been done in the home and so she had domestic tasks to complete into the night. Once again, Jean highlights how farm women submit to these dominant discourses. Like Marie, she gained off-farm work, but this work was in addition to her commitments on the family farm, not instead of them.

Like Marie, Ethel gained off-farm work to supplement farm income during tough economic times. Ethel answered an emphatic, “No! It was all extra! That’s the way it is with a woman when she goes off-farm.” when asked whether her on-farm/household jobs lessened when she was working off-farm. Discourses of motherhood predisposed Ethel to put her children’s needs before those of her own, working in a job she detested in order to provide for her daughter:

I went and worked for a bit of extra cash cooking at the pub, and that was a bitch, a horrible job, but you do it. I worked the hours because the oldest girl went to high school, and had to have the uniform. Work meant not worrying about having the cash to pay for it.

Ethel used this off-farm income to pay for her daughter’s uniform. Her response in gaining paid employment highlights the financial worries that can impinge on farm women and their strong commitment to ensuring the family farm continued.

Gaining off-farm work is not only a response to family farming discourses, whereby extra income supplements farm income. Rather, some farm women undertake off-farm employment because they need to gain independence (O’Hara, 1998). This could be in response to their continual subjection by discourses that reduce them to subordinate positions within their family and community. Through off-farm, work farm women can add to the diversity of discourses shaping their lives because many find their inferior subject positions not challenging enough. Academically, the farm women in this study are highly educated, with 65% of the women gaining a tertiary level qualification.

Being subjected to menial household tasks therefore can lead to frustration, particularly if the woman is a trained professional. Marie illustrates this through her decision to return to nursing:

Initially I went back [to nursing] because I’d done my training and I enjoyed my work and I suddenly thought, I’d like to go back. I went back part-time and I really enjoyed it. It was work which I loved and I’d do from 3 to 4 to 5

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3 Tertiary level includes university, polytechnic and post-secondary, training college qualifications.
days a week. I was involved with that for about 3 to 4 years but we got too busy on the farm; it was just chaotic. I just couldn’t manage everything.

Despite Marie’s love for nursing, farm responsibilities required her to forsake her off-farm work for the farm. Currently she undertakes a range of administrative positions on the family farm. She explained:

I do all the books and GST and everything, all the recording for the sheep, because Mathew doesn’t use the computer. He says he hasn’t got time and we do a heap of farm work through the computer.

Marie has moved from a professional career to one associated traditionally with women; secretarial, administrative work. Matthew is too busy for administrative tasks, which reinforces that his on-farm work is more important than Marie’s. Matthew highlights the discrepancy when describing how important Marie is to the farm:

Marie’s an integral part of the business and we’d certainly miss her if she wasn’t here. She is multi-skilled, right from the menial stuff, providing morning teas for the men, to doing the computer work and the GST.

Despite the fact that Matthew appreciates her, she fulfils a ‘supportive’ position on the farm. Overall, Marie’s active responses have changed from working as a nurse to provide income for the family (and some intellectual stimulation for herself), to forsaking her career interests and goals to carry out a range of menial tasks to facilitate the survival of the farm. Both responses have been for the benefit of the family farm, which has been in Matthew’s family for five generations, so there are very strong expectations (within their immediate and extended families) that the farm is going to continue on for the next generation.

For a number of farm women, farming is not their passion. They are living on a farm because they married a farmer; they do not necessarily like nor are they interested in farming. However, whilst they are still affected by the subjectivities of the dominant discourses, obtaining off-farm work provides them with something they enjoy and removes them, albeit temporarily, off the farm. Bea explained:

The farm work doesn’t really grab me. So I mean [working off-farm] it’s something that I can do, I can still go and work. Albert would be really happy if I stayed at home but I do this for me. I would have gone around the bend if I didn’t have my work.
Bea is a woman who grew up in a large overseas city and then she married a farmer from a well-established family farm. She has fulfilled the discourses of family farming by producing three sons to take over the farm, and on a daily basis subscribes to the other discourses which position her. Bea does not reject these discourses, but adds to her discursive positioning and life experiences through off-farm employment.

In general, actively responding to their discursive positioning by gaining paid off-farm employment does not mean farm women are rejecting the dominant discourses of farm women. Instead, it appears that women are responding to these discourses, particularly that of family farming and motherhood, because off-farm income ensures that their family is provided for during tough times and the farm can survive. These findings support past research that farm women gain off-farm work as part of the family farm survival strategy. Women rarely undertake waged work for self-fulfilment; they do so primarily to maintain their family, their husband’s occupation as farmer, and the farm (Kelly and Shortall, 2002; Shortall, 2002; Bennett, 2004).

Importantly, none of the farm women in this study who work off-farm have rejected their domestic or motherhood responsibilities, which once again demonstrates that farm women prioritise the family farm before themselves. Nevertheless, two women emphasised that gaining off-farm work added more stimulus to their lives, which does indicate a self-fulfilment component. While this is a minority finding, it reflects O'Hara's (1998) study of Irish farm women who noted that they gained off-farm work to gain independence. But even with independence as one of their aims, by working off-farm the interviewees in this study were still essentially working two to three full-time jobs (homemaker, farmer, off-farm worker) to fulfil all discursive expectations.

**Rejecting the off-farm employment option**

It is also possible to argue that farm women are also actively responding to their discursive positioning by not gaining off-farm employment. Twenty-seven of the women interviewees remain permanently on the family farm. Having the opportunity to work off the farm is something most farm women have given up in order to be on the family farm, thus complying with expectations of the traditional farmer’s wife.

For example, Lois acknowledged that her husband’s need for her to be available for practical on-farm work prevents her from gaining off-farm work. This reinforces her discursive positioning as a helper, available to assist her husband on the farm when required. Lois explained:
If I wanted to get any work off-farm or anything like that, then there is always the consideration I had to be on deck to do certain jobs here. Most of the time I'm reasonably comfortable with that, but there are times when I think, Oh damn!

Lois’s compliance with her position as a support worker is clear, as she remains at home to work if needed. Likewise, other farm women, especially those who have established off-farm careers, also sacrifice these to stay on the farm, accepting their discursive positioning. Raewyn explained how she could have gone nursing but chose to work on the farm:

We always stayed focused on the farm. A lot of women went off-farm, and I could have gone nursing, but we made a conscious decision to work together.

Raewyn’s active response to remain on the farm rather than go nursing, highlights her commitment to her husband and the family farm. In addition, Raewyn has five children and she has also cared for her in-laws in their old age. Her compliance with traditional domestic, motherhood and family farming discourses was very strong.

In addition, women have remained on the farm to focus on their children, fulfilling the expectation that they remain in the home as the key caregiver. Astrid explained:

When the boys were home, life revolved around the boys and the farm, they came first and my work came second. But now the boys are away, it’s pretty much 50/50 but if Frank says, “We’re doing this on Thursday, try not getting that extra day of work” I’ll just say [to work], “Sorry, I can’t do it that day.” So the farm does influence things.

Astrid demonstrated a range of active responses. Initially, when her boys were young she remained at home as their main care-giver, responding to discourses of motherhood. Now that her sons are away at boarding school, she is able to pursue off-farm work. However, it is also evident that she has to juggle the expectations of her husband, and to be available for on-farm work if required, thus masculinity and family farming discourses take priority over off-farm work opportunities.

The decision by farm women not to pursue off-farm employment is acknowledged as an active response. These women recognise that because of their qualifications and/or training, they could work off the farm, but they are choosing to remain at home to fulfil household and practical on-farm expectations placed upon them by other dominant discourses.
5.1.3 Responding to the invisibility of farm women’s positions

Sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 have documented that farm women actively respond to dominant discourses by performing a range of tasks in the home, on the farm, and off the farm. By doing so they are challenging aspects of some discourses, whilst accepting others. But these discursive positions that they are fulfilling are largely invisible and under-recognised. This section will illustrate the responses to their invisible positioning, and how these reflect the level of commitment farm women have to the family farm.

As outlined in Chapter Four, discourses of domesticity, embodiment, care-giving and femininity position farm women as supportive housewives and nurturing mothers. These are further reinforced by discourses of family farming, which contextualises these as secondary positions within the highly masculine and patriarchal environment of family farming. The discourses emphasise that men are the ‘farmers’ and women are their ‘helpers’. As women’s work is not ‘real work’, it is undervalued by others. Consequently, women are not recognised for their efforts. This marginalises them and deems them largely invisible in modern agriculture (Brandth, 2002a; 2002b; Saugeres, 2002b; 2002c). Feminist researchers, in particular, have highlighted the secondary role of farm women; considering that the invisibility of farm women is a negative aspect of their life, and one that should be confronted and modified. They have focussed on freeing women from their confinement in the home which is seen as the key site of oppression (Brandth, 2002a). But, research by Brandth (2002b) and Saugeres (2002b) suggests that farm women accept this marginalisation, not considering themselves to be oppressed, but simply living their lives with their own agendas.

The responses from farm women to their invisible discursive positioning in this study reflect Brandth’s (2002a) findings that farm women do find themselves subjugated in everyday life. Specifically, the narrations of participants highlight their focus on ensuring the future of the family farm, not the fact that they may be subordinately positioned within a household with blatant inequalities or that they are not recognised for their efforts. For instance, Connie commented, “No, I couldn’t give a toss about recognition!” This sharp retort succinctly expresses her lack of concern at no recognition. Similarly, Janet underlined the fact that recognition is not important for her, despite fulfilling a supportive role, commenting that, “It doesn’t worry me if I’m recognised or not. I just do what I’m supposed to do.” Another woman Lorraine, suggested that only recognition from her husband is important commenting,
“Recognition by others [is not important], no, I think it’s recognition between Alex and I [that is important] but it doesn’t really worry me what outsiders see.”

The responses of these women suggest that they accept their lack of recognition within the farming sector. These women are focusing on their family and the farm’s survival, not recognition. For example Kate, who rubs her slightly arthritic hands as she explains how she hates working outside in the freezing cold but does so to ensure a family income; or Jessica, who is very animated as she explains her excitement when she travels to Alexandra to have coffee with friends, an infrequent pleasure due to child and farm commitments; or Louise, who spoke determinedly and proudly of her efforts to break in a new farm after her divorce to provide a home for her two children; and Raewyn, who looked exhausted as she described her routine of caring for her seven children and her in-laws, whilst running the homestead and contributing to on-farm work. Gaining recognition for their input and sacrifice is not important for these farm women, which reinforces previous findings by researchers that women surrender individual interests to fulfill the requirements of the family farm (Kelly and Shortall, 2002; Shortall, 2002; Brandth, 2002a; Bennett, 2004).

In contrast, Fiona stressed the need for farm women to be recognised because of their contribution to the family farm. She explained:

I think farm women are under-recognised. People don’t recognise that a woman who runs a household successfully, a garden successfully, keeps meals on the table, does all the errands, and picks up stuff from the stock firms, that they’re doing a huge job. A lot of people think she doesn’t have to work on the farm but just because they’re not actually out there physically, doesn’t mean they’re not actually working on a farm.

Fiona stressed the jobs that a woman undertakes inside the home should be recognised as contributing to the family farm, but this sphere of operation is often not seen as a productive part of the property. Past research has emphasised the difficulties in defining farm work and conceptualising what work women do (Shortall, 1996). To define what women do requires the work to be recognised as farm work, and previous definitions have excluded house bound work because it is not seen to contribute to farm production (Kelly and Shortall, 2002).

Within the New Zealand context, the non-recognition of ‘women’s work’ is reinforced by the exclusion of household work performed by farm women in official statistics. Statistics New Zealand (2006b) states that a farmer’s wife who only performs indoor
jobs (such as housework), does not contribute to the running or the production of the farm, and therefore she is not counted as part of the labour force. Only women who do on-farm tasks are considered to be part of the labour force. Such a definition further marginalises the indoor work of farm women. Because they are not stepping out in their work gumboots and crutching sheep, the efforts of farm women are not being acknowledged as they are not deemed to be working, let alone farming.

Overall, it appears that many farm women are accepting their invisibility and marginalisation in order to comply with other discourses, such as family farming, domesticity and motherhood discourses. In addition, Bennett (2004) suggests that women accept their marginalisation because the structures positioning farm women are simultaneously beyond the control of women and influenced by women, which results in their complicity in their own oppression. Consequently, the acceptance by farm women of their invisible discursive positioning is reinforcing their own inferiorisation.

Male farmer comments reinforced how farm women appear to be content, accepting their marginalised discursive positioning in order to fulfil the expectations placed upon them by the dominant discourses. Alex explained, “No, women probably haven’t [been recognised] because they just get on with things. They are quite happy to be doing what they are doing.” Similarly, Warwick said, “Linda works for her own self-satisfaction rather than for recognition.” Thomas underlined this sentiment that the women are quite satisfied without recognition, commenting that, “As long as women are happy within themselves they don’t need to be recognised to make them feel contented with their lot.” Matthew further reinforced this:

I think that they are quite happy in the role that they are performing. As far as recognition is concerned, if they are not happy in the role they are performing, they are not running out and around with banners saying ‘Give us more recognition’. They are just quietly getting on with it.

Specifically, these male narratives emphasise that self-satisfaction is more important for farm women than recognition by others. This infers that unless their wife is vigorously expressing dissatisfaction with their own work, a man considers her to be ‘happy’ and therefore not in need of recognition. Shortall (1992) and Alston and Wilkinson (1998) would suggest that this is a case of the powerful excluding the powerless, and then taking their silence as legitimisation of their exclusion. Furthermore, farm women are also simultaneously perpetuating their own dominance by condoning the non-recognition of farm women.
5.1.4 Summary of active responses

Overall, farm women respond actively to their discursive positioning by performing a range of tasks across various social, spatial and temporal dimensions. This suggests that farm women challenge aspects of selective discourses in order to comply with discourses of family farming, despite these active responses perpetuating the discursive positioning of farm women as inferior, secondary members of the family farm.

Both groups of women, those choosing to gain off-farm work and those choosing not to, are subscribing to the underlying theme of self-sacrifice to ensure that the family farm survives. Neither group is fully rejecting their discursive positions. Gaining off-farm work does challenge the concept of women staying at home, but they are essentially gaining employment to help the farm survive, which involves an emotional and physical sacrifice to cope with the workload. Likewise, women who remain on the farm are foregoing careers in order to fulfil household and practical on-farm labour requirements. For both groups ensuring that the family farm survives is paramount, warranting their total emotional and physical commitment.

Importantly, these results reinforce the diversity of the women studied. Many farm women appear to actively accept their non-recognition within family farming. They understand that as a farmer’s wife, a mother and a helpmate, they are not acknowledged or recognised for what they do over a range of social and spatial scales, and they accept this because they are focussed on reproducing the family farm. This contradicts feminist ideals of equality, but highlights that some women experience a level of contentedness that satisfies their agenda.

5.2 Self reflective responses – expressing their own identity

This section moves on to further investigate how farm women respond to the dominant discourses shaping their lives through the process of identity expression. Farm women’s identity is well documented in the literature as gender assigned, the product of entrenched gender associations within farming (Section 2.3.3). Within the farming context, traditional gender identities are deeply embedded within farming life and practice. Farm male identities are constructed by discourses of patriarchy and masculinity emphasising their physical power and dominant position over the land and women. Conversely, farm women identities are constructed by discourses of domesticity, femininity, embodiment, and care-giving, emphasising their nurturing, maternal attributes, positioning her within the home caring for her children, husband
and community (Little, 1997a; Morris and Evans, 2001; Pini et al., 2004; Heather et al., 2005). Irrespective of what women are doing on the farm, they are frequently defined by their biology and their marital contract (Whatmore, 1991a; Brandth, 2002a). Consequently, their identity is seen by many to be out of the control of farm women due to their constrained circumstances (Oldrup, 1999). Chapter Four has shown how Southern New Zealand women are positioned as farmer's wives, mothers and helpers by dominant discourses. Exploring how farm women reflect on and express their identity in response to these discourses will showcase the dilemmas women have in forming and expressing their identity.

Hetherington (1998) argues that discourses produce 'identity' through the processes of identity formation and expression. More recently, Saugeres (2002a) suggests that gender identities are formed, shaped and contested from early childhood through people's discursive meanings and practices. As a consequence, expressions of identity can be seen as relational; identity is about how farm women see themselves, and about how they construct similarities and differences within that representation of self and the representation of others (Hetherington, 1998; Saugeres, 2002a). Drawing on these ideas for the current study, it is possible to conceptualise that at different times and places, farm women move between different identities in accordance with the dominant discourses that they face. Moreover, as they navigate these discourses over time, the resulting assortment of expectations, projections and memories have produced a multitude of identities that are constantly evolving, developing and changing.

This section demonstrates that farm women view themselves through the lens of the multitude of meanings and practices associated with these discourses that shape their lives. Their reflections on identity are multiple and dynamic, and women report confusion and conflict when navigating issues of self. This section initially examines how women have expressed their occupational identity, followed by a discussion of the confusion that farm women face in expressing their identity. Lastly, the section explores why some women are rejecting their gender in order to identify with androgynous or masculine notions of 'farmer'.

5.2.1 Expressing their occupational identity

Alongside active, work-based responses (reported in Section 5.1) women explore the process of expressing their identity in response to their discursive positioning. The formal expression of identity is evident in their 'occupational identity' recorded on the
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New Zealand Electoral Roll\(^4\). Documenting the occupational identity of interviewees, enables comments to be made on whether farm women identify themselves solely with traditional subject positions, such as a wife or mother, or, whether they identify themselves with an alternative position such as farmer.\(^5\) The occupational identity of female interviewees over time shows two key trends as shown by Table 5.1.

**TABLE 5.1: Participant farm women (%) by occupational identity 1987 – 2005\(^6\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1987</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer's wife</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New Zealand Electoral Enrolment Centre (2005)

Currently, over half of the 34 Southern farm women interviewed for this study identify with the occupational identity of ‘farmer’ (including farming partner). About one quarter identify with being a ‘farmer’s wife’ or ‘housewife’ (including mother), and the remainder identify with their off-farm occupation (including nurse, teacher, vet). These figures indicate that only one in four farm women identify with a subservient position, in accordance with their discursive positioning. The rest are choosing to identify with an independent occupational identity which contrasts with the dominant discourses and positions discussed thus far. In addition, since 1987 there has been a major increase in the number of participants who are prepared to indicate that their occupational identity is ‘farmer’.

These figures indicate three key aspects regarding the expression of farm women’s identity. First, these figures show that despite being discursively positioned to be wives, helpers and mothers, nearly three quarters of the women identify with an independent

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\(^4\) The electoral roll occupation indicator was used as one formal medium by which to observe how farm women identify themselves. In this study, data from the roll complements narratives from women which informally indicate their identity.

