

**‘To Farm or Not to Farm’:
Succession, Inheritance and Gender**

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DEDICATION

For my daughter who put it all into perspective.

DECLARATION

I have composed this thesis myself on the basis of my own work.

Ulrike Schwarz

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| () | = | author's comment |
| “ ” | = | speech quote |
| ' ' | = | publication quote |
| U: | = | author/interviewer's voice in a quote |
| ... | = | the interviewee pauses or remains silent. |

ABSTRACT

There still exists a strong prevalence of primogeniture in a traditional patriarchal work environment on farms in Britain and other Western countries. This is confirmed by discussions with insiders and documented in the literature on the subject. Other than listing women's contributions to the family farm there is little written about how this gendered situation is actually maintained within the family life cycle and how family members deal with their thus allocated shares. There seems to be little conflict in Scotland, despite the fact that there are apparent inequalities in the way the family estate is shared amongst the heirs. The issues of gender and inheritance especially affect the daughters. The topic of this thesis concerns their socialisation into the acceptance of their share and their potential for succession.

Using a whole family approach the thesis examines ten families owning medium-sized farms in the south-east of Scotland. Their education and social lives as well as their involvement on or off the family farm are described and compared using a multiple case study. A total of 44 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted between July 1999 and February 2000 and analysed using Ethnograph v5 software. The purposive snowball sampling included families in the researcher's neighbourhood and resulted in a nearly proportionate mix of arable, mixed and stock farms with at least one child aged between 18-22 years. Half of these families had sent their children to fee paying schools.

Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is used to describe how class differences perpetuate themselves within a social group, not least through the choice of state versus private schooling, and how this affects the social lives of farmers through exposure to a wider range of peer pressures.

A main part of the socialisation of children on the farm is the acceptance of the changing needs of the farm. This results from 'situated learning' through 'legitimate peripheral participation'.

The attitudes to gender are reflected in expectations and job allocations which result in a restrictive environment, making it difficult for daughters or wives to show interest or be involved in the farm and, also for sons to turn away from agriculture. In the same vein, who does what task usually depends on availability, expertise and personal preference and is not generally gender-neutral. However, the research also revealed that the presence of stock on the farm makes it more likely for female family members to be involved in farming activities.

All agree that 'equal input' should in principle be rewarded with an equal share in the family assets. However, the parents' judgement of what is considered 'equal input' is influenced by traditional views of gender and the economic realities of farm succession. It is still mainly the eldest able and willing son(s) who takes over and only if there are no boys interested will the girls be given a chance to take on the family farm. Agriculture remains a physically demanding industry while equal sub-division of the family wealth would frequently result in a non-viable outcome for the farming successor.

Overall the thesis suggests that gendered expectations have been present throughout the whole process of children growing up and inheriting family farms but given the right situation these are not necessarily insurmountable any longer.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The long term survival of a business is dependent on the successful transfer of the management of the business from one generation to the next. When and how the hand-over takes place is the key to the continuing success of the business. This transition takes place within a framework of fiscal and legal regulations and is subject to influences from an increasingly globalised economy. These influences are felt right down to the level of the family business. The farm is no exception.

All members of a farm family grow into this framework. They undergo formal and informal education and training by family, peers and official bodies. Each person will find their very own way of adapting to more or less constantly changing conditions. What does not change is each individual's genetic make up and that means, in the first instance, their sex. As agriculture is one of the more traditional sectors of the economy the official equality between the sexes is superseded by a patriarchal system within the productive and the reproductive sphere of the family. Children on farms encounter gendered attitudes and work practices. These attitudes are ever present and result in a predominant male succession in the farming industry. They also play a role in other issues relating to the farm. What is a wonderful place to come home to for one person, might be a millstone around the neck of someone else. What appears to be the most productive unit in the country, might also be located on prime development land, which could be sold for housing, with the proceeds used to finance items such as an heir's new venture or the parents' retirement. There is plenty of scope for conflict, but not many cases come to the attention of the Scottish courts.

The object of this thesis is to decipher and analyse the processes which underlie the transfer of a farm and other estate from one generation to the next, which in most cases means to the children or grandchildren (Figure 1a). The factors involved cover a vast spectrum. They range from the socio-economic and political frame the farm operates in, with its growing exposure to fluctuations on a global market place, to the effects of education and peer pressure on farmers' social lives and attitudes to work, and to the direct involvement and interest in all things to do with agriculture. Special attention needs to be paid in each step to gender. To achieve this, local life experiences are set in a sociological

time ↑

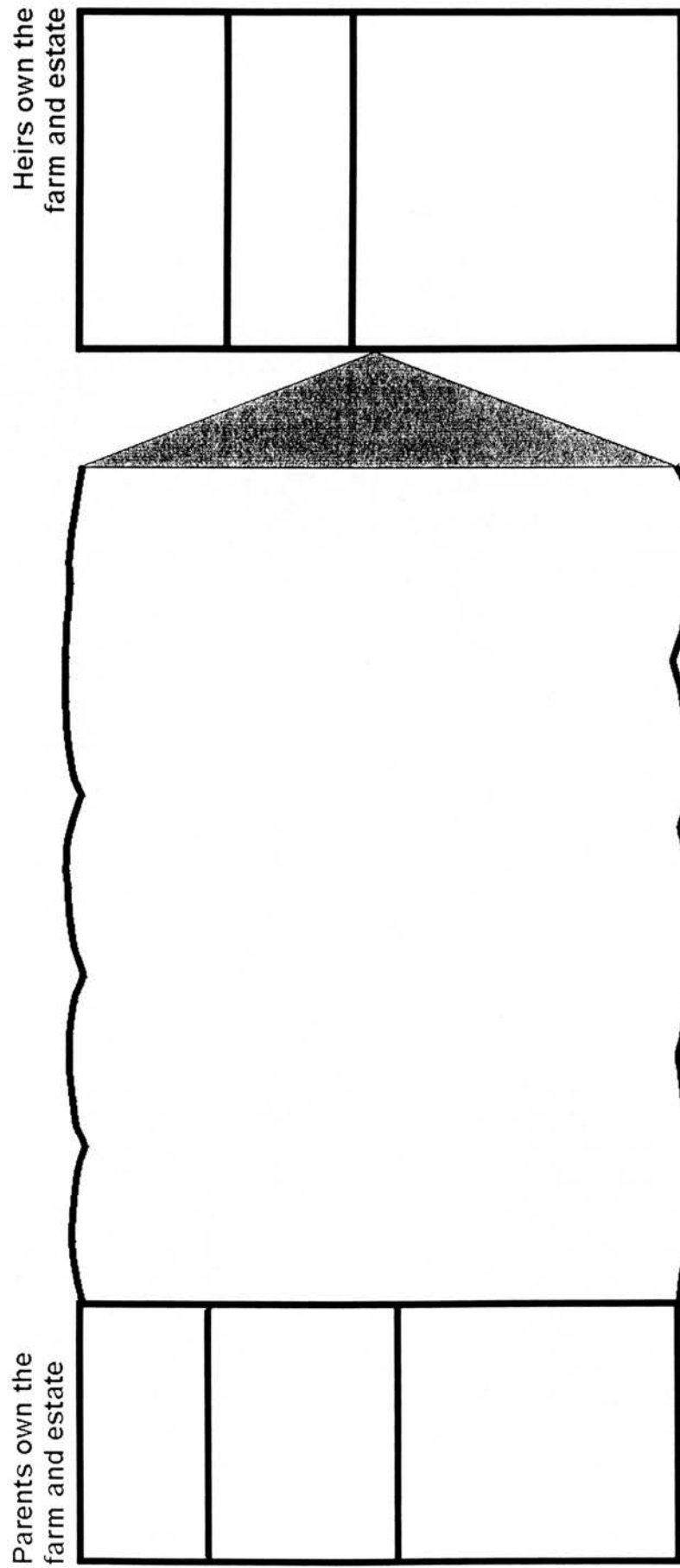


Figure 1a: The process of changeover between the generations (base figure).

frame, in order to make a contribution to the overall understanding of farming communities in Western Europe.

1.1 The personal history behind the research interest

The topic for this project evolved from my own background and my observations of farming families in different countries. As Hastrup and Hervik write (1994, p. 235), 'there is no way of understanding people except through one's own experience and power of imagination.'

During my childhood in the South of Germany, I witnessed the consequences of the traditional principle of 'Realteilung' (in principle similar to the 'Code Napoleon' where every child inherits a part of everything). I saw how families and their in-laws became hostile, were not speaking to one another and ceased helping each other at times such as grape harvest or soft fruit picking. (Extended family labour for harvesting grain and cutting hay at that time had already been replaced by machinery.) Somebody somewhere had not been given their rightful share. Some families did manage to share, keep the farm going and remain talking to each other. Already in the 50's and 60's many of the fathers went to work shifts in the growing manufacturing industry and the wives remained at home running the relatively small farm. The husbands would help with harvest after work and during the holidays. Some daughters marrying into farm families brought with them pieces of land, which could be integrated into the husbands' farm or swapped for a more convenient block. Power plays and bickerings were frequently witnessed by my little friends and myself, the visiting town child. We knew who had fallen out with whom and sometimes used this knowledge to tease the adults. Today, however, the strict 'Realteilung' is a thing of the past. The farms cannot afford to get too small. Many have given up agriculture altogether. The bickerings have remained.

By contrast, as a student I visited friends in the Lower Saxony part of North Germany and marvelled at the size of the farms, the sheer scale of the operations and the understanding within the families that one son would inherit and the other children were to be paid out their legal share, which was usually a lot less than if 'Realteilung' had been applied. That was that. Bitterness arose if the, usually male, farm heir attempted to prove that he could not pay his siblings their legal share, because it would make the farm non-viable. If he managed to convince the Court of this, the siblings would end up with next to nothing. These family feuds were bitter and again resulted in generations not speaking to each other.