\(^5\) Farmer: someone, who owns/part-owns a farm and who is involved in some of the processes of production, whether that is physically labouring on the land (e.g. stock work) or working inside (e.g. administration or housework) in order to reproduce the family farm.

\(^6\) To facilitate comparisons between time periods percentages were used.
occupational identity of either ‘farmer’ or with their off-farm occupation. This contrasts starkly with the narrated expectations and experiences discussed in Chapter Four and Section 5.1. It also indicates that some farm women are increasingly prepared to assert their individuality on formal occasions by rejecting the identities of servitude associated with their discursive positioning. Thus, the electoral roll enables them to construct a different position to the dominant ones they face in day to day farm life.

Second, the changes in occupational identity over time suggest that there is a greater acceptance by some women to be identified as ‘farmers’, despite dominant discourses in their lives that align the identity of ‘farmer’ with males. These changes in occupational identity reflect Grace and Lennie’s (1998) findings that Australian farm women in 1998 were more likely to identify as ‘farmers’ than ‘farmer’s wives’ than they had been in 1994, suggesting a possible change in women’s self perception and identity construction. Lastly, it is also evident that farm women working off-farm are very comfortable with identifying with their off-farm occupation. This supports Oldrup’s (1999) findings that paid employment can be an important factor in constructing a farm woman’s identity, because it implies a degree of independence. This is despite the fact that for the farm women in this study, the off-farm work does not constitute the main activity in the women’s lives.

Generally, farm women are not identifying with the dominant discursive positions of ‘farmer’s wife’, or ‘mother’. More women are indicating that their occupational identity is ‘farmer’, which challenges the dominant subjectivities in their lives that position them as gentle, supportive women who exist to help their farmer husband. Over time, there appears to be a specific change from identities based on domestic responsibilities to a broader, all-encompassing identity which is more reflective of their total input into the family farm. This suggests that women are not viewing themselves through the lens associated with their discursive positioning, at least in a formal (electoral) sense. It also suggests a wide disparity between their elected public status (via the roll) and the discursive and material reality of their lives on the farm.

5.2.2 The identity dilemma – to be a ‘farmer’ or not
Despite an identifiable contrast and change in the expression of their occupational identity over time, it is evident that farm women have difficulties in expressing their identity because of the dominant discourses constructing ‘farmers’ as men (Section 4.2.2). Consequently, whilst the majority of women formally select the occupational
## TABLE 5.2: Comparisons between formally selected identity and reflective narrative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Identity (From 2005 NZ Electoral Roll)</th>
<th>Expressions of identity</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmer</strong></td>
<td>I view myself as a farmer. I think probably other people perhaps wouldn’t but I still view myself as a farmer having good knowledge of farming practice and being pretty capable. Not in all practical skills, but I mean I don’t actually think you actually have to be able to do everything. You just have to be able to make sure that someone is doing whatever needs doing.</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmer</strong></td>
<td>I just really consider myself a farmer... I don’t really isolate myself as being something different so whatever they’re [male farmers are] doing, you know I accept well I can do that.</td>
<td>Beth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmer</strong></td>
<td>I always put my occupation down as farmer ... but the edges are a bit blurred. You know, it’s a combination of everything. You have such a mixture of things to do that I call myself a farmer.</td>
<td>Barb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmer</strong></td>
<td>I always put it down on any form that I’m a farmer because I’m involved. I do. I never, I refuse to put myself down as a housewife anyway. Because that’s not what I’m doing.</td>
<td>Marie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmer’s Wife</strong></td>
<td>When I fill a form in as an occupation, I put down farmer. I used to put housewife once and I suppose as I’ve got older and broadened [my] horizons a bit more, I put farmer. But I’m not really a farmer. But I hate the term ‘farmer’s wife’. But that’s really what we are, aren’t we? [But] I mean we are own people aren’t we really and they would be pretty lost without us.</td>
<td>Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmer’s Wife</strong></td>
<td>You know when you’re going to have to fill out your occupation I never know what to put. Farmer sounds to me... it has all these male connotations that it’s just the outside stuff and all that sort of thing. But it doesn’t really. It doesn’t say what I do, but what I do is very valuable. I always saw my role as a farmer’s wife rather than a farmer and I think they’re very different. There is a specific role there as a farmer’s wife. I consider a farmer to be the one that does what Neil’s doing. He’s out there on the tractor, out there working with the sheep all the time, out there doing all that stuff and that’s his role. But that’s not my role. I’ve been quite happy fulfilling the woman’s role really.</td>
<td>Lois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housewife</strong></td>
<td>Well I reckon I would be a good farmer if I did it all myself. But I mean, I am a good partner that is the words I would use. I am good support person, I can do lots of things in support.</td>
<td>Ethel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housewife</strong></td>
<td>My own personal view is that I don’t believe that the woman should be the farmer...I’d rather be the comfort maker, I’m happy cooking meals and making the house comfortable because I think we need that when they’re working outside in all weathers.</td>
<td>Sandra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housewife</strong></td>
<td>I’m not a woman’s libber...I’ve got a supportive role and I am perfectly happy.</td>
<td>Josie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interviews one and two (October 2004 – June 2005)
identity of ‘farmer’, many are not convinced that they are justified in using that identity. This has produced a range of identity expressions, which are summarised in Table 5.2.

This research has found a range of formally selected identities from ‘farmer’ through to ‘housewife’. But reflective interview narratives emphasise the conflict that some women have in determining their identity. Some interviewees are very confident in their identity as a ‘farmer’. Jessica, Beth, Marie and Barb have put aside the traditional discursive positioning of farm women as wives and domestic workers, and have established an agricultural identity in their own right. Jessica appeared to be very confident in her identity as a ‘farmer’ because of the knowledge and skills that she possesses. Likewise, Barb and Marie identify themselves as ‘farmers’ because its broadness as an identity covers the mixture of work that they are involved in on the family farm. Both emphasise that they are involved in more than just housework. Similarly Beth, who farms independently, considers herself a ‘farmer’ because she undertakes what a farmer does. For her though, ‘farmer’ is not an identity to explain a range of things she may do on the property, but a specific identity associated with running her family farm.

Alice’s narrative highlights the dynamism and conflict inherent within identity formation over time. She is clearly disinclined to be viewed as her husband’s chattel, but there is a degree of uncertainty in identifying herself as a ‘farmer’. Alice recognised aspects of her identity as a ‘farmer’s wife’, but this is in contrast with attempts to assert her individuality by saying ‘we [farm women] are our own people’. This reflects the conflict that Alice experiences not only as an individual, but also as one of many farm women trying to assert their identity within a constrained context.

These data also show that whilst some women are confident in identifying themselves as farmers, other women are more strongly affected by the traditional understanding that ‘farmers’ are men. This latter group of women have an occupational identity compliant with their discursive positioning such as ‘housewife’, or ‘farmer’s wife’. For instance, Lois and Ethel perceived the identity of ‘farmer’ to be a male occupation. Lois disassociated what she does from the term ‘farmer’ because she is not a male and she does not work outside, whilst Ethel emphasised her identity as a supportive ‘housewife’. Both women reflect and rearticulate the discourses of masculinity that produces the identity of ‘farmer’ as male.
At the other end of this data set are the women who are happy identifying themselves as a ‘housewife’; a supportive, house-bound identity. For example, Sandra not only emphasised her preference to be a ‘comfort maker’; she also expressed that women should not be farmers, which demonstrates the meanings that she associates with the identity of a ‘farmer’ – a hardworking, tough outdoors man. Sandra explained:

I think we [farm women] are really important on the farm. Not so much the physical, but just by making life really comfortable. That sounds awful but we are sort of a cushion in farming life because we do the comfort things like the cooking, and making the home comfortable, and keeping the fire always warm in the winter; those sorts of things. You need to have both on a farm I think because the two different positions are quite different as in one being the worker and one being the comfort maker.

Sandra also emphasises that the two positions of ‘worker’ and ‘comfort maker’ are required for a farm to operate. Within this comment though, she marginalises her own position and contribution by emphasising that farmers are workers, whilst those occupied with domestic and motherhood tasks are not. Like Sandra, Josie affirmed her contentedness with having a supportive identity. She inferred that women who do identify with positions other than those traditionally accepted within farming are ‘women’s libbers’, who risk alienation from the farming community because they identify with positions not ascribed to women.

These nine women present a broad spectrum of responses to the dominant discourses when navigating their identity via a statement of occupation. These data reflect the complexity and multiplicity of implications and influences of the discourses identified in Chapter Four. Across this study, it is possible to see women’s reflections on identity as an encounter on a continuum as depicted in Figure 5.3. This continuum emphasises that farm women are a diverse group who respond to dominant discourses in a variety of ways. The continuum shows a range of identities, from women who are fully confident (ostensibly) with identifying with the position of ‘farmer’ through to women fully content (apparently) with identifying with the position of ‘farmer’s wife’. But, there are also some women in-between, who have expressed concern about being justified to call themselves a ‘farmer’ whilst knowing they will definitely not identify with being a ‘farmer’s wife’.

The confusion that farm women experience when expressing their identity is similar to the findings of previous research. Both Brandth (2002a) and Alston(2004) highlighted that farm women have severe problems in identifying their occupation, because the
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The label ‘farmer’ is reserved for men. Trauger (2004) also noted that when women assume the position of ‘farmer’, they are contravening the traditional gender positions on family farms that men are ‘farmers’ and women are ‘farmer’s wives’. Past research has also highlighted that some women do accept the division of labour and choose to be in the home, emphasising that it is necessary to have two spouses with different positions so they can support each other (Oldrup, 1999). Part of the reason for this acceptance is that women perceive that they cannot challenge their discursive positioning because the survival of the family farm depends on co-operation between the husband and wife, whereby one compliments the other. Challenging this traditional arrangement could test the co-operation on the farm and reap disapproval in the community (Trauger, 2004).

Overall, the expressive response of farm women using their occupational identity is not solely the product of the dominant discourses that shape their lives. If this was the case, then the interviewees would identify themselves in accordance with their discursive positions as either a ‘housewife’ or a ‘farmer’s wife’. Over time, it is evident that more farm women are willing to identify themselves as ‘farmers’. However, this is only one way of documenting the identity of farm women, and it is very clear from their narratives surrounding statements of occupation and identity that trying to navigate their identity is highly problematic for some women. There is also considerable confusion regarding the justification of the ‘farmer’ label. Most women still associate the position of ‘farmer’ with a male, but because they appear reluctant to identify themselves with the subservient identities associated with domesticity and wifehood they are using ‘farmer’. Increased dissatisfaction at the identities traditionally used to demonstrate what women do appears to be causing farm women to look for alternatives, and the identity ‘farmer’ covers what they do on the farm and in the household. Moreover, some women wish to move away from gendered identities, and their inherent expectations, within the family farming context.

FIGURE 5.3: Identity continuum from the narratives of nine farm women
Source: Interview two (October 2004 – June 2005)
5.2.3 Rejecting femaleness to be ‘good farmers’

While a continuum of identity responses is evident in this study, a further layer of complexity exists for the respondents interested in ‘farmer’ identities. Continued negotiation of contrasting discourses is clear. Specifically, those adopting ‘farmer’ identities are facing challenges around meanings and expectations associated with their female status. There is reluctance by those who do subscribe to the identity of ‘farmer’ to acknowledge that they are a ‘female farmer’. This response suggests that farm women identifying as farmers navigate conflict with discourses of femininity, because the meanings and practices surrounding femininity position women as inferior, caring, gentle women; not as strong, robust male farmers.

Narratives from five respondents highlight how they focus on being a ‘good farmer’, not on being a ‘female farmer’. Fiona explained, “No, it [being seen as a female farmer] doesn’t worry me at all. I just see myself as a farmer; just a farmer.” Similarly, Astrid stated, “It’s not about being a woman farmer; it’s about being a good farmer. That’s the most important thing.” Likewise, Marilyn emphasised, “If they’re doing the same job they should be acknowledged for the work that they’re doing. They’re a farmer. They’re not a woman farmer.” Beth removed the issue of gender too, commenting, “I think it is about being good farmers; I don’t see it as an issue of gender.” Lastly, Janet contended that, “Gender has never been in my radar. I believe that if you’re good enough to do the farm job, you’re a farmer.”

These narratives emphasise how women, who identify with the position of ‘farmer’, appear to disregard their gender. For them, identifying as a ‘farmer’ is most important, and being recognised as a ‘female farmer’ appears to degrade the position because the identity ‘female’ infers feminine and domestic characteristics not associated with being a ‘farmer’. As previously emphasised, discourses of femininity, gender embodiment, masculinity and family farming have positioned women to be inferior, supporters and homemakers, not farmers. In order to gain a degree of authenticity, and to assimilate into a masculine agricultural environment, women farmers are removing their gender qualifier, choosing to be non-female as a clear response to both the dominant discursive meanings of femininity and masculinity. This appears to be a conundrum particularly for independent farming women, whose income and survival of their family farm depends on their ability to be acknowledged as competent farmers within a male dominated sector.
5.3 Independent farmer responses to dominant discourses

Independent farm women, who choose to identify with the position of 'farmer', most clearly challenge discursive expectations because they undertake work traditionally performed by men. As emphasised in Chapter Four, women are not expected to be farmers due to the dominant gender constructions circulating in discourses of femininity, masculinity and embodiment. Women are perceived to be physically weak and therefore best suited for indoor, supportive positions, thus removing them from the rigours of the hard, outdoor life associated with tough farm men. As a consequence, women who identify with the position of 'farmer' struggle within the farming community to be seen as 'legitimate farmers'?

The following section analyses the case of an independent farm woman's life. It documents how she is discursively positioned because of her female gender and it highlights her responses to these subjectivities. Her life has been extremely demanding because she has prevailed as a farmer, challenging not only these discursive subjectivities constructed for her but also the discursive positions of others within the farming environment.

To gain legitimacy in the farming context, independent farm women respond in a variety of ways to the dominant discourses of femininity and embodiment, and the contextualising discourses of masculinity and family farming. This is best illustrated by the case study of a woman called Jo. Jo is a woman in her late fifties who has farmed independently for forty years, and who identifies her occupation as a 'farmer'. However, she has struggled to be recognised as a 'legitimate farmer' as opposed to a 'hobby farmer'8, because she is a woman.

Jo is a tall, out-of-doors looking woman, her face framed by short dark hair and her hands callused from years of on-farm work. Jo is a confident, outgoing woman but very self-effacing about the fact she owns and runs her own property, along with helping many other farmers run theirs. She speaks authoritatively about farming issues but it is obvious that she has struggled to gain respect as a farmer. Her melancholy expression reinforces the depth of hurt she feels in response to how her family and other farmers have treated her as she has tried to succeed in a man's world. As the interview

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7 In this context, a legitimate farmer refers to a farmer who is farming to provide their main source of income, and is seen to be a genuine manager of the factors of production such as the land, staff and stock.

8 In this context, a hobby farmer refers to someone who participates in farming for pleasure and interest in their spare time. Farming is not seen as their main source of income.
progressed she displayed a great sense of humour and pride as she discussed her children, her farm and her achievements.

Early in her life, Jo learned through family based discourses of patriarchy that as a girl, she was less important than her brothers and that she would not inherit her family farm. Despite managing the property in her brothers’ absence, she was not given the opportunity to take over the property. With a hint of anger in her voice Jo explained:

I was the girl on the farm, and I was not going to inherit any farm and yet I was a very good farmer and extremely good with livestock and probably the best farm manager and staff manager that they had. [But] I could see that... because I was the girl, I wasn’t going to get anything [because of] family influence.

In response, Jo purchased her own farm because she wanted to be a farmer. She loved the lifestyle, the outdoors work and animals. From the outset, Jo’s response of becoming an independent farmer challenged the discourses of femininity, masculinity and patriarchy which prevailed throughout her childhood. However, she found that being an independent farm woman was difficult because of gender discrimination:

It [gender discrimination] was quite significant in the early days. I had to battle against it. It was always there and it was quite significant, pointedly geared towards me being different, odd, and unusual.

Jo laughed as she emphasised how she was seen as ‘different’ and ‘odd’. This supports Saugeres (2002b) research findings which emphasised that French women farming on their own, are treated as non-women, radicals. Saugeres emphasised that the naturalisation of men’s and women’s abilities reinforced and justified the belief that women could not be farmers without the assistance of men, and if women were farming they were not a real woman: they were half a man.

Jo responded to the discrimination by choosing to ignore the bias shown towards her. Instead, she focussed on being a good farmer with skills and knowledge:

I was, sort of, the first woman farming on my own, and breaking new ground, and always getting kind of looked at, sneered at, slung off at. I got to a stage where I just didn’t listen to any of that.
But to be further accepted in a farming sector dominated by masculine discourses, Jo responded by making some personal changes. First, she altered her appearance and behaviour, and became one of the ‘boys’:

Initially the discrimination was like battering your head against a brick wall. But I would ride in the pick up truck with the men, work with the men, organise the men, and talk to them all day, whilst wearing trousers and keeping my hair short. The only thing that kept me going was that I did it well and the staff I had respected me.

To demonstrate that she was a capable farmer, Jo removed any signs or behaviours that were distinctly feminine. She harnessed the meanings and expectations in dominant discourses of masculinity and embodiment as she both worked and looked like a man to enable her to be seen as a legitimate farmer both on and off the farm. Second, off the farm, Jo also had to modify her behaviour by monitoring how she acted and what she said. Jo explained:

I’d get these sorts of side comments and looks from some of the men’s wives, so I had to be super careful. I never laughed at dirty jokes, I never said anything or made any innuendo. Everything was sort of superficial like that.

Not only was gaining acceptance by male farmers challenging, by being a farmer Jo was also alienating herself from the farmers’ wives. To ensure that she was perceived as nothing more than a ‘farmer’, Jo ignored gendered banter that could be misconstrued.

Ultimately, Jo was not accepted as a farmer until she could prove herself within the male-dominated environment. That she owned her own farm and worked as hard as her staff was not justification enough for her to seen as a legitimate farmer. She had to prove to others that she could not only compete, but also do better than them in their world. Jo recalled:

It was only when I became acknowledged as a skilful farmer that all that [gender discrimination] stuff disappeared. Like if you’re selling sheep and you hit the top price, they forget that you’re a woman; they just think that you’re a good farmer. It was only when I got into that category that all that other stuff was just forgotten about. You always had to be better though. You had to be better than everybody.