In my late twenties I worked in Australia and New Zealand and was surprised at the adult children's gratitude to their parents for things I took for granted, such as paying for an education or receiving a substantial part of the estate on the parents' death. On the whole there seemed to be much less bitterness and more appreciation amongst the farming generations.

In my thirties I moved to live in a farming community in the south-east of Scotland and again I found this overall acceptance of a smaller share by the departing daughters, and sometimes the sons of farmers. The families were mostly on speaking terms and if they were not it was a notable exception, much talked about in the farming community. If there was disagreement it was usually on the parents' death. Only then would sons, mainly backed by their wives, fall out and fight, but there was barely ever any mention of the daughters and their resentment of the way they were treated. How did these women manage to live contentedly knowing that they had received a very much smaller share from their parents than had their brother(s)?

The question became more personal when I gave birth to a daughter who is determined to become a farmer. Will she be able to step into her father's shoes? Who has managed to do so before her? Has no other farming daughter ever wanted to farm? What are the problems she might encounter? How have other families dealt with their daughters' interest in farming? Why are there not so many obviously feuding families as in my country of origin?

The list of questions became endless. The answers locals gave me in conversations resembled the ones I had heard before on other gender issues. They ranged from "this is just the way it is here" to detailed economic analyses of the farm family's estate. None of them satisfied me. I decided to apply my academic training to investigate. Symes and Marsden (1981) investigated 156 large farms in England and extracted from the answers supplied mostly by males, descriptions of the farmers' wives. Only 10% of the wives worked off farm, all were responsible entirely for the domestic domain and subordinated their lives to the needs of the farm. If they were included into the farm partnership this was in a totally passive capacity and solely for tax reasons. Any hobby they might have had was seen as complementary to the husbands' interests. His sport, for instance, came before her pottery. This picture, as bleak as it may seem, had one definite feature: the socialisation of the children was in the hands of the mother and not in the hands of the farm or the farmer. It can be assumed, that if the mother was unhappy in her life on the farm she would pass this unhappiness on to the children. This was confirmed by O'Hara (1998) in her work on the

mainly smaller farms in Ireland. However, my neighbours seemed neither unhappy nor bitter, even though most children and household related tasks were up to the women. I tried to find more information in the literature on the issue.

1.2 Succession in the literature

Inheritance practices are specific to each society. Shortall discusses in detail how the origin of inheritance practices in the UK is based on the teachings of John Locke and his philosophy of the individual's right to property. However, Locke assumed the owners were all men (Shortall, 1999).

Mulholland (1996, p. 100) in her study on rich families (including very large agricultural estates) uses the English example of 'coverture' (meaning a wife had no independent legal existence and could not own property or represent herself in court) as an example of how a legal clause can influence attitude. She describes 'coverture' thus: 'This monstrous institution systematised wives' subordination, and survived until 1925 when it had undergone a series of reforms in the passing of the Married Woman's Property Act of 1882 subsequently extending women's right to property.'

According to the solicitors 'Coverture' was not an issue in Scottish law. However, the underlying attitude can be assumed as not totally foreign to the parents and grandparents of the young respondents. Together with the law of primogeniture, these attitudes are part of the parcel which has to change in order to give all siblings access to the option of considering a career on the family farm.

Succession as a decisive factor in the social structure of agriculture has been the topic of research projects since the beginning of rural sociology. In Germany Planck (1964, 1987) was one of the first to point out the socio-economic importance of the event of farm succession. The motivation for this research interest evolved from an increasingly unsettled political climate for the primary sector. In 1981, Fennel found that about half the farmers in the European Community (EC) then had no direct heir. What would become of the land? What would be the effects on the overall economy? We know now that the principle 'wachsen oder weichen' (get bigger or get out) applied itself rigorously. Since then the number of farms still operating as full time businesses has become a lot smaller throughout the EC. The mechanisms of farm transfer will have played a major role in this process.

Blanc and Perrier-Cornet (1993) assessed farm transfer in the EC. Their results fit into three main categories. These are: equal shares to all heirs and break-up of the farm;

equal shares, but the farm carries on as a single unit; and thirdly unequal shares and the farm remains as a unit. These practices change over time and show regional differences.

Equal shares and break-up of the farm (partible inheritance). This is found in Greece and is dominant in Italy and Spain. In Portugal, share out in kind is becoming less frequent. The shares are not necessarily equal. Sometimes the one who gets the biggest share has to look after the parents in their old age. Overall, this method encourages pluriactivity and the break up of farms. Land as such loses its status value and becomes a commodity.

Equal shares and the farm remains as a unit as in France, Denmark and Belgium. This takes different forms. In Denmark the successor buys the farm from the parents at below 20% of the market value (in the UK this is avoided because of tax disadvantages). In Belgium the successor rents it from them. In France the successor pays compensation to the other children, however only at half the market price. These practices result in young farmers in France, Belgium and Denmark being far deeper in debt than longer established farmers.

Unequal shares and preservation of the farm as a unit (impartible inheritance) are found in the UK, Ireland, parts of the Netherlands and of Germany¹. Only in the UK are there no conditions attached. In Ireland the heir has a moral obligation to look after the parents later; in North Germany, in legal codes such as the 'Norddeutsche Hoefeordnung' (NHO) the care of the older generation is guaranteed, together with a monetary compensation of the parting siblings. In Germany and in the Netherlands these payments depend on the capability of the successor to pay without endangering the viability of the farm. Parting children often receive a more costly education than the heir, a fact which might be used in the argument. It is not seen as acceptable for the heir to sell the farm for a monetary gain. In Germany the law stipulates that within 20 years of testate the heir still has to pay his siblings their straight share out of any property being sold unless s/he can prove the sale was necessary for the well being of the farm business (NHO). The resulting court cases are bitter. In the Netherlands similar agreements to the NHO usually exist within the family. In the UK the parting siblings have no say and are generally not known to complain in court.

Since the war some areas of southern Germany and France have shifted away from partible inheritance to inheritance by a single heir. The shift observed is towards inequality and the favouring of the successors' financial position. Only if the financial gains are very high, such in the case of building land, will the other siblings protest. But Blanc and Perrier-

¹ The author has adjusted these results based on personal experiences and data from Haan (1994).

Cornet (1993) mention an overall diminishing of the general authoritarianism since the late 1960's. This increase in a more egalitarian way of life amongst the generations has also been observed by the lawyers (see 6.2). It needs to be seen in the context of a further development. Fasterding (1996) found in West Germany that the emotional ties to agriculture as such are becoming less strong. He believes that this is due to a general change in attitude towards the relationship between work and leisure within society as a whole. Under some circumstances this attitude change is not compatible with certain farming practices, which might require long hours and daily routines. A career in farming might not look attractive enough for the potential successors. The older generation must be aware of this, if they want to keep the farm in the family.

For the British Isles several studies have dealt with the topic of succession as part of their research interest. The best known are: Commins and Kelleher (1973) and Shortall (1999) for Ireland; Hastings (1984) for England, who looked at 25 farms between 130 and 1000 acres and established the concept of the 'ladder of succession'. Hutson (1990) confirmed the 'ladder' for England and Wales; Gasson, Errington and Tranter published extensively on the subject of succession over the last 15 years. Especially relevant for this study is their article in 1998. Approaching by mail the same farmers as in two previous studies they found that there was no link between naming a successor and the financial pressure on the farm. However, the authors concede that the severe difficulties facing agriculture that started only a few months after their interviews had been completed might have changed the outcome of their research. Looking back the difficulties facing farmers then look mild in comparison to the ones they are going through at this time of writing (2000).

All these studies describe a similar process within the families. In general succession is patrilinear and patrilocal. The first born son is still favoured in most areas, but the first born is slowly being replaced by the first son willing and capable to take the farm on. Symes (1990) in his article about succession does only speak about 'sons'. Out of his surveyed farmers fewer than half had followed on the parental farm, which means that it is 'farming' that takes priority in the succession and not 'the farm'. He mentions that only if the sons are not committed then maybe the daughters will have a chance to take the farm on.

The choice of successor and the respective socialisation of all the children to that effect takes place very early, in some cases at birth. Inhetveen and Blasche (1983) show how for German small-scale farm families speculations took place before the child was born about the potential of a helping hand for the mother if the baby was female and of a farm

transfer if a male baby. In a quarter of the farms in the Gasson *et al.* (1998) postal survey the selection was made before the eldest son was 10, half before he was 16 years old. According to Whatmore (1991), sons are seen as the natural heirs regardless of their abilities or preferences. Women enter farming through marriage and even if they inherit land they tend not to farm it themselves, but with or even under the management of a male partner.

Variations between partible and impartible inheritance follow culturally accepted norms and practices, which have shaped the kinship ideologies of the families (de Haan, 1994). Regional and especially national differences cannot be neglected when comparing what is happening in the inter generational farm transfer. They persist despite any established code of law (see 6.2 and *ibid.*). De Haan's main focus is on the Netherlands but his findings are equally applicable elsewhere. The code of law in for example Norway and Germany treats all children as equals, the bequeathing parents do not.

For example, I grew up in the Protestant part of southern Germany, namely Schwaben or Suebia, where partible inheritance used to be the norm. The regional structures were enhanced by the historical developments of different types of villages as well as compulsory field rotation practices. In the north of Germany, as in the UK impartible inheritance is practised. The difference from an aerial view is striking; flying into Stuttgart I see a patchwork of small fields, flying into Hannover I have the same picture as in the UK...large fields.