Even then, Jo had to reject her gender to be acknowledged as a farmer. She explained:

I would go to a stock sale and just leaned on the rail, the only woman and dozens of men, and we just talked about stock. You know, I was a farmer, in
that forum, I was just a farmer. So I was a non-female, I was a farmer and I was a good farmer and I was respected as a farmer. But it was kind of a lonely place to be... within the farming community I kind of was pretty much alone.

To cope with the social isolation as a woman within a male-dominated world, Jo’s response was to join a group of independent farm women located throughout the country that supported each other within the farming sector. They did not become involved with women’s farming organisations, such as the Women’s Institute, because in her words, “We didn’t belong to Women’s Institute and we didn’t belong to Women’s Division of Federated Farmers as they were more about housekeeping in those days...” In addition, Jo had found that organisations such as Federated Farmers were, “...a men’s political arm who wouldn’t let women get involved.” Consequently, the group of women farmers worked informally together to provide the support absent in their lives.

Later in her farming career, Jo was able to gain positions of power within the previously male-dominated organisations, but only after gaining authenticity within the farming sector. She commented:

> When it came to getting elected on to these boards, and taking positions of power, it’s like they thought, “We didn’t like you to be a woman farming, but now that you’re a ‘good’ farmer, we can slot you in [to the organisation].” My being a ‘good’ farmer kind of gave that authenticity to it which they weren’t prepared to give if I was just a female farmer or farm hand. It was a funny sort of thing.

Once again she reinforced that she had to be a good farmer, suggesting that this was the only reason that she was permitted into the male bastion of farming and farming organisations.

Her responses to the dominant discourses within the context of farming reflect the gender extremes required. In her own words, Jo became a “non-female”. She modified her behaviour and appearance in order to become accepted as a farmer, essentially rejecting discourses of femininity learned from childhood. In addition, she challenged constructions of farming masculinity by succeeding as a female farmer. Many male farmers, because of their own discursive positioning, struggled to accept Jo until she proved she could farm impressively. Her actions clearly demonstrate the difficulties and demands that women face in a traditionally male domain. In effect, expectations of
androgynty and farming excellence were the only responses that would provide Jo with access and passage into the highly masculinist world of farming.

But, it is also important to recognise the complexity and multiplicity of discourses in Jo's life. In Jo's case, although she has rejected and challenged aspects of dominant farming discourses, she has not done so for all. Dominant discourses associated with domesticity, motherhood and family farming have still shaped Jo's life. It is also evident that she complies with the other strong discourses in her life. She accepts discourses of domesticity, being responsible for the housework in her home. At one time, she had married and had two children. When she divorced, Jo struggled to be both a solo-mother and a farmer. Subsequently, Jo decided to sell her moderately-sized hill country farm for a smaller, easier-to-farm property. This enabled her to be able to spend more time with her children, reflecting a strong observance with discourses of motherhood. When her children were young they prevented Jo from being on the farm, which she found frustrating. Jo recalled, "I had to stay inside while they had an afternoon sleep and I can remember how frustrating that was."

The experience and attributes of motherhood have also influenced her farming. She commented:

I think few men, but a big majority of women, have a better empathy for stock and what’s going on. If you’re good at farming, and good with livestock, you shift them the day before they need it, and women are really good at that because they don’t wait until the kids are really starving and hungry and then feed them. You prepare in your head what’s needed for the livestock, much better than a lot of men do.

Jo’s view reflects those of Linda and Fiona (Section 5.1.1) whereby women are better farmers because of their nurturing tendencies. Acknowledging the lessons learned via discourses of care-giving and motherhood, Jo suggested that women know when to feed the stock because they are used to feeding their own children; skills and knowledge that few men possess.

Lastly, it is evident that family farming discourses have influenced her in a similar way to farm women in partnerships. Jo has worked extremely hard to ensure that she succeeded as a farmer and that her children had the best upbringing that she could provide. Like other mothers, she has sacrificed a lot for her family, and whilst she will not be passing the farm on to her eldest son as her parents did, she has ensured that her family farm survived to provide for her children. Jo still battles bias against independent
farm women. Agents ask her where ‘the Boss’ is when they visit her property, and some stock agents at sales still address buyers as ‘Gentlemen’, not, ‘Ladies and Gentlemen’. But Jo ignores and/or accepts the conditions noting, “None of it worries me, that’s just part of life...you do miss out because you’re female, you’re not quite in their league. It’s a bit of an old boy’s network... but I ignore the gender part and just focus on the farming part”

In summary, Jo’s choice to be an independent farmer has involved her in contesting the masculine world of farming. She has responded in a variety of ways to the dominant discourses shaping her life: accepting and conforming to discourses of family farming, care-giver, motherhood, embodiment and domesticity; modifying discourses of femininity, and challenging discourses of masculinity and farming. Like the independent farm women in Saugeres’ (2002b) study, it is a struggle to be acknowledged and accepted as a legitimate farmer who operates without the assistance of a male. Jo’s ability to withstand the bias and difficulty highlights the strength and fortitude that women possess within family farming. She also demonstrates that farm women are very diverse and by using an individual case-study approach, this study has emphasised the dynamic, multi-faceted lives that farm women lead.

5.4 Conclusions

This chapter has expanded on the findings of Chapter Four by documenting how farm women respond to the discourses shaping their lives. Two approaches have been used to accomplish this; exploring both the active responses women take in response to numerous types of work, and the self-reflective, expressive responses women explore via choices and narratives surrounding identity.

First, Section 5.1 showed how farm women are actively responding to discourses by undertaking a broad range of tasks. In comparison to those completed by farm men, these are usually deemed to be of secondary importance. The full-time commitment of all farm women to their domestic responsibilities, along with their dedication to caring and nurturing for their family, reflects their compliance with discourses of domesticity, femininity, embodiment and care-giving. But, by performing practical on-farm work, aspects of selective discourses are challenged, such as femininity discourses; whilst other discourses, such as those concerning family farming, are subscribed to as women work with their husbands to ensure that the family farm survives.
Gaining off-farm work is an option that only a limited number of women in this study have pursued. Whilst this proportion of women gaining off-farm employment is lower than the levels reported in overseas studies (O'Hara, 1998; Kelly and Shortall, 2002), the findings of this study are similar with regard to how women accommodate their on and off-farm commitments, and the reasons for gaining off-farm work. Farm women in this study adjoin their off-farm work to their on-farm responsibilities as a means of further enhancing the survival of the family farm. Furthermore, Section 5.1.2 demonstrated that by choosing to work off-farm women were not necessarily rejecting dominant discourses, they are adding to their farm obligations and commitments. Working off the farm provides supplementary income, so women are still fulfilling family farming discourses via ensuring a financial contribution to the unit. These women challenge selective subjectivities, such as discourses of femininity and domesticity, by going off-farm to work, but they are not rejecting these discourses completely as they still fulfil their main responsibilities such as cooking, care-giving and cleaning.

Not gaining off-farm work has also been presented as an active response to dominant discourses. The majority of interviewees remain on their family farm despite being highly educated and/or qualified to work elsewhere. This study demonstrates that these women are also choosing responses. By remaining on the property, they are complying with all of the discourses imposing expectations on them; sacrificing careers and opportunities for different discursive influences.

Overall, analysing this research in terms of the active responses of farm women to their discursive positioning indicates that women are selective as to what discourses they accept, challenge or reject. In some instances, it is evident that they are rejecting aspects of some discourses to comply with more important discourses such as family farming. Ensuring that the family farm continues drives the responses of female interviewees, reinforcing the findings of previous research that the struggle to ensure the survival of the family farm is not compatible with opportunities for self-actualisation (Kelly and Shortall, 2002; Shortall, 2002; Bennett, 2004; Heather et al., 2005).

The second form of response that farm women make involves the navigations and expressions of identity as outlined in Section 5.2. It is evident that an increasing number of women are identifying formally with the position of ‘farmer’. This contradicts the meanings and practices associated with the dominant discourses that shape their lives.
and position them as ‘farmer’s wives’. However, rather than rejecting these discourses women appear to be identifying with the farmer identity via public opportunities (electoral roll), although it is not necessarily something women do comfortably. This study has exposed the tensions and contradictions that occur in such a situation as expectations and implications of their discursive subjectivities (as mothers and helpers) prevail in farm life. Identifying themselves as a ‘female farmer’ produces further discomfort as few women who subscribe to being a ‘farmer’ are prepared to be identified as a ‘female farmer’. The inference exists that women only gain legitimacy if they disassociate with their femaleness and its associated subjectivities, a point especially illustrated in the case of Jo’s experiences.

This study has found that not all women wish to be identified as a ‘farmer’; some express contentment with the identities that directly reflect traditional positioning as ‘mothers’ and ‘housewives’. This supports Brandth’s (2002b) findings that not all farm women comply with feminist expectations of equality, because they are satisfied with their more minor position in the farm household. However, rather than suggest that these women are remiss through being content with servitude, it must be acknowledged that they represent a group who articulate a preference for these positions and conditions. Those expressing subordinate identities are clearly not engaging with the critical perspectives of past feminist scholars, but that is because identity expression narrated in Section 5.2.1 is about how farm women see themselves and not how feminist scholars think a farm woman should see herself. This study has actively sought to record and identify how farm women express their representation of self, and acknowledges that their lived realities may not be engaging with critical perspectives such as those of many feminist scholars (see also Section 2.2.2). This study also highlights how farm women are a diverse group. Exploring the process of identity expression, in response to their discursive positioning, reflects this. The continuum of possibilities and experiences from ‘farmer’ to ‘housewife’ attests to this heterogeneity.

This chapter also illustrates how gender is performed, as others have previously documented (Little, 2002b; Saugeres, 2002b). Specifically, this study shows how women’s responses to dominant discourses are performed through both work and self-expression of identity. Whilst other research has argued that gender is performed in relation to work (Saugeres, 2002b), technology (Brandth, 2006), and sexuality (Little, 2003), this study has focused on the two-fold navigations women complete in regard to their diverse work and identity choices. Types of labour undertaken by farm women
Responses indicate an explicitly active performance of specific discursive subject positions. But the performance of identity is equally potent, for this chapter has shown the juxtaposition of formal opportunities to select and express identity, and the challenge of living out preferred or expected identities, within family farming circles. In these latter spheres, negotiation of gender, careful selection of appearance and behaviour, and attempts at androgyny may all be part of the responsive repertoire women employ.

Most importantly, the significance of this chapter lies in the demonstrated contradiction between these repertoires of active and expressive responses. Farm women are complying with discourses by performing work perceived to be of secondary importance on and off the farm to ensure the survival of the family farm. By fulfilling these expectations, they are also perpetuating their own invisibility, but they frequently accept this too. Conversely, when the interviewees express their occupational identity, some are expressing identities that do not reflect their discursive positioning. This suggests that many farm women have aspirations which differ to that of their partner and the family farm, and whilst the women can formally express these, they cannot actively achieve these goals. Thus, they navigate the differences between how they might wish to express themselves and how they experience their lived reality on the farm with the family. Farm women may express a specific occupational identity such as 'farmer', but this study documents how in reality most still fulfil the discursively produced identities such as a 'farmer's wife', a 'helper' and a 'mother'. Those who do express these supportive identities express this preference. They do not reflect feminist ideals of wishing to modify and improve their positions because they articulate satisfaction with the knowledge that they are supporting their husband, raising a family and ensuring the continuation of the family farm. The experience for farm women who prefer to claim farmer status is more problematic. For women like Jessica, Jo, Beth and Barb, farmer status requires excellence in achievement and negotiation of femaleness bordering on androgyny.

Overall, the responses analysed in this chapter suggest that farm women (with all of their diversity) operate within substantial discursive constraints. Their degree of freedom under these conditions forms the final focus in this thesis, whereby Chapter Six explores how the discursive positioning of farm women influences their agency.
Chapter 6  A Reading of Multi-faceted Agency

Chapter Four documented the dominant discourses shaping the lives of farm women, while Chapter Five explored how farm women responded to these discourses via a range of active and expressive responses across a number of social, temporal and spatial contexts. Building on these findings, Chapter Six will be guided by research question three, which focuses on how the discursive positioning of farm women influences their agency.

In exploring the agency of farm women, this chapter will focus initially on the individual agency of women, analysing women’s narratives as they navigate and experience different agency across a range of dimensions. Then in Section 6.2, the chapter will consider wider implications of the variations in agency in relation to the farm. This section will explore how the positioning of women on the family farm influences their agency both on the farm and in the home. This enables an engagement and comparison with past literature on farm women’s productive and reproductive contributions to family farming. Lastly, the position of the farm women within personal relationships with male partners will be used as a lens to reflect on agency within a more intimate social context. Consequently, Section 6.3 will examine how, despite their marginalised discursive positions and assumed limited agency, many farm women continue to have a significant influence on their male spouses. To explain this, the notion of agency will be broadened to argue that it is a highly variable, dynamic concept with ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ manifestations.

As with Chapters Four and Five, the voices and experiences of farm women are the core focus of this chapter, however, some detailed considerations of male partners is also relevant. Indeed, while past literature has highlighted the inequalities present between women and men on family farms (Alston, 1995; Brandth and Haugen, 1997; O’Hara, 1998; Oldrup, 1999; Heather et al., 2005), little reference has been made to how farm men perceive the position of farm women within the marital relationship, or whether farm women have any significant influence on their partner. Hence this thesis includes a critical reading of farm males’ narratives to provide further insight into the discourses shaping the lives of women and their resulting agency.
As indicated in Chapter Two, this current chapter addresses the women's case material by adopting a particular approach to the notion of agency. From a post-structuralist perspective, agency results from the experiences and implications stemming from positions or locations within the discourses framing our social worlds (Liepins, 2000; Kettle, 2005). Being positioned through discourses at any one time enables subjects to recognise options, make choices and/or act upon the options available to them (Davies, 1991). In addition, they are recognised as individuals able to mobilise agency, and therefore hold a legitimate presence, exercising the right to speak, act, be heard and seen. As Davies (1991) emphasises, agency is not a freedom from the discursive constitution of self but the ability to recognise that constitution and to mobilise or resist, subvert and change, the discourses through which one is being constituted.

6.1 The agency of individual farm women

In examining the discourses surrounding farm women, Chapter Four documented how dominant discourses marginalise women on the family farm. It showed their location within family farming as part of an agricultural sector dominated by social and institutional relations that advantage men and constrain women. However, Chapters Four and Five also highlighted how farm women's experiences cannot be standardised; there is substantial diversity between individuals and circumstances. Agency therefore will also differ between farm women across various social, spatial and temporal dimensions. Agency cannot be treated as one static, homogenous concept across the group of farm women studied. Instead, this section will both recognise the unevenly gendered contexts of family farming and illustrate the diversity of implications for farm women.

Farming is a highly traditional industry involving meanings, concepts and practices which produce perceived truths about farming, farming communities and the people involved (Oldrup, 1999; Liepins, 2000; Little, 2003; Alston, 2004). It is not only based on economic, political and scientific principles, it is also reproduced through normalised social subjectivities which position men as key subjects on the farm and within farming institutions, whilst women are largely marginalised in the home (Shortall, 1999; Brandth, 2002a; Bennett, 2004; Heather et al., 2005; 2006). Existing literature has demonstrated the highly masculine construction of agriculture in multiple discourses. This study starts to detail some of the implications and limitations for women's agency of these constructions. Davies (1990) suggests that alternative positioning can be brought about by personal knowledge and skills, the ability to use
relevant discourses and to be legitimately recognised to do so. She also notes that the individual also has to have a desire to have agency, thus having the assurance to position themselves so they can make choices, carry them through and accept the responsibility for doing so. Using this framework, the following chapter will demonstrate how farm women gain agency through recognising how they have been discursively positioned and how they are able to resist or challenge their positioning and its various subjectivities. This recognition facilitates the identification of opportunities to gain access to other potentially more advantageous discourses which, combined with personal knowledge and skills, will enable the women to gain agency and be recognised as legitimate holders of agency. Kettle (2005) would argue that this action reflects how farm women, who are positioned in a certain way within a given discursive frame, work consciously and strategically to resist and reconstruct a powerful, rather than marginalised, position for themselves. But, this thesis will also argue that some farm women consciously submit to some marginal subjectivities with low agency. Furthermore, agency is enacted through certain discursive, personal and social resources to which women have varied access (e.g. constrained by physical location and household circumstances).

Gaining and performing agency also infers that farm women actively make sense of and engage with available discourses, rather than just passively complying with them. Thus agency in the family farm context will also be attributed to those women who resist certain discourses, or positions within them. Equally, agency may be seen in the way women act to stand outside of, or actively take up, discourse as their own; in particular discursive practices.

In addressing these dynamic manifestations of agency, the following chapter will propose two types of agency that are evident within the lives of farm women. First, 'direct agency' will be identified as an explicit form of agency associated with particular discursive positions, where dominant expectations of women facilitate their direct involvement in actions and/or decision-making on the family farm. Women with direct agency are understood to have a capacity to act legitimately, and exercise the right to be heard, in relation to certain identities, such as mother. Second, 'indirect agency', will be shown as a form of implicit agency that women utilise to circuitously influence practices and the decision-making process on the family farm. From secondary discursive positions, women will be shown as articulating indirect agency through support and suggestions to the legitimate agency holder, the male farmer. By
emphasising that agency is a dynamic concept with different manifestations; clearer representation of farm women’s agency can be made.

The following sub-sections will investigate the various manifestations of agency for different groups of farm women across different social, temporal and spatial dimensions. They will explore how farm women navigate their agency across these dimensions from a multitude of subjectivities experienced on a daily basis.

6.1.1 Navigating agency across different dimensions

When examining women’s agency as expressed through their narratives, it is possible to make some observations across the whole population of women interviewed before considering individual and heterogeneous details. For instance, all farm women perform a multitude of discursively determined practices, navigating a range of different expectations and conditions as they move between various social and spatial contexts. Each involves different manifestations of more, or less, agency as defined by the subjectivities of the position or space.

Agency associated with subject positions

The first analysis of farm women’s agency will focus on agency that a woman is able to employ from different subject positions. Figure 6.1 shows the main subject positions a farm woman fulfils and visually portrays the range of agency that may be associated with them. This is a broadly conceived figure, based on women’s narratives. The figure graphically depicts and also contrasts the narrated variation in agency. Diverse subject positions to which women have access produce contrasting levels of agency. Positions that are traditionally subservient within the family farming context have limited agency, such as a farmer’s wife. As Chapter Four highlighted, farm women generally fulfil invisible, yet crucial, positions on the family farm. They are positioned by subjectivities (such as wife and helper) that place strong expectations on them to comply with others, which limits their autonomy to act and think. Chapter Five further expanded on why women are complying with these discourses, noting that farm women respond to their discursive positioning by focussing on strategies that facilitate the survival of the family farm, rather than furthering their own interests or agency.

The abstract figure is a visual portrayal of the agency associated with the dominant discursive positions of farm women. Each subject position has been assigned agency in accordance with the dominant discourses framing the position and the narratives of the interviewees. These have a degree of latitude (graphically conveyed by the stretched
FIGURE 6.1: A conceptual portrayal of the agency aligned with subject positions
Source: Interviews one and two (October 2004 – June 2005)
diamond instead of using a fixed point) to reflect the diversity narrated in individual farm women's lives.

In deciding to marry a farmer, many farm women actively made the choice to minimise their agency, often forsaking careers that embodied high agency. Barb commented:

> Farming has changed my whole direction of life I guess. Farming is not something that I grew up in. I happened into farming because I married a farmer and then I made that clear choice that that’s what I would be involved in. I wasn’t going to go off and do something else.

Barb’s commitment to her husband and farming together has reduced her ability and willingness to work off-farm. Consequently, she has restricted her awareness of other opportunities and has marginalised her own skills, knowledge and ability to mobilise further options to gain agency. By being a support person to her husband, responsible for the household and raising children, her capacity to be actively involved on the farm and in the wider community is reduced.

Another farm woman, Joy, explained how she viewed marriage to a farmer. It is evident that dominant discourses, such as femininity and domesticity, have influenced her purpose to “...help my [her] husband...” She commented:

> I realised that you can’t go in two different directions in a marriage and I had always decided that I would have been working with him. I always set out to help my husband in what he was going to do ... To my way of thinking a farm runs best when both partners are involved.

Despite her husband’s early death, Joy’s long-term commitment was to support her husband on the farm. While her emphasis was on a partnership, her focus on ‘helping’ her husband reinforced her subordinate position, thus reducing her agency within the partnership.

Barb and Joy’s agency associated with wifehood rests at the lower end of the indicator (Figure 6.1). Alternatively, some women heighten their agency through their personal resources. For example, Hazel, despite discussing her marriage as a partnership, has no qualms about taking her own direction with or without her husband’s approval. She is also critical of women who defer to their husbands, despite their own skills and knowledge. Hazel was very forthright as she remarked:

> I think that’s the downfall of a lot of rural women. They’re not standing up to husbands when they have got as many skills, if not more, than their
husbands. [My husband] Barry is a very skilled person too, but there are times when I need to put a stake in the ground and say, ‘I think I’m going to do this’ and it’s crossing that threshold that’s the hard part.

Hazel’s ability to stand up to her husband was the most overt of the partnered women interviewed, emphasising that some women can mobilise greater agency within wifely positions through their own efforts. She clearly possesses skills to mobilise other discourses that provide her with the agency to make decisions:

It does take courage to stand up to Barry, and I mean I don’t like doing things that he’s opposed to. I think most women would say the same. It’s always been joint decision-making but there are the odd times when I’ve had to step out and say, ‘Well I am going to do this because I think I’ve got sufficient information to say that this is going to work.’

Generally, the traditional subject positions of farm women as farmers’ wives present little opportunity to employ agency, irrespective of what work a woman undertakes. Some women, such as Hazel, can gain agency through self-assertion but, as previous research has documented, most women choose not to challenge their secondary positions because the fundamental survival of the family farm depends on the cooperation between the spouses (Alston, 1995; Oldrup, 1999; Brandth, 2002b). However, it appears that if a woman can identify with a position outside of her family and household commitments, such as an off-farm worker or member of an organisation, she does have a greater opportunity to generate agency. For example, a farm woman who is in a position of authority within a local branch of Rural Women New Zealand has attained a high level of agency within that context. Marilyn commented:

I’ve had so many opportunities with Rural Women, such as leadership opportunities, and the chance to run courses, and develop as a person. It provides the encouragement to go out and try and do different and new things, to try things out. They’ve given me the confidence to be able to get up and talk about my community’s issues and concerns, and go and lobby Ministers. It’s actually been wonderful, [a] great influence on me.

Marilyn has been able to attain greater agency through being an ‘organisation member’ (Figure 6.1). As a ‘farmer’s wife’ on her husband’s family farm, she frequently felt left out of decision-making, as her husband made the management decisions in conjunction with his brother. Dejectedly she explained, “The decisions were made over there on the other farm, because that was where most of the farm discussion took place, and I was not feeling part of it. It wasn’t enough for me. I wanted something else.” Thus, like Hazel, and other farm women, Marilyn gained agency through pursuing alternative
subject positions. Likewise, within the women interviewed there was an ex-deputy Mayor, two regional representatives of a national organisation, two organisation presidents, and numerous treasurers and secretaries of clubs and organisations, all positions providing the incumbents with an opportunity to gain more agency. However, these tend to be temporary opportunities for agency, as all of the women interviewees spend the majority of their time on the family farm.

Another subject position that provides women with agency is that of ‘independent farm woman’ (Figure 6.1). In particular, single women who own and operate their own property have the autonomy associated with sole ownership and management, although like all property owners they are answerable to others such as banks and regional councils. This means that they do not operate with complete freedom, although their potential agency is considerably higher than that of their married peers.

In interpreting agency associated with subject positions, it must be noted, however, that farm women do not live their lives as a sequence of singular subject positions; they navigate several of these positions simultaneously. In addition, within an individual subject position such as mother, there is also considerable variation over a period of time as a farm woman’s life course progresses. Even whilst taking these factors into account, a key finding is that some subject positions represent limited agency because of the dominant discourses that frame them. Alternatively, independent subject positions have higher agency because farm women can attain agency through their own efforts.

**Agency associated with different forms of space**

A second manifestation of agency can be understood in relation to different forms of space in accordance with the discourses which are associated with them. Figure 6.2 is another conceptual diagram that depicts a different way agency varies between specific spaces in which farm women live and operate. The degree of agency commonly associated with the spaces itemised in Figure 6.2 is based on the narratives offered by farm women. Great contrasts are evident. In some contexts the agency reflects the occupational positioning of the farm woman, for example, working as a helper in the shearing shed or visiting the local sale yards. Here the woman fulfils ‘assistant’ or ‘minority’ positions and is operating in spaces dominated by masculine discourses, both preventing her from generating agency. Alternatively, agency in other spaces sometimes contradicts a woman’s subject position. For example, farm women appear to be largely
FIGURE 6.2: A conceptual portrayal of the agency *aligned with specific space*
Source: Interviews one and two (October 2004 – June 2005)
responsible for the input into household tasks as the ‘farmer’s wife’ and their agency in
the homestead is assumed to be higher than if she was out on the farm helping. However, as Bennett (2006) indicated, a woman’s agency in her kitchen should not be over-exaggerated. Even within her main sphere of operation, the farm woman may be subject to others with higher agency such as her partner or father-in-law, who may reduce or nullify her agency by dominating the space. If the farm woman is in the kitchen alone, she possess agency to the degree that she can make many decisions about her time and what is done within this space. But there are important times in the day when she is ‘expected’ to be in the kitchen to ensure that the meals are on the table for the family and workers, so her agency is still subject to the expectations of others.

Beyond the farm, such as within the farming community, a woman’s agency can be higher, although traditionally as a group they are positioned to be supporters and sustainers of community life (Little and Austin, 1996). Whilst these positions are secondary, within a women’s community meeting, such as Rural Women, participants are able to engage in agency through positions of authority in spaces that do not constrain them such as the local community hall.

At the broader, national scale, the agency that farm women possess within rural space is low. The women interviewed for this study considered rural farming space as a site that is under-recognised or not considered important by urban New Zealanders who make up of 85% of the total population (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a). Jackie explained, “I think New Zealand society as a whole, doesn’t understand what farming is or what farmers do.”

Overall, it is important to recognise that agency is highly spatial and it does not necessarily reflect the agency associated with a woman’s discursive positioning. In addition, as women operate across numerous spaces in any given day, they are navigating multiple manifestations of agency in accordance with these spaces.

6.1.2 Contrasting experiences of agency: partnered and independent farm women

To gain a more in-depth understanding of the diversity between women’s agency, the following individual cases will explore the contrasting agency of two women farming in partnerships and two farming independently. Variation in their spatial and social agency is evident. These cases were selected as they represented different backgrounds and farming circumstances. Jackie is in her early fifties, living on an isolated high country
sheep station that has been in her husband's family for three generations. She describes herself as a 'house wife'. In contrast, Jessica is in her early forties living on an isolated hill country property with her husband, although she previously owned and operated her own property. She is actively involved in farming organisations, is working towards a Masters degree and describes herself as a 'farmer'. In further contrast, Joy is in her late fifties, independently farming a semi-isolated sheep station. The death of her husband (early on in their marriage) resulted in Joy remaining on the farm for the sake of their three sons. Lastly, Louise is in an independent farmer and solo mother of two in her thirties, who farms a semi-intensive property. Examining the lives and agency of these four women accentuates the heterogeneity of farm women's experiences.

Jackie

Throughout her life, Jackie has navigated various subject positions and spaces, manifesting a range of social and spatial agency indicators (Figure 6.3). First, it is evident that the majority of her subject positions have low agency, (e.g. farmer's wife, mother and farm helper). This is in contrast to her previous positions, as Jackie explained, "I gave up my teaching profession to be a farmer's wife. So therefore I gave up a regular income, but I was happy to do that. Probably that's the biggest thing." In marrying a farmer, Jackie surrendered the agency and financial independence associated with being a professional woman. But, Jackie narrated this as choice saying, "I’ve always accepted that this is the life that I chose and you make the best of it." Since her children have left home, Jackie now gains some agency through off-farm work, helping organise the local Agricultural and Pastoral (A&P) show. As a highly educated and capable woman, she has been able to mobilise agency through recognising an opportunity and utilising a range of skills and knowledge in this position.

Second, Jackie has to navigate different agency across a range of spaces (Figure 6.4). Each space she encounters has a dominant set of discursive practices that may or may not enable Jackie to exercise agency. On the family farm, Jackie’s agency is limited in the paddocks, farm yards and farm buildings, where she is present in a 'helper' capacity. Jackie’s agency in the home is also limited, despite it being her main sphere of operation, and this visibly upsets her. Simon, her husband, reduces her agency as he does not consider the home to be a productive component of the farm.
FIGURE 6.3: A conceptual portrayal of Jackie's agency aligned with specific subject positions

FIGURE 6.4: A conceptual portrayal of Jackie's agency aligned with specific space
Source: Interviews one and two (October 2004 – June 2005)
Jackie explained:

The house is fine for him because it’s comfortable, it’s clean. But, he’s not home all day. His clothes are washed and ironed and ready to go, yeah, everything is there. He would rather spend the money back into the actual farm, not in the house area as the house area is a non-productive part of the farm.

Simon’s invalidation of the home as a productive space nullifies what Jackie is doing, reducing both her worth and agency. In addition, Simon reduces her agency through financial control. Jackie commented:

I’ve just ordered a new fridge, stove and microwave. But that has taken a long time for Simon to say ‘Yes’. And [if you] sound like a cracked record he’ll just bring a blind down and you’re not allowed to spend. He is the main controller of the money.

Jackie’s agency within ‘her space’ is restricted, as she has no financial means to make purchases within the home without Simon’s ‘permission’. In addition, Jackie also contends with historic family influences that have prevented her from exercising agency. The farm has been in the family for three generations; the station homestead representing the current owners in residence. However, the homestead as a space still subjects Jackie to expectations in accordance with its previous owners, her in-laws. Consequently, her agency in the homestead is also limited. Jackie explained:

I’m proud of my house. I guess when I came here, after I was married, it was hard because I took over somebody else’s garden, and somebody else’s house. Even now, if I was allowed to make my mark on the house, I could do it quite dramatically but I can only dream...I’d never be allowed to do it!

Jackie demonstrates that in spite of being responsible for the home and garden, she still lacks the autonomy to make changes in her home of nearly 30 years because of historic, family discourses. This reflects the findings of Bennett (2006), whereby women are influenced by subjectivities even in the spaces where they spend most time and effort. Jackie is only able to gain agency in the showground rooms where she is responsible for organising the local A&P show. Overall, it is evident that spaces on the farm only attribute Jackie limited autonomy, so, as with the constraints place on her by her subject positions, she only gains agency through venturing into off-farm spaces where she can attain agency through her own efforts.
Jessica

Jessica, the second case of a woman in a partnership also experiences varying agency via different subject positions and spaces. Originally raised in town, Jessica was not initially subject to the discourses of farming masculinity, patriarchy and family farming. Upon leaving school and gaining a university degree, she then decided to go farming (independently), before meeting her husband and shifting to Central Otago. Having married and had children, Jessica finds the agency associated with these positions is a lot less than she experienced previously farming independently. Jessica explained, “I’m very dependent on Charles and that’s a huge issue because you’re always asking permission all the time to do things. You know, you can’t just do something!”

A conceptual representation of the range of social and spatial agency Jessica has encountered is shown in Figures 6.5 and 6.6. Jessica possessed high levels of agency initially as an owner/operator, and then as the main farmer in the partnership. But this reduced significantly when the decision was made to have a family, thus transferring the farming responsibility and the agency associated with that position, to her husband. Jessica’s agency was further reduced as motherhood resulted in less time spent on the farm. She explained her frustrations:

I mean, I made quite a conscious decision to let Charles have a lot of control on the farm and take over a lot of stuff. I feel a bit powerless often now within the farm but I mean I’ve kind of, I’ve let that happen. I still enjoy farming and being involved in the farm business.

Whilst it is still evident that Jessica previously had high agency some areas of her life (e.g. university graduate), she has struggled with sacrificing agency in order to farm in a partnership and have a family. Since ‘letting’ Charles have more control, her agency has reduced to a point where she has to ask for permission to do things evoking feelings of powerlessness. However, by undertaking a Masters degree and having positions of authority within farming organisations, Jessica has pursued opportunities to gain agency:

It’s something I like and I need to do it. They [the farming organisations] influence me; I pick up information and see how things work, and I have opinions on some things and see what’s happening. I think I do those things because I like being interested in issues.

Participating in the farming organisation gives Jessica the opportunity to recognise and exercise agency. She is interested in farming issues and is keen to further understand the
FIGURE 6.5: A conceptual portrayal of Jessica’s agency aligned with specific subject positions

FIGURE 6.6: A conceptual portrayal of Jessica’s agency aligned with specific space
Source: Interviews one and two (October 2004 – June 2005)
workings involved in the agricultural industry. This demonstrates that as a woman with modest agency on the family farm, she has been able to attain agency through participation in off-farm organisations, despite those organisations still being within the masculine dominated agricultural sector.

Spatially, Jessica’s agency is also highly variable (Figure 6.6). On the farm, because of her past experience as a ‘farmer’, she still has agency based on her skills and knowledge, although she is still ‘helper’ in many spaces such as the woolshed. Off-farm, her agency is higher, in particularly in non-farming spaces where she is independent of the farm and the family, such as in the university.

Joy

Joy is a case of a woman farming independently, and as with partnered women, her agency varies via different subject positions and space. Originally raised in the city, Joy gained tertiary education and then married a farmer from an established station property. The choice to become an independent farmer was the result of the death of her husband. Joy was upset as she explained:

My husband, he wanted me to be at home, not poking my nose in to farm business, he wanted me to be at home and have meals on the table and a tidy house. So that was what I was initially when I was first married and really didn’t have anything to do with the farm. Then when he got sick, I had a six-month crash course on farming so and it was only after that that I was actually farming in my own name. Alistair didn’t want me to be a farmer, he wanted me to be the farmer’s wife. He suggested that [I leave] when we got the bad news but it’s never really been an option. I haven’t really thought about it. It’s been a wonderful life, the life of the kids they’ve loved it.

Joy gained agency following the death of her husband, as this presented her with the choice of either remaining on the farm or leaving. Despite discourses emphasising the masculinity of farmers and farming, she proceeded to take up the position of farmer. This decision was influenced primarily by discourses emphasising motherhood and the continuance of family farming, whereby she was taking on the role of farmer to ensure that her sons continued living on their father’s property.

A conceptual representation of the range of social and spatial agency Joy has experienced is shown in Figures 6.7 and 6.8. Socially, her agency changed in response to the death of her husband. Prior to his death, she was subject to discourses of femininity, domesticity and masculinity, positioning her in the home as a traditional
Chapter Six

SUBJECT POSITIONS

DAUGHTER

UNIVERSITY GRADUATE

FARMER'S WIFE (EARLY ON)

WIDOW

INDEPENDENT FARM OWNER

SOLO MOTHER

LOW AGENCY  DEGREE OF AGENCY  HIGH AGENCY

FIGURE 6.7: A conceptual portrayal of Joy’s agency aligned with specific subject positions

SPACES

FAMILY/FARM (EARLY ON)

FAMILY/FARM (CURRENT)

WOODSHED

LOCAL STOCK YARDS

UNIVERSITY

HOMESTEAD

LOW AGENCY  DEGREE OF AGENCY  HIGH AGENCY

FIGURE 6.8: A conceptual portrayal of Joy’s agency aligned with specific space

Source: Interviews one and two (October 2004 – June 2005)
farmer’s wife. Upon his demise, she assumed ownership and management of the property, thus increasing her agency. Spatially, as a farmer’s wife out on the farm and in farm buildings, Joy initially possessed little agency, but this changed when she farmed independently, gaining the agency associated with the position of ‘farmer’. However, beyond the farm, Joy is still subject to gendered discourses and her lower agency in farming dominated spaces, such as the stockyards, reflects this.

**Louise**

In a final contrasting case, Louise is in her thirties with two young children. She is strongly motivated and determined to succeed as a farmer and will not accept subjectivities that position her as an inferior farm woman. She commented:

> Male dominance, it’s never prevented me [from doing anything] … I’ve noticed it but it’s not preventing me. Woe betides any man that does try to prevent me from doing anything. I’ve lived here all my life so people know me, so they wouldn’t even bother suggesting such a thing really. They might think it but they’ve never said it to me. They wouldn’t be so stupid. No, no-one has ever said that to me. If they have, I haven’t heard it. I haven’t been listening.

Louise is not submitting to dominant discourses that subject most farm women to limited agency. She does not ‘hear’ discursive meanings that could invalidate her position as a legitimate farmer. Instead, she cherishes the opportunity to be her own boss and to be able to make her own decisions, commenting:

> I like being my own boss… I like the flexibility of knowing what I’ve got to do and pleasing myself when I do it within my 40-hour week. No-one is telling me that I’ve got to do a job on Monday. I think if I was being told what to do, then I wouldn’t have those choices.