A similar picture to the South German one has been observed by Salomon and Davis-Brown (1988) in their study on two groups of farmers in the USA. Both groups are motivated by their religious beliefs in farming as a God-given way to live, but treat their heirs differently. The Mennonites practice a more equal inheritance and believe in the right to education and property for all children and include their daughters in this. Their neighbours, members of the Apostolic church, believe in primogeniture to the extent that the father might take off-farm work to let the son manage the farm. This has resulted in bigger, more viable units and less fragmentation – a fact which Salomon and Davis-Brown calls 'sobering'. They conclude: 'As long as males are perceived as occupational heirs to the farm family enterprise, equal treatment of men and women in intergenerational land transfers will demonstrate that what is good for women as a class of individuals in the family is not necessarily the best policy for insuring farm continuity' (*ibid.*, (1988) p. 208). Voyce (1994) states for Australia that: 'While in fact parents espouse equality amongst children, they frequently act from gendered constructions and sexual stereotyping' (*ibid.*, p. 74).

This literature review does not claim to be exhaustive. It serves to give an overview of work on the topic of succession. However, all these studies deal only with one or maybe sometimes two members of the farming families. They do not look at the family as a whole. In the same vein as economists had to make allowances for the farmer as not being a totally rational profit maximising decision maker,² sociologists consider including all family members in their research on what governs the mechanisms under which families operate. Ribbens *et al.* (2001) found the ‘multiple perspectives’ resulting from such a holistic approach challenging as well as rewarding.

Symes and Marsden (1981) research on English farm families is now 20 years old. In their conclusions, they ask for research into: ‘...to examine the internal family arrangements which perpetuate such complementary roles and asymmetrical lives.’ Errington and Tranter (1991) wrote 10 years later that farm daughters are maybe the one unused resource. Both of these statements and the fact that I was not finding answers to my questions in the existing literature encouraged me to set out on this project. Globalisation and the CAP have changed lives on British farms to an extent. In general things have not become any easier and therefore the decision on who farms and who gets what out of the parental estate must be more acute than ever.

The first question I found I had to address was the complexity of the issue.

1.3 Why is the topic so complex? Identity and the tripartite meaning of ‘the farm’

The most unlikely urbanites can be heard in reminiscing about their childhood on the farm and their attachment to it. Usually this ends with phrases such as: “Well my brother got it.” Or: “The farm was too small and dad decided to sell up.” Or: “There was never any question of him not getting the farm. Us girls, I suppose, we were just expected to go and find a husband or do something else.” What would have led to these comments, these developments? The underlying processes and family histories are the topic of this thesis.

Without a doubt, the ‘farm’ is to the members of a farm family business the focus of their lives and the source of their identity. This may remain so even after a person has left the farm, the primary sector and the region. “He is a farmers’ son from Ayrshire,” as the Glaswegian lawyer is described to me by his colleague. A person’s individual identity (see 4.1 for social identity) following G.M. Mead (1968) is defined as a process of balance between individual spontaneity (‘I’) and society’s expected behaviour (‘me’). This identity

² McGregor *et al.* (1996) discuss literature on this problem in detail and present a list of factors influencing farmers’ decision-making.

is successful if the individual manages despite his/her uniqueness not to become isolated from the others s/he lives with, but also does not get totally subsumed by their expectations of how s/he should behave (Schäfer, 1998). It would therefore be rather difficult if not impossible to think of the Glaswegian lawyer as a person who declared he hated animals, being outside, was not considered hard working and most of all did not understand 'farming' and 'the farm'.

'The Farm' means different things to different people at different times. These meanings can be categorised under three headings³:

1. The farm as an asset.
2. The farm as a unit of production.
3. The farm as an employer, a livelihood, a source of intrinsic value.

The farm family's identity stems from all three. Quotes to that extent are common knowledge in the farming community:

"She comes from a **big** farm." "With a farm that size they should be living like millionaires"; referring to the 'asset'.

He is milking a litre a year herd or as in Australia: he is a member of the '2 ton club'; showing the production potential of the farm and

"You just can't sell a man's livelihood." What should he do? Where should the family go? "They owe it to the farm that brought them up to see it continue"; encompassing the intrinsic value of the farm as a livelihood, an employer.

1.3.1 The farm as an asset

As an asset the farm has a value. The definition of this value depends on the criteria applied. There is the market value, which depends on the supply and demand for other agricultural properties; the taxable value, which depends on the definition of the tax code at the time of assessment; the book value, which depends on the definition of the accounting practices applied; the leisure value, which is determined by the amenities the farm can offer such as shooting, fishing, watersports, rambling; the future value, which depends on the potential for development into other uses such as housing, roads, a quarry or landfill site; and the

³ See also Inhetveen and Blasche (1983) who describe the 'Hofdenken' of women on small-scale German farms under the (translated) headings of (1) bread-basket, allows to produce one's own food, (2) share and source of work, (3) 'solid rock/castle/fort' in unsettled times, (4) continuity and duty tying the generations together, needing sacrifices, demanding duties to keep it going for the next generation.

environmental value, which encompasses items such as groundwater resource and air quality.

These values are very diverse and some of them difficult to quantify in strict currency terms, but they all have one thing in common: they change. This is particularly acute for the market value, which responds to external forces on a very local as well as on a global scale. For example: a farmer sells some land for development, because there is a big demand due to a multinational company moving to the area. Because of the taxation laws, if s/he does not roll this money over appropriately capital gains tax will be payable on the proceeds of the sale. The neighbour on the other hand, had bad years on the books because adverse prices on the world market have made the farm unprofitable and the bank will have enforced a sale. The person with the rollover problem will be willing and able to pay over the market let alone the production value for the adjoining farm and thus outbid anybody who based their offer solely on the earning capacity of the farm.

1.3.2 The farm as a production unit

This is the item which is the easiest to quantify: "This year we produced so and so many units per production unit." For example, cabbages or tons of cereals per hectare or kilogram meat per cow or lambs at x pence a pound. It is also the item which is the least often mentioned in family discussions about the future of the farm. 'Asset' value or 'moral' value are far more prevalent. The reasons are obvious. The farm as a production unit can vary its output constantly depending to a large extent on the inputs used. This is far more variable than the actual market value of land. However, it is the third intrinsic value that is the most complex and probably the most crucial one.

1.3.3 The farm as an employer, a livelihood, a source of (work) ethic and intrinsic value

Respondents, neighbours and friends are often found speaking about the farm as if it was a person. They owe it to 'the farm' to keep going. They say they cannot go on holidays and one woman even says she could not have another child, because the farm would suffer too much. They could not do that (sell it) to the farm, because after all it brought them up. They are talking about the farm as if it was an 'employer' as one of the lawyers in the research describes it, which to him was the only way he can make sense of the farm families dealings with the farm and each other. The farm to them has a life of its own.⁴

⁴ MacKenzie (1990) describes in his book on nuclear missile guidance how a state, perhaps personified by the president or a political elite, is conceived of as akin to an individual, rational human decision-maker. In the same vein the farm is often perceived as a person, who demands loyalty, just like an employer. There is no question, whether these conceptions are right or wrong, they exist in people's minds and therefore influence their personal decisions

If we assume the farm to be a person it can demand loyalty, commitment and sacrifices. It can on the other hand give rewards and thanks. Such terminology is familiar in popular books on gardening and especially in expressions used to describe soil fertility. Why not understand them to be used in the context of the farm, which mostly is determined by its soils and the handling of them?

A farm can also be experienced as a 'place', maybe even 'as a place called home'. As such it rewards refuge, a sense of security. This applies even if we follow Massey's (1994) argument, that place is not a location with secure and static boundaries. She states that the identity of a place is always formed by a juxtaposition and co-presence of a particular set of social relations and by the effects these produce. 'The identities of places are unfixed because social relations change and they do not derive from some internalised history with clear boundaries, but from the specificity of the interactions with the outside' (*ibid.*, p. 169). This does not contradict remembering a farm as 'a place called home'. Words to that effect can be recalled by anybody who has ever revisited a place where they had felt at home. The place would have felt different. People have changed or are not there any more; houses and shops look different, have extended or been removed. But in the memory it is all still there.

The sense of security people associate with the place they grew up in is not unique to farming offspring, but the experience of the farm as an employer and a livelihood is. The farm has demands. Work has to be done for all to see and in all weathers. Removing the farm will leave the people working it without 'a job', without 'the farm' making it clear what there is to do. So does closing a factory or a coal mine for that matter. The difference is subtle and may be seen in the family's proprietorship of and residence on the farm. The miner and the factory worker do not have that. Even the factory owner is unlikely to live in the factory, but the farming family lives on the property, which undoubtedly would enhance any feelings they harbour for that 'place'.

Errington (1988) has described how farms were used in times of high unemployment as sources of work for family members. Still today comments such as: "Well he (!) can always come back and farm, if things don't work out elsewhere" are still made by my farming neighbours. This seems to imply that the farm owes these men and it is mostly men, a living. They are entitled to live 'off' the farm, make a living on it, in the same vein as the farm can demand work from family members. Talking to German sociologists, it became clear how this obligation of helping out on the farm as a member even of the extended family

vein the farm is often perceived as a person, who demands loyalty, just like an employer. There is no question, whether these conceptions are right or wrong, they exist in people's minds and therefore influence their personal decisions.

and living in town was still common practice. Home slaughter, fruit picking, grape harvest are all occasions where farms can rely on relatives to help. The farms in this research did not have these traditional labour requirements, but they have always employed labourers.

We accept the personification of the 'farm' as an employer, as such it cannot be sold easily, because it cannot 'consent', but demands loyalty to the last opportunity of carrying on. Still today respondents and key informants confirmed it is usually not the farmer who sells, but the 'bank' who enforces a sale. The farming family carries on until 'outsiders' call a halt. This can be interpreted that they do not have to take any blame; they were loyal to the end.