Figure 6.9 summarises Louise’s range of social agency. Socially, the agency that Louise has experienced is greater than most farm women’s because she has not complied with or fulfilled some of the traditional positions such as farmer’s wife. Furthermore, her father helped her buy a farm, which countered some of the dominant masculine views that girls should not farm. Since then, as an independent farm owner, Louise has had agency aligned with that position.

As part of her farm survival strategy, Louise makes many decisions in response to motherhood discourses. She places the needs of her children over the requirements of the farm, instead of the farm determining what she can do with her children. Louise explained:
FIGURE 6.9: A conceptual portrayal of Louise’s agency aligned with specific subject positions

FIGURE 6.10: A conceptual portrayal of Louise’s agency aligned with specific space

Source: Interviews one and two (October 2004 – June 2005)
I just do a huge feed on Fridays which doesn’t do my stock any good, but it doesn’t kill them. I’ve got to prioritise and that means that I can have the weekend off because there’s nothing worse than two moaning children in the tractor – believe me! I just have to work around the children; it’s just the way it is.

Louise has gained agency through her decision not to submit to the demands of the farm in the weekend, making the choice to spend time with her children. She noted that contractors and shearers accept that her working week is from Monday to Friday and they respect that. Asserting her ‘motherhood’ responsibilities has not marginalised her within the farming community; in contrast, it appears to have enhanced it as she works when she wants to.

Spatially Louise has higher agency than other partnered women (Figure 6.10). In addition to owning and operating her own farm, which provides her with spatial agency both inside and out on the farm, Louise has lived and farmed in the same locality her entire life. As she exclaimed, “…I have lived here all my life so people know me…”, highlighting how she is accepted and treated like any other farmer within the local community. However, like Joy, once Louise leaves her local area, she encounters gendered discourses which position her as a woman with low agency, rather than a farmer.

**Discussion**

Through examining the agency of four very different farm women, this study has demonstrated the temporal, social and spatial dynamism of women’s agency. The agency of partnered women, who marry a farmer and end up farming in partnership, is compared with independent farmers who choose to be a ‘farmer’. Partnered women, who generally fulfil secondary positions in line with being a farmer’s wife and caregiver, possess limited social and spatial agency. Both Jackie and Jessica highlighted the variability of agency as they negotiated a myriad of subject positions and spaces on a daily basis.

This section has also shown that independent women, such as Joy and Louise, have a greater capacity to employ more agency through their independent circumstances. This supports the findings in Chapter Five that independent farm women are more able and willing to challenge and change their discursive positioning. Most importantly, independent farm women choose to be farmers and live on a farm, thus challenging gendered subjectivities and hegemonic discursive practises within farming. Without
exception, the independent farm women interviewed were strong-willed, highly motivated women who work hard to remain within the farming sector. Consequently, the independent women in this study all possess high agency. Following their decision to be a farmer, their determination and desire to succeed has provided them with the willingness and motivation to recognise, and mobilise, opportunities to achieve agency, despite originally being discursively marginalised as traditional farmer’s wives, farmer’s daughters and mothers. Furthermore, not only are they deciding to be farmers as a career choice, the women also choose to remain on the family farm to ensure its continuation. The discourses surrounding motherhood and family farming appear to have a strong influence on their decision to remain farming. Women are remobilising these discourses, which effectively marginalises them, to create a greater agency and a stronger identity for themselves. From this position of farmer, owning and operating the property and largely immune from masculine discourses, the women have developed a strong sense of self and agency.

In summary, farm women’s agency varies with not only a woman’s subject position, but also within different spatial contexts. Most women’s agency reflects their inferior positions. For some women, emancipation from these positioning discourses has been achieved by independent farming, providing these women with an opportunity to attain greater agency. Overall, the agency of these women still reflects their gender irrespective of their experiences and actions because they live and farm within a highly masculinist environment.

6.2 Agency in partnered family farms

The previous section identified how, as individuals living in diverse realities, women’s agency varies considerably within their own lives and between lives. The contrasts between the lives and agency of partnered farm women and independent women were highlighted, emphasising that agency on the farm will vary greatly depending on whether a woman is farming independently or in partnership. The following section focuses on partnered farm women and the agency aligned with the practical on-farm\(^1\) and household\(^2\) work that these women contribute to the family farm. Past research has highlighted that women often undertake menial tasks to ensure that the family farm survives. This not only reinforces their inferior subject positions, it can reduce their

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\(^1\) On-farm tasks include land and stock management such as lambing supervision, haymaking, fencing, weeding, and animal husbandry.

\(^2\) Household tasks include home based, indoors tasks such as cooking, care-giving, housework, laundry, and caring for guests.
agency. It will be argued that despite the significant contribution of partnered women within both these productive and reproductive spheres, they have limited agency.

### 6.2.1 On-farm agency

Chapter Five documented the very significant contributions women make to their family farms, showing that nearly 60% of the interviewees work full-time or in a regular part-time capacity in on-farm work, in addition to their full-time commitment to household work. Previous data has already shown that independent farm women, such as Fiona (Section 5.1.1) and Louise (Section 6.1.2), have high on-farm agency whereby they make their own stock and land management decisions. The following subsection focuses on the on-farm agency of partnered women, demonstrating that despite their significant on-farm input, they appear to have only limited responsibility or decision-making capabilities.

Astrid illustrated the issue of input not being mirrored by agency for partnered women. She discussed her position as a ‘farmhand’, saying “If Frank asks me to do something [on the farm], I’ll do it, and I won’t grizzle. I generally enjoy doing it.” As a helper, Astrid is complying with her husband’s request for assistance and she just gets on with the job without complaining. This reinforces findings in Section 5.3, that irrespective of what they are doing, women do not complain about the type of work or their lack of recognition for undertaking it, as they are focussed on the farm and not themselves.

Astrid’s comment suggests that she has limited on-farm agency. But, despite their marginalised subject positions, many farm women indicated that they exercise some agency in relation to on-farm work with a degree of choice over the work they do. For example Jackie, living and working on a high country sheep station, recognised some influence over her work:

> As far as my jobs go, I’m quite driven by the weather, whether it is inside or outside, and also how the mood takes me. I am a farmer of chosen things. I choose what I do now. I do call myself a farmer, but of selective things, and I love going out and doing farming work.

Jackie articulated more choice than Astrid. Similarly, Marie emphasises some on-farm agency, also narrated as choice:

> I’ve lived here ever since we’ve been married and I’ve always been brought up on a farm so I suppose it’s in my blood. I quite like it. It’s the freedom; there’s a choice you can do things. You know I can go out and work with
Mathew during the day if I want to. I quite often go out and spend a day on
the farm doing things and I quite enjoy that.

Marie’s agency is linked to choice and the autonomy to work on the farm, or not. However, she also indicated that she is in a support role, which suggests her agency is limited. While she may not have the agency that she had as an off-farm professional (Section 5.1.2), she appreciates the freedom associated within family farming, taking pleasure in being able to choose her on-farm work which she obviously enjoys, irrespective of whether it is positioned as ‘helping’ or not.

In contrast, Josie’s experience sits somewhere between Astrid’s and Marie’s. She narrated both a minor ‘support’ position and aspects of choice. She commented, “I’m happy in a supporting role, doing what I’m doing and I just think I’ve got a choice every day.” Josie’s supportive role reinforces her subordinate position and reduces her agency within the family farm, but for Josie the freedom to make some choices everyday is an important source of agency.

Overall, it is evident that farm women are significant contributors to on-farm production, and that they generally enjoy this endeavour. Many consider they have the autonomy to choose what they wish to do and when, but this is limited in the broader context whereby they are still only fulfilling the subject position of helper on the farm, only able to mobilise limited agency within the productive sphere of the farm.

Farm women’s limited agency is also demonstrated when examining who has the sole responsibility for tasks on the family farm. Figure 6.11 shows, on average, from both the male and female perspectives, the percentage of on-farm tasks that the partners have responsibility for. On average, across all male participants, farm men perceive that they are solely responsible for 60% of on-farm tasks whilst farm women have no sole responsibility for any on-farm tasks. Likewise, farm women perceive that males are solely responsible for 56% of on-farm tasks, whilst they only have limited sole responsibility for on-farm tasks. This indicates that whilst the labour input of farm women is high, the degree of sole responsibility and its associated agency is constrained.

The lack of agency attributed to women for task responsibility is also reflected in their level of input into decision-making for on-farm tasks. Figure 6.12 shows that both men and women share the view that farm women have no sole responsibility for decisions made on the farm. Any involvement in the decision-making process is in a shared
FIGURE 6.11: Average on-farm task responsibility by gender and perspective
Source: Partnered interview one - record sheet three (October 2004 – June 2005)

FIGURE 6.12: On-farm decision-making by gender and perspective
Source: Partnered interview one - record sheet four (October 2004 – June 2005)
capacity. Conversely, farm men are perceived by both men and women to be solely responsible for at least 50% of the decisions made. Partnered women have no autonomy to make decisions regarding on-farm production; their contribution is only in a shared capacity, although as Jean emphasised their opinion is not always noted. She explained, "Well I suppose I have accepted that he's really making the decisions on the property. I mean, I'll always say something, but usually the decision has been made." Jean has a say, which may give her a sense of agency, but in reality her partner is invalidating this by making decisions irrespective of what Jean says.

Overall, partnered women narratives (and record sheet responses) accentuate the lack of agency attributed to them within the context of on-farm work. Most of their agency is confined to being able to make decisions about what they do and when; insignificant compared to the decisions concerning on-farm production made by the male farmer. This discussion reinforces Saugere's (2002a; 2002b) findings that irrespective of what partnered women do on a property, they will not be granted recognition, legitimisation or agency as a capable on-farm producer because they are a woman.

6.2.2 Household agency

It has been well documented in previous chapters and in the wider literature that farm women are important on the family farm, but frequently find themselves performing marginalised tasks within the household in their positions as wives, mothers and caregivers. In particular, Chapter Five highlighted the level of input women contributed to the home, with all interviewees having a full-time commitment to their household responsibilities. Previous data also showed that independent farm women, such as Kate (4.3.2), have greater household agency because they have complete responsibility for household tasks and decision-making, and they do not appear to subscribe fully to discourses of domesticity. The following sub-section will compare the level of responsibility that partnered women have for household tasks, with the agency that they can mobilise within that context.

The majority of farm women in partnership acknowledge how they are relegated to the home throughout their narratives, recognising their constricted spatial boundaries. Christine lives on an isolated high country station and explained how she is restricted to the homestead, "Malcolm, my husband, does most of the outside work. I am 'expected' to feed the workers and keep the home and grounds tidy." Christine's subject position and spatial agency are limited by her husband's expectations. Similarly, Ngaire noted a
traditional gender division, “My husband does most of the farming tasks. My role is within the farm gate”. Her boundary is clearly delineated, representing the division between the productive and the reproductive spheres of the farm. Lastly, Jackie is the only woman out of the three who sensed some control of her space. She commented, “Mostly Simon does or instructs who does the farm jobs. I’m in charge of the house/garden area.” Unlike Christine and Ngaire, who indicate that they are assigned their tasks and role, Jackie suggested that she has agency through her control of her space. However, Jackie’s comments need to be read alongside earlier narratives (Section 6.1.2) that show her husband’s financial control and opinion that the house and garden are not productive parts of the farm. This contradictory narrative indicates how a woman’s sense of agency also varies depending on the emphasis and context of her reflections.

Cumulatively, the women’s narratives highlight how they are expected to be within the household performing domestic tasks. Consigning women to the home is constricting their agency as the tasks that they are expected to undertake are associated with secondary caregiver and support positions. Coupled with a woman’s compliance with dominant discourses to ensure the survival of the family farm rather than her own ambitions, it means that many farm women do not have the opportunity to make changes to their own discursive position and agency.

Christine demonstrated how constrained a woman can be in her efforts to comply with discursive and family farming expectations. Her narrative previously expressed angst over her husband’s expectations that she feeds the workers and keeps the home and grounds tidy. Complying with these expectations has limited her agency by preventing her involvement with on-farm tourism activities. She explained:

> Whilst there is huge potential for tourism via bed and breakfast accommodation, at this stage I ... [because] it would have to be me ... am not prepared to do it because I am tired of cooking farm meals and catering for others.

In fulfilling her initial on-farm responsibilities to family, her ability to pursue other agency-enhancing opportunities is removed. This reflects the findings of Shortall (1992) who noted that the power of dominant discourses is reinforced because farm women have not been privy to alternative discourses which may have empowered them. Christine is “tired” of her household responsibilities and would like to be involved with something else. But this is unlikely to happen given her husband’s response when he
was asked why they each performed the tasks they do. Malcolm replied, “It is a best match of skills with tasks and traditional roles.”

It is evident that many partnered farm women would not be involved with their daily household chores if they had the choice. Jean stated resolutely, “I would rather be outside ... I know the inside stuff has to get done, but I would prefer to be outside,” and Hazel emphasised that if it were not for her tourism activity, and if she was confined exclusively to being a ‘farmer’s wife’ she would, “Go mad!” Similarly, Lorraine exclaimed, “I’m a basic sort of house cleaner ... I mean my primary interest is the actual livestock. That’s what my focus is on.” Lastly, Marie declared that, “I’m not in the kitchen all of the time. I’m only there the time I need to be.” These narratives emphasise that partnered farm women undertake the household responsibilities because of subject position expectations, not because they want to. Not only are they physically situated in the home, they are also socially bound by discursively articulated obligations. Both forms of confinement restrict the agency of women on family farms, reinforcing no: only their invisibility (Section 5.1.3), but also their focus on the family farm and not themselves (Section 4.2.1).

Supporting these findings regarding the dominant expectations about partnered women’s work in the home, Figure 6.13 shows who, by gender, has sole responsibility for household tasks, from the perspective of women and men participants farming in partnership. Despite all women interviewees having full-time input into the housework, these data show women do not have sole responsibility for all of the household tasks. On average across all male participants, farm men perceive that their partners have sole responsibility for 82% of household tasks, whereas (on average) farm women consider that they are only solely responsible for 66% of household tasks. The disparity between these figures and the women’s lower response indicates that women do not consider that they have total responsibility for the tasks to which they have been discursively assigned. Furthermore, it indicates that their partners are not aware of this. Implications of this extend to the women’s sense of agency. That women consider they lack sole responsibility implies that even within their main sphere of operation, they feel agency is qualified by expectations and requirements of their partner.

Further reinforcing why the women feel a lack of responsibility for household tasks is evident when examining who makes the household decisions from the perspective of both men and women (Figure 6.14). Whereas farm men are solely responsible for on-
FIGURE 6.13: Average household task responsibility by gender and perspective
Source: Partnered interview one - record sheet three (October 2004 – June 2005)

FIGURE 6.14: Household decision-making by gender and perspective
Source: Partnered interview one - record sheet four (October 2004 – June 2005)
farm decision-making, farm women are not solely responsible for household decision-making despite having a full-time level of input. Their input, and also levels of responsibility are not reflected by their decision-making agency. In addition, a difference in the perception of how much agency each partner has is present between men and women. Farm women indicated that they are solely responsible for 40% of the household decisions made, but male farmers indicate that women are responsible for 55% of the decisions. Farm women’s perceptions underline the influence of male partners within the household/reproductive sphere. Within the context of household agency, farm women lack agency in the space to which they are consigned because their male partners are involved in what is happening, despite a low-level of male household input. This suggests that both the reproductive and productive spheres of the family farm are intrinsically linked, whereby main household decisions are strongly influenced to farming activities. As Christine elaborated, “Household daily operations are influenced hugely by what’s going on, on the farm.” Hence, as farming decisions are primarily the domain of the male, he will also influence what is happening in the household.

Overall, it is evident that partnered women lack agency in the household space to which they are assigned on the family farm. Not only do partnered women perceive that they are not ascribed authority, by being responsible for tasks and decision-making, they consider that they are regularly unable to make decisions by themselves. This simultaneously weakens their own agency whilst increasing the agency of their partner, as he has a significant input into not only on-farm responsibilities, but also household responsibilities.

6.2.3 Summary
Section 6.2 has explored partnered farm women’s narratives to document the agency that they are able to mobilise. In addition, it has highlighted the discrepancies in responses from men and women farming in partnership, identifying who is responsible for tasks and decision-making in both the productive and reproductive spheres of the farm. These differences indicate that despite their considerable input to both areas, partnered women are not able to mobilise agency as they are not attributed with significant task or decision-making responsibility.

In addition, there are significant discrepancies between how much task and decision-making responsibility women perceive they have, compared with male perceptions.
Generally, women perceive less sole responsibility than men give them credit for. This suggests that men do not recognise that women feel constrained by a lack of autonomy. Furthermore, women perceive they share task and decision-making responsibility more often, whereas males are more likely to make individual decisions. This reinforces the breadth of agency that males have across operations in family farming and how the limited agency of partnered farm women is the product of their inferior discursive position and the dominance of males in the context of family farming. Malcolm, who outlined his decision-making philosophy, reinforced this:

> For most of our decision-making, whether it is for the family or whether it’s for the farm, we are both involved on an equal basis. Sometimes I feel that she has got too much to say and sometimes she clearly thinks that I have. But it is hard, hard work and I think that if you are looking for efficiency maybe one has got to dominate, you’ve got to have one dominant person; I suppose it’s an argument about dictatorship or democracy. A dictatorship is more efficient and faster than a democracy. I think I have got it right!

Generally, it is evident from the narratives and survey responses of farm women and men that despite women having a high level of input into the reproductive and productive operations of the family farm, they do not possess parallel levels of agency. While this study emphasises the diversity of women’s (and men’s) experiences, the example of Malcolm’s perspective suggests women’s agency is often constrained by male attitudes and dominance, and the quest for farm efficiency. It is also evident that farm men are ignorant of how women perceive their levels of agency. This in-turn perpetuates the lowly position of farm women because male ignorance of how women perceive their low agency removes any need to make changes to family farm operations to enhance female agency.

### 6.3 Relationship agency between farming partners

A central part of traditional family farming is the ‘co-operation’ between spouses. In reality, women are reluctant to challenge the traditional husband-wife dynamics to ensure the continued survival of the farm, thus resigning themselves to a life of limited agency (Alston, 1995; Oldrup, 1999; Brandth, 2002b). The following section aims to investigate the agency between farming partners using narratives from both men and women, in an effort to document how a woman’s position influences her agency within the relationship and whether she is able to utilise her multitude of subject positions to influence her partner.
Thus far, Chapter Six has highlighted the limited agency that farm women are able to mobilise from their subject positions and how this differs with the agency of their partners, both in terms of productive and reproductive contributions to the farm. As the previous two results chapters have documented, women are positioned by dominant discourses that position them into inferior, secondary subject positions. Their active responses and expressions of identity in response to these discourses reflect these influences, in particular their dedication to ensuring the family farm's survival. Women are demonstrably a very important and influential component of the farm. But women's agency, particularly that of partnered women, is not representative of their input. This infers that women have neither the capacity nor the influence, through agency, to implement their intent to ensure that the family farm survives. According to previous research findings, and readings of narratives in this study, this is not the case. Women are able to facilitate the continuation of the family farm through their endeavours. This implies that they do, in fact, mobilise agency, although not necessarily to their individual advantage.