1.4 Issues of identity and gender

An identity can be derived from all three meanings of the farm.

The definition of a family firm (see 1.6) states that resources and management are in the hands of close relatives. What is different for a family farm business is that these resources are mainly based on land ownership and entail therefore a certain physical immobility for the business and the family which runs it. They are identified and identify themselves with their 'bit of dirt' and thus expect to manage it in a way which the onlookers, the general public, politicians and administrators approve of. This can have its problems. Berlan-Darque (1988) describes how difficult this identification is in a time when the farmers' identity is questioned in the course of agriculture being devalued on one hand and their spouse's identity is questioned as they are compared to their counterparts in the city as having no professional status.

There is always a gender issue in discussing identities. As Mead (1988, p. 125) says: 'Natural gender differences are central for the representation of 'rural idyll'' (Mead's emphasis), as quoted in Jenkins (1996).

Endeveld (1994) believes that rules apply for women and men regarding their agrarian identity. However she shows that women, and most farming spouses are female, do have room to manoeuvre and definitely do not see themselves as helpless.

Hughes (1997) looked at moral order and domestic identities in village (not only farming) life. She found a distinct historic and geographical situatedness of a socio-cultural construction of womanhood. Women who do not fit are marginalised unless they have an 'excuse', such as economic necessity for their otherness. Otherwise a woman's duty is to stay at home until the children finish primary school. This role applies to incomers and locals within the village. She also quotes Braithwaite (1994) who comments on the stereotype of the rural woman as the family woman in the home and who found that these

women were on the surface rejecting their domestic identity, but in reality they only worked part-time and they all tended to make sure that their work fitted around their domestic responsibilities. Hughes (1997, p. 136) warns that if we accept that gender identities are unstable, historically specific and constituted in place, we must be wary of extrapolating any findings to 'other' rural places (Hughes's emphasis). However, it can be argued that certain parallels offer themselves in between areas or even countries, provided all factors are considered.

In her work on the detraditionalisation of occupational identities in Australia, Bryant (1999) still finds traditionality in the construction of some identities in farming. She concludes that there are shifts

in understandings about work patterns and masculinities and femininities which are constructed and reconstructed in a range of contradictory circumstances and settings – living in a rural locale which at the same time is increasingly open to global norms about gender and work, working with one's husband or wife in a 'family partnership' but increasingly each partner having more specialist and individualist work domain and role, and for some having work which is both in and outside of agriculture (*ibid.*, p. 256).

1.5 Consequences stemming from the tripartite interpretation of the 'farm'

In order to address the change over between farming generations the question that needs to be asked is: What criteria from the tripartite interpretation are applied by the persons involved and when does that happen? In other words, which aspects of the farm are the family members using when they make decisions about the future? When and on what basis are these decisions reached? This basis consists on one hand of the family members and on the other of the farm business. The family has its own dynamics, its members their own characteristics and preferences. The farm business has its capital items such as location, soil type, roads and buildings and its specific mix of enterprises with their respective input structure, which include labour requirements and their respective marketing potential.

Both require different inputs at different stages of their existence. They are closely inter-linked. Soil type, topography and location determine in most cases the possible enterprises, but these depend on the persons' preferences and capital available to finance them. No adviser will suggest a piggery to a farmer located far away from feedmills and markets, who has no capital and detests the smell of pigs. Likewise keeping sheep on a highly productive lowland arable farm would be an inefficient use of expensive cropping land. The family as source of farm labour undergoes different stages in their lifecycle.

Children are born and can be involved or leave the farm, wives become involved, withdraw and become involved again. As Gasson and Errington (1993, p128) state:

...the fluctuating labour supply will lead to considerable variation in labour productivity and the occurrence of under-employment over a substantial portion of the family cycle.... While the supply of family labour thus varies with the family cycle, the development cycle of the business can also give rise to fluctuating demands for labour. Indeed one of the greatest challenges facing the farm family business is in meshing together the constraints and opportunities of the family cycle with those of the business development cycle.

As Harris (1990) writes:

...this actual fusion of different types of relations and activities is well illustrated (though not in a communal situation) by Hutson's work on farm families. The same group (and the relations which constitute it) is simultaneously a family group and a management team, but cannot be understood as either, only as both. Whether the farm families he describes are family farms with a management content or a management team with a kin context is at the substantive level not an issue for the observer, but for the members of such groups. It is they, not we, who give primacy to one set of rubrics rather than another and their choice may differ between occasions (p. 196).

If we follow both arguments into the future, the change over between the generations with the additional item of the meaning of the farm to the individual at various times, demands investigation (see Figure 1b)⁵.

Attitudes and value judgments can be understood at least partly as the result of one's upbringing. The impact of education and social life on farming people form therefore the first part of the section on findings from the interviews. Their interpretation draws heavily on Bourdieu's 1984 concept of 'habitus', which by definition incorporates the impact of social group and gender.

The opportunity for 'Situated Learning' is emphasised. How skills and knowledge are applied in the daily lives of the people living and working on the farm is the content of the second part. Farm family members' active involvement in tasks related to the household, children, farm tasks and the management of it all are described. Both learning and farm family tasks can be understood as shaping and being shaped by the attitudes and values associated with the farm.

⁵Ehmer and Mitterauer (1986) differentiate between 'Familienwirtschaft' where the farm is organised around the available family labour, and 'Hofwirtschaft' where whatever labour the family cannot supply is bought in to keep the labour supply of the farm constant.

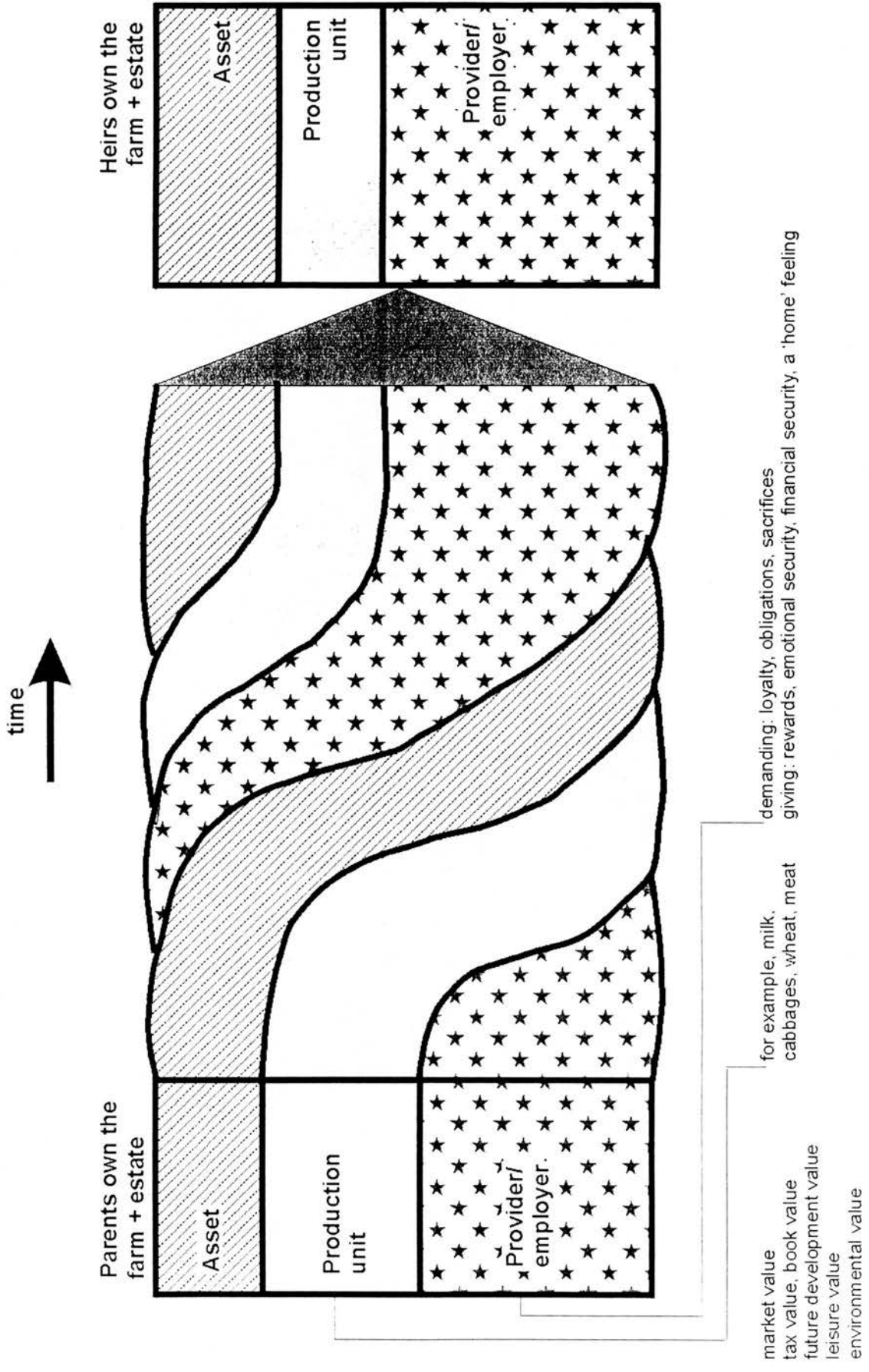


Figure 1b: The three-partite meanings of the farm. The plaited cord.

In part three, the actual process is analysed, which shows the handing over of the farm and other assets from the ownership of the parents to the ownership of the heirs. Particularly in here the individual judgments, which have evolved during a person's lifetime, become clearer in their effects on the future of the farm family.

Gender is addressed in all three sections respectively. This sequence was chosen in order to account for the way gender becomes evident throughout each person's life. Also the evidence found suggests this rather than a summarising review of the literature on gender or a separate chapter on gender.

In all these parts one thing remains crucial: the influence of the tripartite meaning of the family farm. Which of the three aspects prevails at any given moment in time determines the attitude of the people in their response to questions such as education, retirement, financial planning, succession and job satisfaction. Problems will arise when two people apply different criteria at the same time. If for one family member the tradition of the farm in the family – meaning 3 – is more important than its development potential – meaning 1 – the others might disagree and want the farm to be developed. If one thinks a new shed is more important – meaning 2 – than a conservatory on the house – meaning 1 and maybe 3 – there is conflict. As long as everybody involved can think and feel at the same time with the same mix of interpretations of the 'farm' there is no open conflict. The farm and its family functions smoothly.

All three parts should be put into the context of developments in the whole of society, with its trends, technologies and globalised markets, in short the socio-economic climate in the course of time. This is described in Chapter 2 with an emphasis on the south-east of Scotland, which is where the researcher and the respondents live.

1.6 Definition

The following definitions will be used throughout this thesis.

Definitions of what makes a farming family or a farming family business, differ depending on the methodological, theoretical or political angle taken. There is no clear divide between the farm as a family business or a capitalist enterprise.

After extensive discussion of the prevailing literature, Gasson and Errington (1993) choose the following six elements to their definition of the farm family business.

1. Business control is combined with managerial control in the hands of business principals.

2. Kinship or marriage relates these principals.
3. Family members (including these business principals) provide capital to the business.
4. Family members including business principals do farm work.
5. Business ownership and managerial control are transferred between the generations with the passage of time.
6. The family lives on the farm.

They emphasise that this is an ideal type of farm family business, a farm family, a farm family household and a lot broader than, for example, 'a family worked farm' which would preclude all farms which employ labour to any defined extent. The authors liken it to an onion which is layered but still recognisable as such even where there are one or two layers missing. This definition is used here demonstrating the vast scope for diversity within the farming population. It demonstrates the far-reaching consequences for any of the family members regarding what is considered by themselves and by others as to be their 'right', their duty, their responsibility and their choices at various stages of their lives.

The above six factors are very gender specific. Men typically exercise business control. The business principals are men and men are mostly also the holders of the farm's capital. Men typically inherit farms (*ibid.*).

Marsden (1979) as quoted in Whatmore (1991) identifies five phases through which a farm household might pass during the lifetime of one generation. These are: marriage; expansion of family and business; dispersion as children leave home; independence and then replacement/take-over by the next generation. Keating and Little (1991), in their research based on a small group of New Zealand farmers, use different stages. Their stages in life are making a place, choosing a successor and moving out of farming. Their stages for succession are watching for interest (where they seem to watch the boys more than the girls), determining eligibility, placing the successor and letting go.

The issue is not whether one definition is more aptly describing the phenomenon than another, but the importance is, that there are phases, that need to be kept in mind when the labour and financial situation of a farming family is assessed. What working hours can the family members make available for the family business? Is there enough work for all of its members? Finally there is the question of how the changeover between the generations is handled. The agricultural colleges offer seminars discussing retirement, succession and

inheritance (eg. advertisement in *The Scottish Farmer* 3/1/2001). The terms used in advertising them and used in this thesis need to be defined⁶:

| | |
|-------------|--|
| succession | transfer of management control over use of assets |
| inheritance | legal transfer of ownership of business assets, including land |
| transfer | combining succession and inheritance, but not suggesting that these two processes are simultaneous |
| retirement | withdrawal from active managerial control or involvement in work on the farm |

These terms introduce the scope for different scenarios and personal interpretations.

Inherent are legal, fiscal and financial implications for each of the three steps.

⁶ For a detailed discussion see Gasson and Errington (1993) and Hutson (1990).

CHAPTER 2

Background Information

The following chapter is designed to provide a clear picture of the geographical, socio-economic and financial conditions under which the farming families in this project operate. There are pronounced differences between the regions ranging from the large estate encompassing several farms of varying productivity, to the near croft sized marginal stock farm. There are also the highly intensive farm units producing soft fruits, pigs or poultry. Variations in rainfall, soil quality and distance from markets for labour and agricultural inputs and outputs are equally vast. The latest 'Scottish Rural Life Update' (Williams *et al.*, 1998) explicitly refers to the diversity of rural areas in Scotland.

This diversity becomes very clear if put into the context of either a teenager, who wakes up on a small stock farm in the Highlands in winter and has to go and help feed the sheep before the school bus arrives or a child on a big arable farm in the Lowlands, where there is not much happening in winter and there is enough money from either on or off-farm sources to finance a skiing holiday abroad. Financially and from a time and work point of view the teenager on the Highland farm might not even be able to afford a weekend in Aviemore.⁷

This background information is necessary to allow the reader to visualise the conditions applying to the present and future of the particular families in the project and may help in making comparisons with families in other farming regions.

The first part of the chapter describes the geographical context of the farms, the second the work conditions in the area and the socio-political context and the third the financial framework within which the families operate given their farms' specific climate, soil and capital improvements⁸.

⁷ Aviemore is one of the Scottish Ski resorts in the Highlands.

⁸ Capital improvements include money spent on items such as land, buildings, fences and roads.

2.1 The geographical context of the research

The research took place in the south-east of Scotland. This area contains the regions Tayside, Fife, Lothian and the Borders and totals just over 7,000 (21%) of Scottish farms on an area of 1.2 million hectare out of Scotland's total of 5.2 million hectare.

It is a very varied part of Scotland containing hills, lowlands and coastal areas. The climate is milder and dryer than the rest of Scotland. The majority of Scottish arable farms and a high proportion of the better soils are found here, but the area still contains approximately 10% of Scotland's LFA (Less Favoured Areas) (The Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department, 1999).⁹

Nevertheless farmers from other areas of Scotland quite often consider a move to the south-east as a move to the 'easy life'. What this statement implies is that this area may offer greater production potential as well as good access to urban facilities, but that this also comes with a higher price tag when land values are considered.

The field work including the insider observation took place on medium-sized farms in the Borders region and the eastern part of the Lothian region, namely East Lothian.

The Borders region is slightly more stock orientated than East Lothian, which has more purely arable farms as well as some soft fruit and vegetable units. Part of this is reflected in the respective size of farms. The average Borders' farm is 175 ha and there are 42 % of farms larger than 100 ha; the average East Lothian farm size is 115 ha and there are 37 % of farms which are larger than 100 ha. Dairy farms are on the retreat in both areas and were not included in the sample.

The agricultural sector in the Borders contributed 18.4% of the region's GDP.¹⁰ This means that agriculture in the Borders has a far more important role than in the rest of Scotland (3.1%) (Ramsay *et al.*, 1997). The same report does not provide any figures for East Lothian. Due to its proximity to Edinburgh the latter is increasingly used as a country dormitory for people working in the city and in certain aspects is not considered 'rural' as such, but as 'urban with a significant rural population' (Edmonds *et al.*, 1996). A straight comparison of the GDP does therefore not offer itself.

⁹ In total Scotland has 31000 holdings with more than 2 ha and an average size of just under 170 ha each. This does not mean all of this farmland is highly productive. A very high percentage (83% in 1999) are of LFA status. For comparison only 45% in the UK have this status. In Scotland only 17.2% of the total land is arable (35.9% for the UK and 45.3 % for all the EU States) (SERAD, 2000).

¹⁰ For comparison agriculture contributed 1% to the UK total GDP. For the European Union this amounted to 1.6% in 1997, whereas in 1989 it was still 4% (SERAD, 2000).

According to the Scottish Office overall 20% of the Scottish population lives in rural Scotland. This is the same proportion as in 1981. The definitions of what is 'rural', however, do vary (The Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department, 1998). Using a finer grading Williams *et al.* (1998) found that 28% of the Scottish population live in rural households¹¹ (see also 3.4 on the use of secondary data).

In order to make the statistics more relevant to today's situation and socio-political requirements, the difference between 'rural' and 'urban' is not as relevant any longer and could be replaced by a spatial concept which takes into account the relationship with the global market rather than with the nearest urban centre. This train of thought is in line with the ongoing discussion on 'locality' and 'rurality'. Marsden *et al.* (1990), and later van den Ploeg (1992), use 'locality' not in its purely geographical sense, but as a specific social space. In the past each and every locality as they define it, gave rise to a wide range of farming features. Nowadays these features, these 'local specialities', are severely affected by political and technological developments. Their list is long: e.g. environmental concerns may impose bans on long standing farming practices and result in a changed landscape; the introduction and abolishment of subsidies and quotas influences what is grown on farms; the field of technological advance is vast with progress for example in seed preparation and plant breeding ranging from the introduction of single seeds (which resulted in migrant work gangs becoming a thing of the past), right up to gene manipulation, which in turn allows for a much more radical use of herbicides and insecticides. In the field of material handling, the introduction of the pick-up trailer and the forklift has made many farm workers redundant. And as they left with their families, their quite often 'tied' farm cottages became available for non-farming people or fell into disrepair, all depending on the appeal of the region as a convenient place to live.

According to College advisers¹² the respective farms selected in both areas can safely be considered as 'medium' sized and were directly comparable as far as size, location, soil types and production systems were concerned. For reasons of anonymity a direct listing of farm type and pseudonym used in the write-up has been omitted.

¹¹ A written request to the statistics section of the Scottish Executive yielded a definition of 6 categories on population density, which is used in the context of the Scottish Household Survey and the comment: 'The phrase 'predominantly urban, but with a significant rural population' relates to areas such as East Lothian which are not classified as rural on the crude population density approach (probably referring to the 6 categories from above), but where we know much of the area's composition is accounted for by 'countryside'.'