To help reconcile this disparity between agency and influence in the family farming context, the concept 'agency' needs to be broadened to accommodate the dynamic, multi-faceted manifestations of farm women's agency. Davies (1990) documented that individuals gain agency through their ability to recognise and act upon options, and to legitimately speak and be heard. Furthermore, agency refers not to an individual's intentions but to their capacity to carry these out, which is why agency implies power (Giddens, 1984, cited in Hartman, 1991). From this perspective, farm women have limited agency. Farm women and their input are not legitimately acknowledged or recognised because of the dominant masculine and patriarchal discourses within which their contribution is situated. However, despite their lack of acknowledgment, farm women are very influential. They are a significant authority on the farm through their social and economic contributions. Arguably, farms would not survive as effectively or efficiently without the efforts of women; therefore they are exercising agency through alternative means.

To account for the influence of women in sustaining their family farm, the concept of agency will be broadened to involve 'direct agency' and 'indirect agency' (introduced in Section 6.1) Direct agency reflects Davies' (1990) view whereby women who recognise options and mobilise their resources to be heard, have direct agency. It is an explicit form of agency associated with the direct involvement in any actions, responsibilities or
decision-making on the family farm. Farm men have considerable ‘direct agency’ because they are positioned in key roles on the family farm, within an agricultural sector that supports structures of domination that ensure that farm women remain subordinate (Liepins, 1998; Brandth, 2002b). Some women can mobilise direct agency and a capacity to act legitimately in relation to certain identities such as the president of a local organisation. Indirect agency is a form of implicit agency that women employ to achieve their objectives. Whilst women lack the overt power associated with having responsibility for on-farm and household tasks and decision-making, they are still having an influence on what is happening on the family farm. From their different subject positions as wife, farm helper, supporter and mother, women are able to mobilise indirect agency through supporting, and making suggestions to, the legitimised agency holder, the male farmer.

Narrative data from male farmers highlighted the influence that farm women have on their partners from the male’s point of view (Table 6.1). This research has found that the males interviewed recognise that their partners influence them by providing moral support, cognitive clarity, and a moderating effect. For men such as Doug and Simon, their partner provides moral support and reassurance. For instance, Doug suggested that Mary’s presence has enabled him to expand the farm business. Likewise, Jackie provides Simon with important emotional support by listening to him after he has had a difficult day on the farm. Other women assert more of a cognitive influence where they contribute different perspectives, strategies and ideas and provide alternative options that are considered before their partner makes the final decision. Gordon highlighted Edna’s ability to articulate her opinions clearly, providing him with important, alternative perspectives during the decision-making process. Lastly, many women provide a ‘reality check’, reminding their partners about the practicalities of their situation, which in turn moderates their partners’ decisions. Brian, Matthew, and Patrick highlighted the stabilising influence of their partner, suggesting that their spouse is able to focus and settle them because women have a more holistic perspective of the family farm.

Overall, farm men emphasised that their ability to have discussions with their female partner, enables them to make better decisions, and this is occurring across a range of farming circumstances, from extensive high country sheep stations to smaller, intensive pastoral properties. Consequently, through these talks women are indirectly influencing their partners and the decisions made, thereby mobilising indirect agency.
### TABLE 6.1: Indirect female influences from their male partner’s perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Influence</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Source farm size (hectares)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral support</td>
<td>Some are very involved in the running of the farms but others like Alice provide moral support.</td>
<td>Terry</td>
<td>28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A lot of things I've done, without her I couldn't have done. We couldn't have expanded without her. She is mainly a supportive rather than driving role.</td>
<td>Doug</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And when things don’t go to well during the day it is good to come home and have a grizzle.</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>10,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive capabilities</td>
<td>She’s influenced me with her positive coaching talks ... she has been a shot of positive enthusiasm. Her clear thought processes, when I have got fifty things to think about, means she can come in independently with some clear thinking, not my own tunnel vision.</td>
<td>Gordon</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She thinks differently I suppose, she is always contributing something different.</td>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She is a driver, a strategic thinker, always moving on and dragging me along with her.</td>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If I had a hare brained scheme she would put some sort of reality on it.</td>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marie has had a major influence, a stabilising influence.</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She made me more financially savvy and she asks 'Why do we do what we do?', which makes us stop and think.</td>
<td>Warwick</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderating influence</td>
<td>If I get some hare brained ideas she brings it back to reality ... she's got some very practical and sensible ideas ... so between us the decision making is a shared thing.</td>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women are absolutely essential... I wouldn’t want to do it without my woman! I would have probably been a dumpy old musterer or stockman or something if I didn’t have my woman. She’s settled me down a lot; she’s focussed me a lot on my career in farming probably</td>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview two (October 2004 – June 2005); Postal survey (October – December 2004)
Chapter Six

Agency

Farm women narratives indicate that they are aware of their capacity to mobilise agency through the process of discussion. Table 6.2 presents some of these data. In particular, this research shows that daily talks are being used as the central method of communication, whereby both partners are able to support each other in making day-to-day management and operational decisions. Whether it is as a provider of reassurance for their partner, alternative suggestions, or a reality check, women are also emphasising that discussion is an important aspect of their partnership. Hazel, in particular, highlighted how important her position is within her partnership with Barry. Despite being perceived as a farmer’s wife, Hazel articulates this as a significant position with the capacity to generate agency because she provides the foundation that enables her partner to farm effectively. Overall, it is evident across a range of farming circumstances that despite their subservient positions, women are aware that are able to exercise agency through indirectly influencing the direction and manner in which decisions are finally made.

Both men’s and women’s narratives highlight the indirect agency that farm women exercise through discussion. Whilst they do not have the sole responsibility for making decisions, particularly on-farm decisions, most farm women are facilitating a discussion process prior to decisions being made. This contribution is also important as it enables women to gain a sense of influence as she employs her indirect agency. As Janet stressed, there is a general lack of awareness of how influential farm women are within farming partnerships stating, “I think there’s a lot of urban New Zealanders that probably don’t understand, or want to understand, the input and the influence that the female partner of a farming partnership actually has.” Not only is it important for women to gain an awareness of their influence on the farm, the broader community needs to acknowledge not only the physical input of women to family farming, but also their cognitive and the emotional input as well.

In addition, it must be noted that 71% of farming partners are farming on the male’s, inherited family farms. The men have lived there and have been involved in the management and decision-making processes, for a significant part of their lives. For many men, farming is a very deeply embedded and insular existence and it is an identity that they consider their own. Having female partners exercise direct agency through having task responsibility and/or making decisions, when men are used to sole farming responsibility, would be unfamiliar. Therefore, women are more likely to contribute via indirect agency through their subject positions, providing assistance and support that
TABLE 6.2: Indirect female influences from their perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Influence</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Interview Source</th>
<th>Farm size (hectares)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>We bounce off each other all the time and we change our perspective from each other ... he talks about everything now, he is much more open.</td>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We discuss most things together and I value his opinions ... doesn't mean to say I always agree with it ... but we discuss things and work things out.</td>
<td>Marilyn</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It's a partnership thing ... we do talk about things.</td>
<td>Bea</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily discussions with your partner are very important so each one knows what is happening. Particularly so I know what is happening, where he is and what he's doing</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you don't communicate, and make the daily discussions with your partner you live in a wee tunnel and the other one doesn't know what you are thinking and you don't know what they're thinking</td>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He is always keen to discuss things and I guess we sort of plan the things he likes to do on the farm.</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>1577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>I am making a significant contribution to the whole economic well being of this unit. I mean, what keeps that farm stable? Barry's got to have the infrastructure right to be able to be a good farmer and if someone is nurturing that infrastructure, keeping it right, then the whole farm ticks</td>
<td>Hazel</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'm fairly organised in my mind and so I look at the big picture so I've probably made him think about the future more.</td>
<td>Josie</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview two (October 2004 – June 2005); Postal survey (October – December 2004)
does not threaten the traditional position of "farmer", nor does it threaten the cooperation inherent within the farming marital relationship. Their input, however, is invaluable in providing direction, reassurance and guidance for the farm men as they go about making decisions and managing the property.

In summary, agency within the family farming context is highly variable because of the complex and diverse components of family farming. Static and singular definitions of agency do not allow for the complexities of this family-based production unit. Farm women recognise many options for themselves but often choose not to act upon them as this may compromise the overall goal of family farm survival. Partnered farm women, such as those noted in Section 6.2, frequently occupy marginalised positions on the farm, performing tasks that are far beneath their intellect and skill levels. They perform them because that is how they can facilitate the survival of the farm. Thus, in their own indirect way, farm women are significant. Women may not demonstrate agency within the strict definition of the word, but they are not powerless. They are achieving their objectives through the navigation and prioritisation of various aspects of their lives through the means available from their constricted subject positions.

6.4 Conclusions

This chapter has built on the findings of Chapters Four and Five by relating them to the agency of farm women. In particular, this chapter was guided by the question of how the discursive positioning of farm women influences their agency. Chapters Four and Five have documented that women are discursively positioned by dominant discourses that ensure their subordinate positions, and their responses reflect the subjectivities positioning them. Based on these findings, it could have been expected that farm women would have limited agency because of their lack of recognition and legitimacy within the masculine world of family farming. But this chapter indicates women exercise agency individually (Section 6.1), in relation to the farm (Section 6.2) and in particular, in relation to farming partners where present (Section 6.3).

From the outset, narratives and written responses of farm women and men have reinforced the assumption that the agency of partnered woman (on the farm, and in the household), is not in proportion to their level of input into both key areas of the farm’s operation. This is primarily the result of their discursive positioning within an agricultural sector which has marginalised the position of women for generations. But farm women’s agency is not static; it varies considerably for each individual woman.
and between women, across a number of dimensions. Socially, many farm women gain agency when they operate away from the constraints of the farm undertaking different positions within different discursive constructs, such as in off-farm employment (teacher) or in organisational involvement (club president). Here their agency may be very high, although this period of high agency is only temporary. This research also showed that farm women in partnerships with men, possess limited on-farm agency, reflecting the inferior, constricted discursive positions reserved for women, such as a mother, a wife and a farm helper. In further contrast, single independent farm women are able to exercise significant agency due to the status and power accrued from owning and operating their own property. Spatially, farm women’s agency varies too. In most partnerships, women possess most of the agency in the home. However, this may be marginalised by the presence of a partner, on-farm operations and other subjectivities that may prevail depending on who is present in the home and kitchen and what the space is being used for. In contrast, independent farm women have greater agency on their own property, both inside and on the property. Although once they are off their farm, they are still subject to gender constructs operating in broader spatial spheres.

Importantly, there is a discrepancy between men and women in how much agency they attribute to themselves and their partners. This suggests that men might be more willing to attribute more autonomy to women if they were aware of how their partners felt. This is an area that warrants further investigation, as it would have significant implications for the lives of farm women.

Significantly too, by studying the diversity of farm women, it is clear that agency is qualitatively different in different circumstances. This is highlighted by studying independently operating women who, whilst facing an unevenly gendered industry, are able to demonstrate considerable direct agency. Furthermore, this direct agency is much harder to articulate for partnered women. In their case, agency needs to be appreciated in its indirect form where it is not mobilised for their own benefit but it nevertheless is articulated. Women’s agency in partnership is most clearly evident in communication, discussion and wise moderation of the farm – for the benefit of its ongoing operation; albeit in an unevenly gendered state.
Chapter 7  Conclusions

This thesis contributes to the established literature on women in family farming. It has explored the diversity of women’s experiences, while also highlighting their importance as facilitators of family farm survival, the dominant form of primary production in Western agriculture. In particular, it has identified the traditional, dominant discourses positioning women in ways that normalise gender inequalities. Nevertheless the thesis has also shown that women are able to exercise significant influence and input into facilitating the future of their family farm.

This study has been committed to better appreciating the heterogeneity of farm women. It has shown that farm women are an extremely diverse and highly capable cohort who not only deal with the vagrancies of the land and weather, but also its people and traditional subjectivities. These are women who: climb the side of a mountain to clean the station homestead’s hydro-power generator (Jackie); battle snow and rain during lambing and then warm up the new born lambs in the kitchen oven (Fiona); fly themselves from the farm to work after preparing meals for the ‘boys’ at 4am (Jean); commute for two hours to watch their child play a hockey game or have a music lesson (Jessica); or do without a family holiday for fourteen years due to the demands of the family farm (Edna). This study emphasises that these partnered and independent women are the unsung heroines of family farming. They undertake whatever is required of them to ensure that the family farm continues for eternity.

This chapter draws the study to a close. In doing so, the first section synthesises the findings and arguments presented in Chapters Four to Six, discussing them in relation to the research questions first established in Chapter One. Then follows an account of how the study relates to existing wider academic knowledge on farm women. Specifically, it charts the affirmations, contributions and challenges this study brings to the literature of women in family farming, and to the broader field of rural gender research (Section 7.2). Lastly, the chapter concludes by identifying a number of recommendations for future research, within the area of gendered, rural and farm research (Section 7.3).
7.1 Summary of findings

In exploring the discourses and agency which characterise the lives of farm women, this thesis first identified key themes from previous research highlighting the importance of farm women in family farming, the inequalities which prevail within farm households, and the disjuncture in understanding between feminist academics, and farm women, regarding the apparently subservient position of women in family farming (Chapter Two). This review supported the development of post-structural, feminist research design which employed in-depth interviews to gather narratives from partnered and independent farm women (Chapter Three). This primarily qualitative approach enabled the women (and their partners where present) to provide a more detailed account of their lives. The results of this study were then presented in Chapters Four to Six.

Chapter Four was guided by the first research question which sought to document the dominant discourses shaping the lives of farm women. Two main groups of discourses were identified as forming the framework in which farm women live and work. First, positioning discourses were identified. These discourses of domesticity, femininity and care-giving situate women in traditional subject positions such as farmer’s wife, mother, domestic worker and farm hand. These positions highlight how women generally undertake menial tasks deemed to be less important than those completed by the male ‘farmer’. Throughout their lives the women have been exposed to these positioning discourses that are also constantly reinforced, legitimised and maintained by the contextualising discourses prevailing within the farming sector. This second group of discourses were classified because of broader constructions of meaning and subjectivity surrounding masculinity, family farming and patriarchy, which contextualise the lives and experiences of farm women. These discourses interact, whereby notions of patriarchy also support family farming discourses and legitimise certain forms of masculinity. Overall, it is the discourses of family farming which place greatest expectations on farm women requiring them to facilitate the future continuation of the family farm.

These findings, on the generic level, underline that farm women in Southern New Zealand live and operate within a composite discursive framework that shapes and sustains expectations and constraints for women in family farming. However, it is a mistake to assume that all women are influenced equally by positioning and contextualising discourses. Instead, the case study approach highlighted how the
influence of dominant discourses varies between women depending on their lived realities.

Chapter Five expanded on the findings of Chapter Four, investigating how farm women responded to the dominant discourses. First, active responses focussed on the on-farm, household and off-farm work of women (Section 5.1.1). Farm women were found to comply with dominant discourses by undertaking an extensive range of work, in both the social reproduction and primary production spheres of family farming.

The undertaking of household work demonstrates a compliance with discourses of domesticity and femininity. All women in this study had full-time input into the reproductive sphere; most women expressed pride in their family, home and its surrounds. In contrast, men had a low level of input into household tasks, regarding domestic activity as ‘women’s work’. Likewise, farm women undertook care-giving work associated with nurturing subjectivities by becoming mothers, and through their support of partners and extended family members.

In addition to their household commitments, farm women also make a high level contribution to on-farm labour. This requires women to increase their workload, often sacrificing their own careers and interests to ensure that both on-farm and reproductive/domestic work is completed for the sake of the family farm. In undertaking on-farm work, women are challenging discourses of femininity because many of the tasks are not perceived to be ‘feminine’ or suitable for physically weaker women. This includes tasks such as lifting hay bales and manoeuvring livestock. Such active responses show that women are making decisions. These may challenge some discourses, such as femininity, to fulfil other more important discursive expectations, such as facilitating farm survival. Overall, these findings have emphasised the fact that farm women do have the capacity to make some choices; they are not placidly complying with all of the subjectivities in their lives.

Gaining off-farm work (or not) has been interpreted as a form of active response. For some women, gaining off-farm work provided additional income to pay for family needs, therefore serving as a compliant response to the discourses prioritising family farming. Off-farm work was also performed in addition to their on-farm and household work. Importantly, choosing not to undertake off-farm work was also identified as an active response, as the majority of women studied chose to remain on the farm, to focus solely on their on-farm and household responsibilities. This reinforces the idea that farm
women are prepared to sacrifice personal opportunities, prioritising the farm’s needs over their own in order to facilitate the survival of the family farm.

Women’s *expressive responses* to discourses were also identified; via a study of the choices and narratives surrounding farm women’s identity (Section 5.2). These responses were classified ‘expressive’ since it was recognised that the majority of farm women indicated that they were ‘farmers’, which contradicts the meanings and practices of the dominant discourses framing their lives. However, many women were not confident in using this label, some experiencing considerable anguish in expressing this occupational identity. The identity of ‘farmer’ is traditionally associated with strong, outdoors, men, not women. Nevertheless, women are increasingly claiming this identity to describe their on-farm and household input to the family farm, which in their opinion is more than just being a ‘farmer’s wife’. But, in addition, there are also farm women who are content with their supportive subject position, and the occupational identity of ‘farmer’s wife’ or ‘housewife’. This indicates that a broad spectrum of identities is expressed by farm women, once again reflecting their diversity. Still further complexity was identified, for some women who are confident to identify as ‘farmers’ also assert that they are not ‘women farmers’, in some instances challenging femininity subjectivities to gain legitimacy within the masculine dominated environment of farming.

Women’s responses to the dominant discourses analysed in Chapter Five highlights both women’s individual diversity and contrasting farm realities in which they live. Some women actively comply fully with the prevailing subjectivities, such as Sandra (Section 5.2.2) who identified, and worked as, a ‘housewife’. Others challenged them in many ways, such as Jo (Section 5.3), an independent farm owner/operator. Importantly, the expressive responses of women who identified as farmers, contradicts their active work performed in accordance with domesticity and femininity discourses. Overall, both the active and expressive responses of all women in this study reinforce their commitment to the survival of the family farm, and the underlying ethos that family farming is not a place for self-realisation.