¹² State run advisory service for farmers associated with the agricultural colleges.

Geographically all farms are within easy commuting distance of either Berwick on Tweed or Edinburgh. No child had to travel any further than 30 minutes to the local primary school or high school (unless fee-paying schools were opted for). Agricultural merchants, supermarkets and doctors are also within 30–40 minutes for all farms.

At the time of the interviews three of the ten families ran two farms, one of these rented. All the remaining farms were owned. The six arable farms varied from 400 to 1,500 acres, some contracting an additional 200–400 acres. Two grew potatoes and cereals, the others solely cereals and some rapeseed.

Two farms classified themselves as mixed. They each owned around 630 acres arable, with 500 ewes and 200 fattening calves or 40 suckler cows, some of them pedigree, respectively. Two of the arable farms were in the process of introducing a cattle enterprise. The two stock farms lambled between 1,600 and 2,500 ewes and ran more than 100 suckler cows each.

The respective mix of production systems is not fixed, but changes all the time depending on farm and family set-up. Overall there is no hard and fast rule as to how this happens. For example: Given bad prices they will fatten or breed less female stock or adjust their cropping mix.; given wet weather such as during this year of writing they will have problems lifting the potatoes and/or sowing their winter cereals. Given the outbreak of foot and mouth disease, which is decimating stock at this time of writing (2001), the consequences for any future farm decisions are still threateningly uncertain.

2.2 Conditions under which the farms operate – the socio-political context

2.2.1 Developments in rural policy

Europe's rural areas have undergone drastic socioeconomic changes especially since World War II (WWII). The EEC, founded in 1957 and including the UK since 1973, with a five year transition period successfully achieved the goals for its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of increased food production and self-sufficiency and later resulting in surplus, but was not able to guarantee incomes for farmers comparable with the rest of its members' populations. 'The development of agricultural structural policies after WWII reflected a growing awareness that the improvement of agricultural incomes could not be achieved through protection and price support alone' (Arkleton Trust, 1996, p. 9). The first CAP reform effort was issued as the 'Green Paper' in 1985 and has since been followed by ever more radical policy changes. The farm was and is the target of the introduction and abolishment of items such as strict price policies, quota systems, co-responsibility levies, set-

aside schemes, guidelines for the safeguarding of the environment. Winter (1996) summarises the 'irreversible re-politicisation of agriculture'. For this project the most relevant of these forces are:

- Restructuring and redefinition of the British countryside as a sphere of leisure consumption rather than primary production. This is leading to a geographical re-distribution of economic activity and a dramatic repopulation of all but the remotest countryside for the last 25 years, which in turn disrupt the traditional market for farm property.
- International and national concerns and imperatives regarding environmental sustainability and biodiversity.
- European policy initiatives to reform CAP.

Winter (1996) describes the main feature of the new agriculture as having a highly bureaucratic support system. 'Farmers are confronted by a bewilderingly complicated system of controls. The cost to the public purse remains high and few of the expected environmental benefits have materialised' (*ibid.*, p. 308). An example of this is the criticism of the achievements of SEPA (Scottish Environment Protection Agency) in the first year of its existence.

This ever-changing agenda meant initially a demand for increased food production at any cost, then a call for cutting production costs to remain competitive, which resulted in high levels of mechanisation and out-migration from the agricultural workforce. At the same time many farmers increased their debt burden. For the future, Memagh and Commins (1992) as quoted in Shucksmith *et al.* (1996), list some of the structural changes facing UK farmers in an even more accelerated form by the year 2000. Most of them are well under way at this time of writing:

- Transition to an era of production limitations in agriculture.
- De-coupling of income supports from food production programs.
- Re-organisation of industrial production to the possible disadvantage of rural areas.
- Growth of the service sector in urban areas.
- Centralisation tendencies as a consequence of the single market.

- Continuing depopulation from certain rural areas (see below on urban counter flow).
- The expansion of information technologies, tourism and leisure industries.
- Increasing environmental demands placed on the countryside.

They emphasise that different rural areas will respond differently, but, nevertheless, all their residents will have to respond in one way or another. This applies in particular to the families who work the land. What are their employment choices?

2.2.2 Migration and employment in rural areas

Employment opportunities in a region play a major role in young people's perceptions of the future. Can they find or create work or do they have to move to find it? At what age does this happen? The 1991 Census clarifies the migration patterns in Scotland. In comparison to the whole of Scotland, rural Scotland shows a higher in-migration in the 1–15 and the >45-year old age group and a lower in-migration for 16–19 year olds. However, out-migration for rural areas is in line with the whole of Scotland. Most migration in general happens amongst 16–29 year olds, a fact which contradicts the popular belief, that young people are being replaced by pensioners looking for a retirement home in an attractive area. Most in **and** out migrants for all areas are of working age and employed (Edmonds *et al* 1996).

Overall there is no de-population. The Special Migration Statistics from the 1991 Census (General Registry Office, Scotland 1995), show that for rural Scotland as a whole the in-flow of migrants is 1.69% higher than the total outflow. The out-migration has in many rural (and in particular farming) areas been more than compensated for by in-migration of people from urban areas looking for a 'rural lifestyle' either for their retirement or as a base to commute or work from. (Second-home owners also bring capital into rural communities, but are by definition not 'members' of it as such.) These newcomers have brought with them their lifestyles and values, in addition to capital which flowed into agriculture via the purchase of farm buildings and land. Their integration into the local communities has and is happening with more or less resentment and misunderstanding from both sides (Jedrej and Nuttall, 1996) with the result that the rural-urban cultural divide is becoming more and more fluid. Both groups use rural or urban, public or private goods and services, some local some in the towns.

There are regional differences in these patterns, but these do not apply to the areas of the research project. This implies that there must be jobs available in the research areas,

however, these might not meet the personal preferences of the respective job seeker and s/he may decide to look elsewhere.

Jamieson (2000) takes issue with other theoretical work regarding young people's migration and attachment to rural localities. She found an unexpectedly complex pattern of reasons that make people into 'stayers' in an area with various degrees of 'detachment' or not. Social class via the parents' background remains one of the major determinants.

As all of the informants in this project are, broadly speaking, from the middle class farming community regarding income and education, having choices has been an implicit part of their lives. Nevertheless, Sandra Ballantyne (Appendix II(7)), one of the younger respondents, voices her (pleasant) surprise at how many of her peers were actually choosing to come back and live and work in the Borders. Another young respondent, Mary Petrie (Appendix II(8)), says she could imagine that the way technology such as telecommunication is going she herself or her sister could live on the farm and work in another capacity other than farming, elsewhere. Neither see a rural residence as handicap, unlike previous generations who had experienced it as such. Changes in the employment market and on the farm affect the perceptions of the future of all people associated with agriculture.

2.2.3 The consequences of modernisation and changes in farm labour

Technological progress in agriculture has been dramatic. Yields for some products have more than doubled since WWII. Labour saving seeding and harvesting techniques are dominating. As a side effect, the associated labour process has become increasingly homogenous, demanding either a very specialised expertise or capital intensive automation. Also, this general process is becoming disconnected from what is happening locally. Today agricultural outputs are mostly processed, packaged and marketed a lot further away from their place of production.

An extreme example is the growing of tomatoes in the Saudi Arabian desert with the help of migrant workers and high tech water supplies. These are sold in Scottish supermarkets in winter and as a consequence Scottish tomato growers in the Clyde valley are no longer able to compete given their higher production costs (labour and heating) and have gone out of business (source: personal observation).

In the same vein a process of externalisation affects the flow of inputs such as capital, fertiliser, machinery and seeds¹³.

¹³ For a discussion of the implications of subsumption see, Sarah Whatmore *et al.* (1987): 'Towards a typology of farm business in contemporary British agriculture' in *Sociologia Ruralis* 27 (1) pp. 21-37.

Prices for agricultural inputs and outputs are mainly reflections of the global market. This applies to the money market as well. The interest rates on the farm's overdraft are determined by non farming related factors. This was not a problem as recently as one generation ago, when there were many farmers without any debts whatsoever (see 2.3). Now an increasing number have debts and might have to sell assets to keep the farm afloat. These debts might have been incurred through an expensive business expansion, which has not achieved the expected product prices, or simply through an overdraft which could not be paid off, because the business either did not adapt efficiently enough to changes in the market or had a bad season. The parents' generation did not have to contend with these issues to the same extent. The present generation has had to become more business minded and where necessary, has borrowed in order to survive in farming.

The latest report from the Scottish Executive (SERAD, 2000) shows how farms have become bigger and fewer. Everywhere farms are amalgamated and property is sold to non-farming people. The overall result is a feeling of greater uncertainty for people associated with farming or even just living in rural areas. Their whole existence is in flux. Who are their neighbours? Who buys or rents the former workers' cottage or even the farmhouse? Are there enough people to keep the school, health service, transport network, village shop and other local services? This ripple effect goes far beyond the supply and demand for products directly related to farming. The devastating effects on tourism and other small businesses (see previous page) due to the Foot and Mouth outbreak demonstrated this clearly.

2.2.4 Agricultural labour force

As agriculture deals with natural processes (see also Section 4.3.2), the activities surrounding it are determined by factors that are only to a certain extent predictable. They are seasonal, weather, soil and acreage dependent, and deal with 'live' matter, plants and animals¹⁴. In that respect farming differs from other small family businesses. However, there are many similarities between a farm family business and for instance a family craft bakery shop, in a tourist town. Modern production processes have gone towards factory type food production, but even on the most mechanised farm, the performance of one field or animal affects other production factors down the line. This includes the family living and working on the farm. Work patterns on farms are not only tightly interwoven, but also have to be flexible enough

¹⁴ The extremes are intensive livestock farming, such as battery hens and piggeries, where there is a very high concentration of animals under nearly 'assembly line' conditions. But even there nature still has its say via factors such as the need for ventilation in hot weather, reproduction cycle limitations and the need for slurry disposal acreage.

to respond to changes in the natural or market environment. In addition, the number of people working on the farm can vary a lot during the seasons. In some cases this additional workforce is entirely supplied by the extended family and friends, whilst in others it is all casual labour hired from outside. The volume of labour in agriculture supplied by family members in various capacities for the whole of the UK is in the region of 249.4 (in 1,000 Annual Work Units) with an extra 118.9 (1,000 AWU) supplied by non family members. In other member States of the EU the non-family proportion is even less (European Commission, 1999).

The agricultural work force is declining further all over the European Union. The reasons are reflective of the overall decline of the significance of the agricultural sector within the respective economies of the member states, as agricultural productivity improves and non farm opportunities continue to increase. (Food) imports from poor countries with cheap labour and less costly legislation are another factor in the global equation.

Between 1981–1991 the number of people working in agriculture, forestry and fisheries had declined by 40% (*Eurostat*, 1996).

In the 1991 census, 1% of the Scottish population and 3.2% of people living in rural Scotland were employed in agriculture. Within this declining sector the trend is for less full-time regular employees, whose average age is increasing and who are not replaced on retirement. There is, however, also a definite increase in part-time employees, including more spouses, who are shown to work full-time or part-time for the family farm on a regular basis (Scottish Office, 1998).

However, the increasing use of farm contractors and machinery rings, is ignored by the official statistical base. Nevertheless, whilst the statistics now include the farmers' spouses in the head count, they do not take into account the actual hours worked or in what capacity the spouses work for the business. Still in the 2001 agriculture Census for Scotland neither occupier nor spouse were assessed by sex. Does that mean it is officially assumed, that the farmer is male and the spouse female? Other family members are assessed by gender, but again not by actual hours worked.

These figures make it less surprising that in the EU when it had 12 Member States, only about half to two-thirds of farming household incomes came from farming with the rest coming from other sources. For the UK these 'other sources' were mainly due to wages (*Eurostat*, 1996). Out of the people actually working on a farm in the UK, 71.6% had some other employment. This compares with only 54.9% in Germany (European Commission, 1999). One possible explanation is the irregularity of German primary school hours, which

makes it more difficult for German mothers to go out and do waged work. In comparison, their UK counterparts do not have this handicap.

For the whole of the south-east of Scotland, most farms have 1–2 employees on their books, but the statistics nevertheless show that there are still nearly 100 farms in the region who employ more than 7 workers. Farms in the Borders on average employ 2.36 employees per farm, which is higher than the Scottish average of 1.79, in part reflecting the bigger scale of the Border farming businesses, rather than a lack of efficiency. However, on 471 farms in the Borders (71 in East Lothian) the spouses helped, some of them full time. A further 62 (9) female family members also worked on these farms (SERAD, 2000).

A recent report on the impact of the Common Agricultural Policies on the agriculture in the Borders estimates that by the year 2003 another 350 jobs will be lost, but because of the tightly interwoven nature of the industry with other related sectors of the economy, a further 715 people will have to find alternative employment. It is estimated that a total of 2.3% of all the persons employed in the Borders will have to find alternative employment due to Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) changes under the 'Agenda 2000' scheme (Ramsay *et al.*, 1997), a prognosis which is already being felt quite distinctly by the future job seekers as well as the rest of the community. These figures will certainly increase given the ramifications of the Foot and Mouth Crisis, which is not over at the time of writing.

The job market in the Borders is known to offer a more restricted range of options than East Lothian because of the latter's proximity to Edinburgh, but this apparent lack of opportunity was not mentioned as an obstacle by any of the interviewees. This exemplifies the picture drawn by Post and Terluin (1997), who found that total employment increased in what they define as rural areas in almost all OECD countries between 1980 and 1990, while agricultural employment declined over the same period. They take this as an indication of the increasing diversification of the respective rural economies. This was also reflected in the increase in non-agricultural employment in rural regions. (However, figures for the United Kingdom were not given with respect to employment.)

2.3 Financial aspects of the farms

Any plans for the future involve an examination of the present and the past. For a business, this means a good look at the financial prospects lying ahead. In Scotland the aggregate farming income has continued to fall over the last three years, as did direct subsidies. Despite this, the latest report for all the farms in Scotland shows the total for Direct Grants and Subsidies came to £476 Million and the 'Total Income From Farming' to £239 Million.

For the year 1998/99 the average percentage of subsidies of the 'Net Farm Income' amounted to 501% for all farms (SERAD, 2000). A further decline in the level of government subsidies is to be expected and has already been partly implemented for cereal farmers.

As an example of the order of financial transaction the individual farm businesses below will effect in a year, here are some excerpts from a balance sheet out of the 'Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture' for the year 1998–1999, which looks at nine types of farms. 'Cereals' is one of them. The books of 23 cereal farms are averaged and published annually. The average total assets¹⁵ of these cereal farms were £537,362/£554,792 (opening/closing balances) and total external liabilities were £97,091/£87,799. This represents some 18%/16% of the farms' total assets which were owed to outsiders. In comparison to other industries this is not a lot of debt, but the production processes on a farm do not allow for an extra shift to be worked such as in the manufacturing industry, for example, to remedy a difficult situation. The farmer will have to wait for another season or another calf crop. This is sometimes not feasible and the bank might step in and force a sale. The total crop output of £76,286/£65,636 for these averaged farms needs to be seen in relation to that. The differences in the opening/closing balances are given to illustrate that there are big seasonal variations and vast amounts of money involved in farm businesses (see also 5.2.3: Office duties).

According to the 'European Size Unit classification' 40% of all Lothian and 47% of all Borders farms are classified as having an SGM (Standard Gross Margin)¹⁶ of more than 48,000, which places them ahead of the rest of Scotland, where only 28% of the farms are above this mark (Scottish Office, 1996). EU-wide this places Scotland at the top of the income list. However, with constantly changing directives in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), disease fears and a high reliance of farm businesses on subsidy payments, the picture is changing throughout the farming community. The extent to which individual farms rely on subsidies was established in a recent report on the Business Performance of Borders Regions Farms (Ramsay *et al.*, 1997). The subsidy receipts for the 429 Borders farmers responding to the questionnaire was well in excess of the net profit of their respective farm businesses. For stock farmers especially, the subsidy is their profit. This translates to: no subsidy, no profit for your work.

¹⁵ This entails land, buildings, improvements and fixed equipment, e.g. grain-dryer, machinery, equipment, vehicles and breeding stock (see below Ch 5 the example of a group of heifers); physical working assets such as trading livestock and harvested and growing crops.

¹⁶ The Standard Gross Margin represents the value in Euros of crops and livestock and their related subsidies on the holdings, less the variable costs to produce them.

Farm-gate prices have dropped, the pound sterling is strong, health scares and bad weather have all contributed to a dramatic increase in agricultural borrowings (TSB, 1998). On average in 1997–1998, approximately 40% of farms in Scotland had no borrowings. Given the weather conditions in the year 2000 and the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in 2001, the assumption seems justified that there will be a lot more farmers who will have to borrow to keep themselves in business. How many will be forced out of business is uncertain.

Returns on the total capital invested in a farm are usually very low. This is mainly due to land prices that do not reflect the production potential of the farms. To overcome this in recent times, consultants are often using the return on capital excluding the value of land as a measure of a farm's performance. For Scotland these figures have been declining steadily as well. According to SERAD (1999), for 1995/96 this stood at approximately 16% for all farms and came down two years later to 11.2%, ranging from a low of 5.3% for sheep farms to a high of 21.2% for crop farms, which had benefited from a good potato year during that particular period.

LloydsTSB note in their Economic Bulletin (TSB, 1999) that, whilst they do believe the rate of increase in agricultural borrowings has slowed down, they are not sure whether this is due to a significant fall in investments or in private drawings. They do not say whether this level of borrowings is sustainable or even healthy for the industry. At the time of writing, a disastrous year for all farmers left the press full of sad stories of farming families having to give up and of farmers actually using 'helplines' set up for them by various charities. However, as a neighbour comments on a recent sale of a nearby farm for purely residential purposes¹⁷: "All this misery has not brought land prices down, because of people like that (referring to the property purchasers). Soon there will be no one left to make it look like 'the country' for them, because we will all be gone and there will be no one to farm it. These guys certainly do not want to get their own hands dirty."

The use of land solely for farming is now contested. What is today's optimal use of land and resources? Optimal for whom, a state, a village, the environment, the consumer? According to van den Ploeg (1992), theoretically it is possible to grow all EU crops on the best areas of land which lie in the main deltas (that is, the areas which allow the application of the latest in agribusiness technology) and make 70% of the area farmed at present free for non-agricultural use. The technology is there, but will it ever become socially and politically acceptable? What would happen to the formerly farmed land? What would the resulting

¹⁷ This comment was made before the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease.

landscapes look like? Nine years later one of the main farming magazines prints a commentary about a BBC topic of abolishing food production in Britain altogether. The author concludes his reply: "It (a non-food production policy) has, nevertheless, become politically correct to discuss it" (Richardson, *Farmers Weekly*, 29 December 2000, p. 57). The tone of the whole article seems sad, resigned, even helpless. Earlier on in the article on UK-grown food, he uses the words 'dangers of mass media communication', 'imbalance' and 'frightening'. The whole purpose of 'being a good food producer' is starting to be questioned.