Lastly, Chapter Six used the findings of the previous chapters to investigate how the discursive positioning of farm women influenced their agency. Chapter Six initially highlighted the diversity of socially and spatially varied agency. Comparing the agency between independent and partnered farm women highlighted their contrasting
experiences of agency across different dimensions. Following on, Chapter Six emphasised the discrepancy between the level of input into both the household and on-farm spheres, and the agency that farm women are able to mobilise through task responsibility and decision-making. Furthermore, the chapter recognised that a woman's sense of agency varied depending on the emphasis and context of her reflections. Overall, these findings stressed the relationship between the inferior discursive positioning of farm women and their limited agency. Consequently, the conclusion was made that the subordinate discursive positioning of many farm women, particularly partnered women, has a negative influence on their agency. However, this conclusion does not reflect the importance of farm women in facilitating the survival of the family farm emphasised in current and previous research, which infers that farm women can mobilise agency and influence family farm management despite their inferior positioning.

Further investigation of the narratives of the farm women (and men) in Section 6.3 analysed how partnered women have the capacity to influence the management of the family farm from their secondary discursive positions. Agency, therefore, is not solely mobilised by the individual with the most overt power. Importantly, this highlights that agency is a highly variable, multi-faceted concept that can be expressed by farm women circuitously, thus providing them with power not previously recognised. Subsequently this led to a broadening of the concept of agency to include direct agency and indirect agency; the latter being manifestations of agency which account for the influence of farm women on their family farm via their relationships with partners.

Overall, this thesis argues that there are two groups of dominant discourses that shape the lives of farm women. These impose subjectivities on women to which they respond actively, and expressively, in order to ensure that the family farm survives. From their frequently less valued discursive positions, women have limited agency. It is evident that while independent and partnered women’s opportunities and actions vary, some women are able to mobilise direct, independent forms of agency, while others articulate indirect agency by utilising their supportive positions to influence the management and operation of the family farm.

By utilising a context sensitive, post-structural approach rather than the generic focus used in many previous studies, this thesis makes an important contribution to the literature on farm women and agency. It has achieved this by focussing on both the
Chapter Seven

Conclusions

constrained context in which farm women live their lives, and the diversity that exists within this group of women. Consequently, these findings provide an advance on previous accounts of farm women and contribute to the broader realm of rural gender research by providing greater insight and understanding into how farm women are discursively positioned and their responses and the agency they can mobilise from a context which does not allow them absolute freedom. The following section will now focus on these contributions.

7.2 Contributions to academic debate

The conceptual character of this study originates from a range of disciplines, including: social and rural geography, and wider gender and agency studies. This study both affirms and challenges these literatures, whilst also contributing new depths of understanding and nuances of meaning in certain areas. This section outlines some of these details with reference to specific concepts, themes and literatures.

7.2.1 Affirmations of wider literature

As reviewed in Chapter Two, there is a breadth of understanding regarding women on family farms and this study affirms many of these findings garnered over time. It reaffirms the importance of women's on and off-farm work to the survival of family farming; a theme that has been clearly outlined by previous feminist work (Sachs, 1983; Whatmore, 1991a; O'Hara, 1998; Shortall, 1999; Bennett, 2006). Furthermore, it reinforces the identification of gender inequalities within farming households, highlighted in earlier studies, are still present (Sachs, 1983; Fink, 1991; Alston, 1995). As with these previous works, family farming in Southern New Zealand demonstrates that men continue to have the main responsibility for farm tasks and decision-making, whilst partnered women are seen to have lesser positions and decision-making opportunities. These uneven gender relations continue to reflect the power relations between men and women in partnered situations; a theme that has been well established in past studies (Bouquet, 1982; Whatmore, 1991a; Shortall, 1992; Brandth, 2002a). Similarly, as previous research in Australia, Ireland and United States has shown (Sachs, 1983; Alston, 1995; Shortall, 1999), the position and work of farm women are still largely unrecognised and undervalued.

Beyond early literature on work and power issues, this thesis has especially concentrated on post-structural analyses of gender in farming; engaging with a number of recent themes. In particular, the study’s documentation of the inferior subject
positions of farm women underlines how dominant gender discourses are normalised within farming and agriculture (Liepins and Schick, 1998; Saugeres, 2002a; Brandth, 2006). Furthermore, this thesis has highlighted how discourses can be classified to better appreciate how they shape the lives of farm women. ‘Positioning’ and ‘contextualising’ discourses were categories used to demonstrate how women are constructed as good supportive mothers, domestics and community members who work hard to sustain the family farm (see also Little, 1997a; Liepins, 1998; Morris and Evans, 2001; Heather et al., 2005), while the farmers are men (Brandth, 2002b; Alston, 2004). This study has also found that some farm women appear to be expressing identities not conducive to their discursive positioning, such as partnered and independent farm women, for instance Jessica and Beth, who use the occupational identity of ‘farmer’ (Section 5.2.2). These women appear to be moving beyond homogenous male and female categories, although some interviewed women struggle with using the identity of ‘farmer’, thus reinforcing the influence of the normalisation of masculinist farming discourses.

This study also reaffirms the findings of past studies that women accept their subordinate position to facilitate the continuation of the family farm (Grace and Lennie, 1998; Brandth, 2002b; Heather et al., 2005). Furthermore, in some cases women are exercising their own power to perpetuate their subordinate positions (Shortall, 1992). For instance, some women have also been shown to undertake on-farm and off-farm responsibilities, in addition to their domestic tasks, knowing that their workloads will increase as their partners are reluctant to do ‘women’s work’ (Kelly and Shortall, 2002; Bennett, 2004). However, as this study has also reinforced, despite the high level of input by women into on-farm and household work, it is the farm male that has the overall responsibility for tasks and decision-making due to the dominant discourses which prevail within family farming.

This thesis has also reinforced previous literature regarding New Zealand farm women. Historically strong themes such as the importance of family and future generations, gendered labour relations and the boundaries of appropriate womanly behaviour have endured. However, it is also evident that New Zealand’s farm women continue to fulfil crucial positions on family farms. Moreover, women continue to challenge feminine subjectivities by performing a range of on-farm tasks to ensure the survival of the family farm. Furthermore, the presence of independent farm women indicates that some societal change has occurred. Women can now own and run their own property, despite
farming still being a male dominated industry. Most importantly, this study recognises the diversity within New Zealand's farm women. It has identified and reflected upon the diverse and multiple experiences of farm women derived from their individual contexts. Moreover, it reinforces the apparent contentment that some women experience with their lifestyle, despite their continued lack of recognition and invisibility within family farming. Both issues warrant further investigation.

Furthermore, this research has shown that farm women, through their discursive positions, are able to influence what is happening on the family farm by supporting their partners through discussions and advice. While it is evident that the men are still mainly responsible for the tasks and the decisions made, more emphasis has to be placed on the degree of influence women have from their lesser subject positions. Through focusing on the narratives of both partners and the diversity of women, the understanding of agency as a concept has been enhanced, appearing to be far more dynamic than outlined in earlier agency literature (Section 2.3.4)

Overall, this study has reinforced many key findings of previous research. However, this research also sought to redress the fact that many previous studies did not take into account the diversities present between women, which have concealed various subtleties regarding the critical realities of farm women. Consequently, this thesis also closes with some challenges and extensions to the existing literature.

7.2.2 Challenges and contributions to wider literature
Past research has documented important generic findings regarding farm women, particularly since the advent of in-depth, micro-scale approaches by researchers such as Whatmore (1991a). However, a greater critical awareness of the realities, experiences and negotiations of farm women on family farms is required using more recent analytical tools. This study signifies a new level of research and knowledge, whereby deeper understandings of the diversity of farm women's discursive contexts and experiences are actively sought and studied in relation to a broad range of different social, spatial and temporal dimensions.

This thesis has been explicitly designed to register diversity between independent and partnered farm women, and a range of partnered contexts. Through this methodology a clearer understanding of the heterogeneous activities of women within the family farming context, and the agency that they can mobilise, has been gained. Previous research has emphasised that the lives of farm women revolve around the family farm
In contrast, this study has sought to show that women, within that discursively controlled context, are navigating a diverse range of positions and identities across different dimensions. Past research has not sufficiently acknowledged this.

Likewise, past feminist research has been inspired by feminist politics and has attempted to make farm women visible, and improve their lives or change the gender inequalities that exist (Sachs, 1983; Whatmore et al., 1994; Shortall, 1999; Brandth, 2002b; Pini, 2003). But this approach does not adequately acknowledge the complex realities of many farm women, including the fact that some articulate acceptance, and even contentment, with their subject positions and limited agency. There is a disjuncture between the critical (but supportive) feminist academics and the complexities of farm women’s lives. This study has documented that within their constrained contexts, farm women navigate spatial and social inequalities and make choices; they can be pro-active or passive as they narrate and live their lives around the family farm. Thus an important feature of this thesis has been its quest to acknowledge the diverse lived realities of women, to gain an understanding of the variation of women’s responses and manoeuvres within the family farming context.

Furthermore, this thesis showed that women have the capacity to generate spatially and socially varied forms of agency despite their constrained autonomy. Previous literature focuses on agency as a relatively coherent, single concept whereby individuals considered to have agency are those with freedom from, or autonomy within, contextual constraints. This thesis argues for a more variegated understanding and construction of agency. It identifies that there are critical limits to a farm woman’s autonomy (which highlights the relationship between positioning discourses and their agency), but still they are able to mobilise a form of agency which influences family farm management. This suggests that agency is far more complex than previously understood. Consequently this study suggests broadening the concept of agency to include ‘direct’, explicit agency, and ‘indirect’, implicit agency. These are not a binary or mutually exclusive categorisation for, as Chapter Six showed, farm women can articulate both forms of agency in different spaces and contexts.

The recognition that farm women have the ability to exercise power through indirect agency is an important development within rural gender research. Farm women cannot be perceived as powerless, subordinates who work endlessly to facilitate the survival of
the family farm. Whilst many (particularly partnered) women may not have absolute autonomy, this study has shown Southern New Zealand farm women do have the capacity to make some choices and influence the decision-makers in both the reproductive and productive spheres of the farm. In addition, this study has shown that deeper understandings of farm women are gained through studying both women and men in farming partnerships. While rural studies have benefited from studies of masculinity in recent years, this research has highlighted the benefits of integrating critical analysis of gender relations as they operate between heterosexual partners. Section 6.3 of this thesis demonstrated some advances in this area, which future research may follow. Furthermore, acknowledging that many women choose to comply with the dominant discourses in their lives because ultimately they love the farming lifestyle and are content with 'their lot' is an important contribution to farm gender research. The emotional aspect of their lifestyle and relations is one of a number of directions for future research.

7.3 Future directions

This thesis has affirmed and strengthened understandings of how discourses shape the lives of farm women. But it has also documented a mosaic of rich understandings and diversities that have previously been hidden concerning women's responses and agency. In so doing, it has contributed to a number of fields of literature and highlighted some directions for research that warrant further investigation.

First, this research has touched on emotional geographies whereby farm women experience and express a range of emotions in their daily lives. The study of emotional geographies is a relatively recent focus of social research. It introduces the affective dimension, particularly into post-structural, feminist methodologies, whereby the social world is seen to be constructed and lived not only through discourses but also via relations and emotions (Nash, 1998; Widdowfield, 2000; Anderson and Smith, 2001). The previous marginalisation of emotional geographies has occurred because of the prevalence and belief in, issues of objectivity, detachment and rationality. These were popular values used to provide a sense of authenticity to earlier social research, whilst an engagement with subjectivity and passion was devalued (Anderson and Smith, 2001).

Those who have undertaken research addressing emotional issues have found it both a difficult and marginalised form of research (Nash, 1998; Widdowfield, 2000), and emotional geographic research within the rural sector is limited to date. A recent study
focussed on the experiences and emotions of rural women in relation to their safety, whereby it was considered that the experiences and/or feelings of women were seen as one core medium via which emotional geographies could develop (Panelli et al., 2004). Extending this contention, it is evident that this thesis could lead to some significant emotional geographic findings. Throughout the research there were implied and overt emotions being expressed and demonstrated by the women interviewees.

This research has demonstrated that dominant discourses position women and they respond to them actively and expressively. Some of the emotions associated with these responses were evident, such as the angst experienced by Alice when identifying herself as a ‘farmer’, an occupational identity traditionally associated with men (Section 5.2.2). Furthermore, there are a plethora of emotions that could be explored which would further contribute to the understanding of farm women. These could include: emotions associated with really loving the farming lifestyle (Beth); losing confidence through being isolated from other people (Christine); the pleasure felt through ensuring the house and garden are well cared for (Ngaire); the disenchantment endured after realising that her husband did not consider the home as a productive part of the family farm (Jackie); the anger experienced when the farm was inherited by her brothers (Jo); and the pride expressed when talking about a family farm which has been in the family for four generations (Alice). An increased awareness of the breadth and width of emotions experienced and expressed by farm women would contribute to a holistic portrayal of them as significant, expressive, individual women, not invisible, unrecognised enigmas, who support their spouses. Although this was beyond the original scope of the study design, future readings of farm women’s emotional worlds would represent another level of analysis for similar, in-depth studies of farm women.

A further area which warrants investigation within the emotional geographies of farm women is a contradiction between the emotions that farm women are discursively expected to possess, and the emotions, and the emotional relations, that they reflect in their daily lives. Discourses of domesticity and femininity place expectations on women to be gentle, submissive, and emotionally weak, whilst their male partners are discursively expected to be emotionally strong and stable (Section 4.1). However, this thesis has demonstrated that farm women are able to articulate emotional strength through being a major support for, and influence of, their husband, and through their physical and emotional input into ensuring that the family farm survives.
In addition, studying the emotional geographies of farm women would link with geographies of health which have increasingly focussed on individual circumstances and the complex contexts through which they live their lives, e.g. the complexity of health issues in primary industries (Panelli and Gallagher, 2003). Recent studies of psychiatry which have focussed on the relationship between mental health and farming, have found that farmers (and their families) face an array of stressors related to the physical environment, structure of farming families and the economic difficulties and uncertainties associated with farming, and these are potentially hazardous to their mental health and require further research (Page and Frager, 2002; Fraser et al., 2005). Geographies of health need to extend these findings, which primarily focus on the mental health of ‘male farmers’, and explore how mental health problems in family farming impact on the farm women. Furthermore, this potentially links with issues of domestic violence within farm households whereby women, struggling to cope with financial, psychological, emotional and social isolation, experience anguish because they cannot fulfil the expectations associated with being a farmer’s wife, and are the subject of physical and emotional violence as a result (Alston, 1997). As a greater critical awareness of the lives of farm women emerges, issues such as mental health and domestic violence could be acknowledged and addressed.

The second theme that this thesis alludes to is embodied geographies. This study demonstrated that discourses of femininity included aspects of embodiment that emphasise that women cannot be farmers because of their female bodies (Section 4.1.1). As a consequence, a normalisation of gendered discourses has occurred within family farming which has produced a clear dualism between what is expected of female and male bodies (Saugeres, 2002a; Little, 2003; Brandth, 2006).

More broadly, geographies of embodiment have examined how gendered spaces come to exist through the continued maintenance, enforcement and normalisation of gendered discourses (Brown, 2004). Johnston (1996) documented that sexual difference creates feminine and masculine spaces, which reinforce and maintain female and male bodies. Similarly, Guyatt’s (2005) study of a New Zealand pub showed that the social constructions of gender were naturalised and embodied across different spaces through the division of labour. Such geographies of the body highlight issues of power and domination, two themes already evident within past research on family farms. These notions of power and domination, via readings of embodiment, could be extended to farming research, for previous research has indicated how women’s bodies are spatially
situated in the kitchen (Bennett, 2006), whilst men’s bodies are aligned with the land (Saugeres, 2002c) or in the tractor shed (Brandth, 2006). This spatial embodiment theme also builds upon this study’s discussions regarding agency, whereby women were unable to mobilise agency in certain spaces as these were highly masculinised (Section 6.1).

This research has also shown that independent farm women challenge aspects of dominant discourses in their lives, particularly those of feminine embodiment. This study has also highlighted how these women adopt their own management systems, utilising technologies and subjectivities in their lives to successfully manage a family farm (Section 5.3). Further research could identify the implications for independent women who challenge the hegemonic notions of gender by being farmers. Likewise, in addition to independent farm women challenging normalised discourses, they are also challenging masculinised spaces. This may have repercussions for the identity of farm males, whose strength and position is aligned with their work on the farm, in the woolshed and on machines. Independent farm women in particular are challenging the gender-based dualisms that have traditionally prevailed within farming, particularly those based on the notions associating certain body forms with particular types of work. Further research is warranted to gain a greater awareness of the impact of independent farm women on the identity of both females and males in farming, and the future structure of family farms in New Zealand.

The last theme addressed is the concept of agency. This thesis has demonstrated that farm women’s agency is a multi-faceted, dynamic concept that can be indirect or direct. This increased awareness of the dynamism of agency could have further implications within farm gender research. Within the household and on the farm, a greater understanding of the different agency that women and men can mobilise and articulate is required as this may have implications for the family farm. Geographies of both emotion and embodiment could link to further studies of agency. Gaining an appreciation of how women mobilise and articulate different forms of agency could lead to further studies focussing on the emotions associated with agency between women from different circumstances and contexts. For instance, this study highlighted how some partnered women are subject to their husband’s financial controls, removing the woman’s ability to have autonomy in her kitchen (Jackie). In contrast, other independent women expressed their joy in having the freedom to do what they like without having to comply with the expectations of others (Louise). Emotional
geographies could explore the link between the agency of farm women and their emotional experiences, emotional relations and levels of contentment of women.

In addition, future studies of agency could reflect on who has agency in relation to specific decision making areas such as farm safety or environmental management, and how this is exercised. A greater appreciation of the differences between the emotional perceptions of farm men and women regarding safety and environmental issues, and the implications this has for family farm management is worthy of further examination. Studies highlight that women are very important to the family farm, but how they perceive tasks, expenditure priorities and occupational safety differs significantly to those of male farmers (Panelli and Gallagher, 2003). Comprehending their strategies of compromise, negotiation and compliance to navigate the perceptual disparities would clarify the underlying mechanisms which facilitate farm continuation, and identify whether changes in prevailing gender inequalities could jeopardise the future of family farming as a mode of agricultural production.

In conclusion, this study has improved the understanding of the lives of New Zealand farm women by discussing their experience in relation to the findings of the international literature. A New Zealand case study reveals ...

However, this thesis has also led to further questions regarding the emotional and embodied geographies of farm women, and the wider applications of a broader concept of agency. The challenge now is to engage with these issues in meaningful ways so that the understanding of farm women’s lives is taken to a deeper level; ensuring they are no longer an invisible, unrecognized farm household entity, but a central, acknowledged figure in the operations of family farming.

In conclusion, this study has improved the understanding of the lives of New Zealand farm women by discussing their experiences in relation to the findings of the international literature. A New Zealand case study has revealed how dominant positioning and contextualising discourses have influenced the lives of farm women, the ways women have responded to these and the implications for their agency. However, this thesis has also led to further questions regarding the emotional and embodied geographies of farm women and the wider applications of a broader concept of agency. The challenge now is to engage with these issues in meaningful ways so that the understanding of farm women’s lives is taken to a deeper level, ensuring that they are
no longer invisible, unrecognised farm household entities, but important, acknowledged actors within family farming.
References


Fairweather, J. (1995) 'Farm Women and Men's decisions regarding working on and off farm', Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit, Lincoln University, Christchurch.


Appendix A

PhD Ethics Materials: Information Sheet and Consent Form
FARM WOMAN DISCOURSE AND AGENCY:
IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILY FARMING

PhD RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the aim of the project?

This doctoral research project aims to investigate the position and contribution of farm women, and how farm women and farm men operate within their farm household and business. Specifically it aims to identify the discourses that shape the lives of farm women in Otago, South Canterbury and Southland, looking at the range of ways that women respond to these discourses within their family and working lives and the reasons for these responses. It also seeks to document the implications of these discourses for their agency, farm viability, and relations with men farmers.

What type of participants are being sought?

The project will be interviewing farm men and farm women (adults who currently live together) on family farms in the Otago, South Canterbury and Southland regions. Variation between farms, such as farm type and size; household characteristics, such as household size, the use of family labour; farmer (female and male) age; and degree of involvement in other income sources, will contribute to the diversity of the project. The project will also be interviewing farm women who operate farms independently.

What will participants be asked to do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to be involved in a range of techniques to gather information. An initial postal survey will collect information regarding property, household and labour characteristics.

The first meeting will involve a semi-structured interview with both partners present. This will focus on the family farm, farming strategies, household dynamics, labour allocation and farming expenses. Some individual rating tasks will also be completed on worksheets. The time taken should be about 1-2 hours. At a later date separate interviews, for both partners of 1-2 hours duration, will be scheduled whereby participants will be asked about what how they view family farming; the recognition of farm women; off farm work and the discourse which influence their daily lives.

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1 Discourse: An assemblage of meanings, ideas and practices which influence an individual's daily thoughts and actions from a range of sources, e.g. Religions Discourse would involve ideas and meanings derived from sources such as the Bible, or church.
Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?

A range of information will be collected which is to be used to answer the research questions for the project. Some personal information regarding name, location, age and educational qualifications will be collected via the postal survey and initial interview. This information is primarily for contact and classification purposes. Other questions which will enquire about thoughts, viewpoints and ideas will not be directly attributable to the individual respondent. Information will be audio taped and later transcribed.

This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Responses from the interviews will be analysed using a range of qualitative and quantitative techniques such as Discourse Analysis. The results of the project may be published, and will be available in the library, but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

What if Participants have any Questions?

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Sue Peoples (PhD candidate) or Dr Ruth Panelli (Supervisor)
Department of Geography Department of Geography
University Phone No. 479 8779 University Phone No. 479 8784

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee
FARM WOMAN DISCOURSE AND AGENCY:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILY FARMING

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

3. The data/information collected (audio-tapes, worksheets and notes) will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed;

4. "This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind."

5. I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project if I feel any degree of discomfort or feel at risk in any way;

6. I will not be receiving any compensation or remuneration as a result of my participation in this research project;

7. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the library but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

.................................................................  .................................................................
(Signature of participant)  (Date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the

University of Otago Human Ethics Committee
Appendix B

Postal Survey
Part One: Property Characteristics

Questions 1-4 gather information about your farm so a clear overview of your property is obtained.

1. Who owns the property?

Owners Name(s): ________________________________

2. What are the details of the property? properties?

Some farming families have a number of properties at different locations. The table below is designed to gather information on these. If you have one property then please fill in the details for Property One. If you have more than one property then please fill in the columns as applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Details</th>
<th>Property One</th>
<th>Property Two</th>
<th>Property Three</th>
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<td>...........</td>
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<tr>
<td>Size (hectares)</td>
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| Form of Ownership (tick the current form of ownership) | o Private individual  
o Private partnership husband/wife  
o Family trust partnership  
o Partnership (Other)  
o Private family company  
o Other  | o Private individual  
o Private partnership husband/wife  
o Family trust partnership  
o Partnership (Other)  
o Private family company  
o Other  | o Private individual  
o Private partnership husband/wife  
o Family trust partnership  
o Partnership (Other)  
o Private family company  
o Other  |
| Length of ownership by your immediate family (years) | ...........  | ...........  | ...........  |
3. *What commodities are produced on your farm?*

*Please indicate, where applicable, what commodities *are produced* on your farm(s) and their degree of financial importance to you. If you have more than one property then please indicate which property you are referring to as per question 2.*

*(Each row needs to have a tick)*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
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<th>Limited Contribution</th>
<th>No Contribution</th>
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<td>Sheep</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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4. How has your farm changed or diversified?

Change in response to external factors, such as market conditions and drought, are a key part of family farming and can lead to different diversification strategies being implemented. Change gives an insight into how the farm has operated over time and the direction that it has taken, and will take, in the future. Please fill in the following table noting what change and diversification has occurred, when and why. Diversification strategies can include: changing the farm type through the addition of new crops and/or stock, or the addition of a tourist venture. Change could include the hiring of extra labour, the purchase of an additional property or changes in the family unit. If you have more than one property then please indicate which property you are detailing (as per Q.2) when outlining the nature of the change/diversification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s) of change/diversification</th>
<th>The nature of the change/diversification</th>
<th>Reason for the change/diversification</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. What are your household’s characteristics?

Please fill in the following table indicating the age of members of your immediate household and their gender. Please include yourself. In addition, please indicate whether family members live on the property permanently. If not, please indicate whether they have left home permanently, or work and live elsewhere during the week (returning home for weekends), or are at home on a semi-permanent basis because they are at boarding school or university. You may put an age range if you wish.

Please note: This table is based on the traditional concept of a nuclear family. If your immediate family is a non-traditional family unit, then please indicate each member with labels which are applicable for your situation. Extended family members are considered in question 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Member</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Are they permanently At home?</th>
<th>If no, where are they located?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole Female Operator</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child One</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ male □ female</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Two</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ male □ female</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Three</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ male □ female</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Four</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ male □ female</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Five</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ male □ female</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y. N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Are there any other significant family members?  
Please fill in the following table indicating other members of your extended family which have a role in your household or on your farm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to immediate family</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Do they live with you?</th>
<th>Contribution to household/farm?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.....yrs</td>
<td>Y . N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.....yrs</td>
<td>Y . N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.....yrs</td>
<td>Y . N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.....yrs</td>
<td>Y . N.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. What is your highest educational qualification?  
Please tick your highest educational qualification for each partner where applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Male Partner</th>
<th>Female Partner</th>
<th>Sole Female Operator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No formal schooling</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school only</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School Qualification</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical training</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree/diploma</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Who are the people working on your farm?
Please fill in the table below indicating the current number of people working on your property, including yourself, other family members and paid external labour working indoors and/or outdoors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid family labour (wages/salary not drawings)</td>
<td>.......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid family labour</td>
<td>.......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non family paid casual labour</td>
<td>.......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non family paid permanent labour</td>
<td>.......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.......</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Where do you spend the hours of your working day?
Please write a total which provides an indication of the hours you spend working on the farm, either inside and/or outside, per day. Different seasonal requirements cause this figure to change so an approximate figure is fine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Male Partner (hours per day)</th>
<th>Female Partner (hours per day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the house</td>
<td>......</td>
<td>......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the farm (farm work)</td>
<td>......</td>
<td>......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the farm (other, e.g. tourism activities)</td>
<td>......</td>
<td>......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off the farm (paid)</td>
<td>......</td>
<td>......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off the farm (unpaid)</td>
<td>......</td>
<td>......</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. What are your sources of income?

Question 10 aims to gather data on your total income from all sources over an average year, over three different time frames. Using each of the percentage bar graphs below, please fill in each one with the family farm’s total monetary income from all sources for that time period where applicable.

Please use the following labels to classify income sources:

- **On-farm production** (e.g. commodity sales)
- **On-farm other** (e.g. tourism venture)
- **Off-farm paid employment**
- **Off-farm other** (e.g. asset income or interest)

An example has been completed for you below.

![Bar graphs showing income sources for different time periods.](image)

**Name of person completing this survey**

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this background survey. Please place the survey into the reply paid envelope and return it as soon as possible so that the next stage in the research process can be arranged. In addition, please indicate below when it is best to phone you to arrange the follow up interviews. **Time**
Appendix C

Interview One: Semi-structured interview outline/record sheets
PARTNERS INTERVIEW PLAN

The following plan outlines the approach to the first interview with participants. Their postal survey will have been received and analysed. The interview has the partners together and they will be required to fill in handouts as the interview proceeds.

Recap

1. Re-familiarise participants with the aims of the research and check to see that they have 1-2 hours of free uninterrupted time.
2. Explain why I am interviewing them.
3. Check to see whether it is still okay to use the tape recorder.
4. Reinforce that what they say is confidential and it will not be shared.
5. Go over the rights of the participants with respect to reminding them that they have the right to say that they will not answer a specific question, or that they can stop the questioning process for whatever reason, without any fear of repercussions.
6. Go over what I have covered so far in terms of the postal survey.
7. Outline the themes that I will be asking about in the combined interview:
   a. farm ownership
   b. diversification possibilities
   c. family involvement in farming
   d. the future of your family farm
   e. family farm expenditure
   f. family farm task allocation and prioritisation
   g. family farm decision making
**Theme One - Family Farm Ownership:**

**Define family farming and why it has been the focus of research**

Family farming is a distinct form of commercial agricultural production whereby family ownership and control of the means of production (property, capital, and resources) is combined with the utilisation of family labour.

Research regarding the ‘survival’ of family farming in the 1980s, following the restructuring of the agricultural sector in New Zealand and other Western countries, initially predicted that family farm numbers would decline whilst corporate based agriculture would grow. However despite predictions, family farming has continued to dominate agricultural production and as a result researchers have been trying to understand the reasons for this is by studying family farming’s social and economic dynamics.

1. **Form of ownership of the family farm**
   - Private individual
   - Private partnership husband/wife
   - Family Trust/partnership
   - Partnership (other)
   - Private company
   - Public Company
   - Absentee owner
   - Other ____________________________

Has this changed over time? How? Why?

2. **How did you come to be farming this property? eg. inherit, purchase?**

   _______________________________
Theme Two: Diversification Possibilities (HANDOUT)

Over time, family farms change their direction in response to factors such as market prices and trends, market demand, family circumstances, opportunities available and economic viability. This research is interested in the decision making process behind diversification and identifying how partners identify different opportunities and who ultimately makes the decision.

If there are more than one property involved then use more than one column.
In accounting for their ratings they are to do this from their point of view only.
WORKSHEET ONE: Diversification Possibilities
Below is a list of possible diversification strategies for farms. Please indicate next to each one whether you think it is a **realistic form of farm diversification for your Property (properties)** by writing either a 1-very realistic to 5 - not realistic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversification Possibility</th>
<th>Rating Property One</th>
<th>Rating Property Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce new stock breeds</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialise in stud type breeding programme</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing new livestock e.g. ostrich farming,</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic farming</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm forestry/woodlots</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food production/gate stall</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism operation, e.g. horse treks</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism accommodation operation, e.g. bed and breakfast, home stay</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry off grazing</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cropping</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trading operation</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>........</td>
<td>........</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Criteria for rating. Please explain below what influenced the ratings you assigned for the diversification strategies.*
Theme Three: Intergenerational Farming

Intergenerational farming has been, and continues to be important within NZ family farming. Farms have been passed down through the family forming strong historic ties to locations and keeping New Zealand's pastoral lands in private ownership. This research is interested in how families view the future; are children encouraged to continue on with the family farm?; do intergenerational practices of passing the farm on to the eldest son still continue?; does an emotional link to the family farm still exist or do economic reasons dominate decisions regarding the farms future?

In addition, this research is interested in gaining an understanding of your backgrounds, whether farming has been the main occupation in your family or whether you have moved into farming from other areas and influences.

3. Were your parents farmers? If not, what were they?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Do you have any other close relatives on your side of the family in farming?
(Brothers/sister/cousin/uncles/aunts)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male’s Relatives</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female’s Relatives</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. If for either partner there has been no involvement in farming ask what the reason was which influenced their decision to become a farmer.
At the heart of intergenerational farming has been the practice of passing the farm down to the eldest child, especially if they are a son. Whilst this practice may vary from family to family, this research is interested in establishing whether you have aspirations to see your children farming, whether this differs between male and female farmers, male and female children.

6. Would you like your children to be involved with the farming industry? Family farm? Does this differ depending on whether it is your daughter/son? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Partner</th>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Male Partner</th>
<th>Son</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Partner</th>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Female Partner</th>
<th>Son</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Partner</th>
<th>Daughter</th>
<th>Male Partner</th>
<th>Daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Partner</th>
<th>Daughter</th>
<th>Female Partner</th>
<th>Daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. If you do intend to pass on the farm to your children, what will your criteria be?
   o Inheritance to the eldest son
   o Inheritance to the eldest child
   o Inheritance to the child who wants to farm
   o Equal shares to the child who wants to farm and those who do not
   o Property is sold to the child who wants to farm it
   o Property is split up amongst the children to do with what they like
   o Other ______________________

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Theme Four: Gender differences within family farming

Farmers have traditionally been viewed as males, despite the important input that farm women have contributed over the years. This research aims to identify whether farm women and farm men have different priorities on the family farm and how this influences the operation of the farm. For this exercise, three areas have been identified as being important on the family farm; expenditure, decision making and labour allocation. Each of these requires a worksheet to be filled in whereby participants are required to rate priorities and responsibilities.
Worksheet Two: Expenditure Ratings

For each expenditure please rate, from 1 – very important to 5 – not important, indicating how important you see that purchase for the family farm. In addition, please indicate with a tick which source of income usually pays for the purchase. Other as in off-farm employment, interest, asset income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Farm Income</th>
<th>Other Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stock purchases</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal health</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weed and pest control</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed and grazing</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertiliser and lime</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry and forestry maintenance</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel for farm</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel/power for household</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs and maintenance</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm vehicle purchases</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asse: purchase</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asse: replacement</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building construction</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt servicing</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household expenditure – food, basic necessities</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family care – clothing, shoes</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family luxuries; holidays, treats</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family car</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School fees; trips</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health bills – doctor, dentist</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrading household equipment, e.g. fridge</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Partner Luxuries, such as?</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Partner Luxuries, such as?</td>
<td>.......</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criteria for rating. Please note below what influenced your ratings for expenditures on the farm.
Worksheet Three: Farm/Household Task Prioritisation and Allocation

Below is a list of tasks carried out on the family farm. For each task rate it on a scale from 1 – very important, to 5 – not important, in terms of how important the task is to the continuation of the family farm. In addition, in the columns on the right indicate with a tick whether it is the male or female farmer on your farm who usually carries out the task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Rating 1-5</th>
<th>Male Farmer</th>
<th>Female Farmer</th>
<th>Other Labour</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilising</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shearing/crutching</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambing/salving supervision</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailling/decking</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipping/drenching</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay/baleage/silage making</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milking</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeding/mowing</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spraying for pests/disease</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting crops</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General property maintenance</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal husbandry</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding out</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office work/book keeping</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax preparations</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GST/ ACC</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with callers/telephoning</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>running farm errands</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of employees</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation/meals for employees</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily management decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long term management decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bed and breakfast accommodation</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm shop/gate sales</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooking for household</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of aged and/or children</td>
<td>1-5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework</td>
<td>1-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other tourism activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
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</table>
Worksheet Four: Decision Making on the Family Farm

Using the matrix below, indicate with a tick who usually makes the decisions for the following issues for an average farming year. (For other, please write in who that is)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Male Partner</th>
<th>Female Partner</th>
<th>Shared</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stocking rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily on farm operations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling and purchase of stock</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment/vehicle purchases</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour &amp; contractor hire/fire/allocation</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term farm planning</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household purchases</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Household daily operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household (long term planning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily farm spending</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asset Purchase</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset Replacement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily household spending</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long term financial planning</td>
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<td>Environmental management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production levels</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child education (schools)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criteria for rating. Please note below what influences your decision making allocations.
Theme Five: Family income from the family farm

The combination of resource ownership and family labour ensures that many family farms have an advantage over corporate properties. However, to maintain the economic viability of the farm, wages for family labour are often non-existent or less than the market rate. This research is interested in establishing whether farm men and women could receive income from the farm (in the form of a wage) without threatening its economic viability.

8. Do you receive any direct payment for your work on the farm or in the household?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. If yes, what form does this payment take?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment form</th>
<th>Male Partner</th>
<th>Female Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wage/salary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of profit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee or fixed payment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment in kind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. How would you describe your direct input into the farm business as opposed to the household?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Partner</th>
<th>Female Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No direct input</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency relief only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual or Seasonal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular part-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular full time/crucial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. How would you describe your direct input into the household?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Partner</th>
<th>Female Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No direct input</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency relief only</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular part-time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular full time/crucial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you very much for your time. As per our earlier discussion, a second round of interviews needs to be scheduled. Farm Woman ________________________
Farm Man (ph)_______________________________. Thank you again .............
Appendix D

Interview Two: Interview themes
Interview Two – Discourse and Agency details administered to Individuals (Males or Females, including single operator women)

The interviews will be based on broad discussions of the following themes:

- The ‘survival’ of family farming in the 21st century
- Reasons why farm women and farm men utilise off farm work
- The recognition of women on this farm and in New Zealand family farming
- The external influences (discourses) that shape the lives of men and women in farming and:
  - the range of ways men and women react to these;
  - reasons for these responses;
  - how discourses influence farm men’s and women’s choices and actions (i.e. agency);
  - implications of discourse and agency for:
    - the action of women in family farming
    - the farm’s future
    - the male farmer