However, these contracting forces are met by a strong countercurrent. Farmers worldwide are and always will be individuals and as such tailor their response to new technologies and to market pressures to suit their circumstances. As Long (1989) describes mainly for Third World countries, people process their very own experiences in their very own way. They all have different perceptions of what, for instance, the introduction of a new technology will mean for them. They will weigh it up for their own specific situation and then react in the way they see best. It is in this weighing up and reacting process that differences of opinions will manifest themselves amongst the different family members (see 1.5 about consequences stemming from the tripartite interpretation of the farm).

Whatever the outcome, it has always been influenced by *all* factors involved in some way or another, and this applies in an EU context as well. Van den Ploeg (1992) argues the same as Long (1989) that even the weakest link in the market chain has some power. It might just mean giving up farming and moving away. Farmers are no different from anyone else in that they react to changes in the light of past experiences, traditions and perceptions of the future. As such, farmers try to balance work, family and finances within their social system and between generations in a trial and error procedure (van den Ploeg, 1992).

2.4 Summary

Other than the geographical context of the project, this chapter provides the socio-economic background information relevant to the understanding of the lives of the people in the research.

The farms are defined as medium in size and turn over; the families can afford lifestyles similar to their professional commuting neighbours. However, due to severe worsening of the profitability of agriculture over the last three to five years, the future for the families is far from certain for the younger generation and alternative sources of income from non farming sources need to be envisaged. These developments have become more

evident in the light of the present Foot and Mouth outbreak and its effect on the local as well as national and EU economy.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Research questions

This research project evolved from the observation that farm parents found reasons to treat their children unequally when it came to questions of inheritance **and** that families still felt very committed to each other after the distribution of the estate had been made clear.

Reviewing the literature, numerous studies of succession, power and property in farming based on research with the farmer, the successor or sometimes the farming couple were found, but not many approaching the subject as it relates to the farm family as a whole. This generated more interest in the way these farm siblings lived quite contentedly with their allocated share and each other, or so it seemed at least to the outside world. By adopting an interactionist perspective of the type exemplified by Becker (1953, as discussed in Rose, 1982), the main research questions follow the outline of the factors he discovered in his seminal study on marihuana users (Becker, 1953). Learning the technique, learning to perceive the effects and learning to enjoy the effects. The questions which need to be asked to transfer these factors into the context of farming families are:

- How are farm children socialized into their future lives?
- Given the socio-economic and political frame they are in what preferences can and do parents and children enact regarding their future lives?
- How conscious are parents of the way they are bringing up their children?
- How do children themselves accept the way they are being treated?
- What are the main factors influencing the family members' behaviour?
- If there are any changes in this, when and how do these usually manifest themselves?
- What scope is there for official bodies to assist in making the succession into the next generation a successful one, given the restrictions agriculture in the UK is experiencing?

Becker (*ibid.* in Rose, p. 179) writes in his conclusions:

This suggests that behaviour of any kind might fruitfully be studied developmentally, in terms of changes in meanings and concepts, their organisation and re-organisation, and the way they channel behaviour, making some acts possible while excluding others.

This statement in particular encouraged the direction of this research.

To summarise, the questions posed in this study have sought to detail how individual family members end up with their 'lot' and how they manage to cope in accepting it. In line with de Vaus (1991), I wanted to understand 'what is going on?' as well as trying to see 'why that is the case'?

3.2 Research frame and the concept of pointillism

The attempt to frame in a scientific way what I experience daily as a very complex and ever changing environment felt more daunting than entering unfamiliar territory. Reviewing the respective literature, I fully expected to be even more discouraged. That was not the case. Hammersley demystifies the framing process by saying: 'Science is institutionalised enquiry' (1989, p. 134). Bechhofer goes even further saying that the research process is not a clear cut sequence of procedures following a neat pattern, but a rather messy interaction between the conceptual and the empirical where, deductions and inductions occur at the same time (Bechhofer in Burgess, 1982). Bryman (1994) in the same vein concluded a whole volume on analysing qualitative data with the verdict that there is no standard approach. These statements made it easier to overturn any preconceptions founded in my science training towards the use of qualitative methods.

The best way to understand complex social phenomena while retaining the holistic and meaningful character of real life events is the case study (Yin, 1984). Hakim (1987) calls the case study the social researcher's equivalent of the spotlight or microscope. Robson (1993) defines a case study as a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, using multiple sources of evidence. In contrast to Yin (*ibid.*) this definition includes 'ethnography' but does not specify whether the boundaries of the phenomenon under investigation are clearly evident.

For my own illustration of the complexity of the case study design, I turned to art and the style of French Impressionists called 'Pointillism'. Painters like Seurat and Pissarro but also Sisley have used, maybe even invented, this technique. The artist does not mix the pigments on the palette, but applies pure colours in small dots or dashes, hence 'pointillism'.

Seen from a distance these dots produce the effect of coloured areas that are more subtle and richer than could be achieved if conventional techniques had been used.

With this image in mind I decided to use the case study approach. Because it is a search for a holistic understanding of real life events from individual cases, it leads to a colourful whole painting.

I used a multiple case study design as my research frame knowing that I would be exposed to criticism regarding my research's reliability and potential for generalisation (Stoecker, 1991). Ragin (1992) supports the case study approach and even goes as far as saying that virtually every social scientific study can be conceived as a case study as it is an analysis of a social phenomenon specific to time and place. However, he advises constant questioning of the research's generalisability and validity. Schofield (1993) suggests increasing the generalisability by asking three main questions: 'What is?', which leads to researching what happens usually, under normal circumstances; 'What may be?', which means looking at exceptional agents in the field such as pioneers and risk takers; and thirdly 'What could be?'. This means trying to find an 'ideal' case which has managed to put into practice as many of the ideal solutions as feasible, and then look to see how ideal the case turns out to be. Schofield further warns the researcher to be prepared to have one's expectations negated. Thus forewarned, I had been suitably prepared to expect some reversals of expectations during my research.

In my study I had the choice of taking either the individual as a case or the family, but hesitated in making this judgment. Ragin (*ibid.*) considers every individual as providing a window on the community, but I argue that every family member is a product of its family. If I see my role as a tentative effort of understanding and, as such, subject to reinterpretation as Mitchell (1991) advises, I need to make every effort to describe my understanding of the situation as convincingly as I possibly can, and then let the readers make up their own minds. As such, I chose to use the family as the group and the individual as a case study within the family unit. This has the advantage of having all adult family members voice their opinion on such complex matters as inheritance and education. The resulting multiple perspectives give a far more rounded picture than if only the usually male farmer is approached.

3.3 Sampling

To answer the research questions (see 3.1) I needed to keep constant in my sample certain variables which influence the processes of people's socialisation, perception and plans for the future.

At a farm level they include:

1. regional customs and legislation (see 2 and 6.1.1)
2. farm location in relation to markets, alternative employment and education (see 2)
3. status of owner or tenant (see 2)
4. farm size
5. farm business set-up (enterprise mix, employment of labour, structure of the farm's finances) (see 2)
6. farm profitability (see 2).

Some of the above variables are closely interlinked.

At the level of individuals:

1. age and sex of children
2. qualifications, age and health of the parents (see 4: Education and social life)
3. involvement of family members and/or other relatives (see 5: Farm involvement)
4. non-farming sources of income and/or employment (see 5: Farm involvement).

The purposive sampling took all ten points into consideration. Concentrating on one region within the south-east of Scotland, namely East Lothian and the Borders, which have a similar access to infrastructure, instead of the whole of Scotland, ensured that regional customs and location factors were the same. As Whatmore *et al.* (1994) state, there are regional variations in the opportunities for improvement in the relationship between gender and rurality.

I am lucky to live in this area which allows for all of these factors to be taken into account. It is close to a major Scottish centre, has some of the best soils in Scotland while

also extending to farms assigned a LFA status. Agriculture in this area has a long tradition of intensive and some say prosperous family farms.

Some of the hill farmers in Scotland however, can definitely be classified as 'rural poor'. During the crisis at the time of writing, exacerbated by the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease, their financial plight has been a constant feature in the media. The sample drawn did not include those, but was restricted to families who theoretically should see a future in farming as a distinct possibility, because I wanted to look at the changeover between generations without an impending fear for survival as a further variable. I managed to find seemingly financially stable farming businesses. During the time of the interviews (July 1999 – November 1999) the farm families in the project were still holding out for better times, but since then some of their neighbours on similar sized farms have started to show signs of financial stress. At the time of interviewing, agriculture had undergone a couple of difficult seasons; two years later, at the time of writing, this had grown into a real crisis. However, the families I had selected were all still appearing to be financially secure enough to continue farming. I take this as confirmation of my sampling regarding financial matters.

However, there are further issues that I had to address in selecting my sample.

The question of which type and size of farm to choose proved complex.

Using physical size does not account for the production potential of soil and the topographic contours of the land; using livestock carrying capacity or crop yields does not allow for a comparison with other enterprises; using turnover as calculated from the farms' enterprise structure does not allow for the sometimes crippling debt load of the business; using return on capital is heavily influenced by the valuation of the land, buildings and machinery. After consultations with local advisers and colleagues I decided to use '*labour*' as the sampling criteria for the following reasons.

If a business can afford to employ **at least one other full-time person**, other than the farmer, it needs to be able to generate at least that person's wages. It also means they have still the option to make that person redundant, which these past few years have shown is the first thing farmers do when they are trying to tighten their business set-up in order to weather a crisis. Having this option means for a potential successor that there is still leeway to manoeuvre, the business is not against the wall as a full-time occupation for him/her.

The differences in the family's estate through their status as owners or tenants was excluded by approaching **only owner occupiers**. Some of them did rent part of their land,

but the main farm was owned. This is in keeping with this area where the majority of farms are owned by the families farming them.

A conscious effort was made to keep **the number of families on stock farms, arable farms and mixed farms the same**. Intensive farms such as straight piggeries, poultry businesses and horticultural farms have not been included as they are by definition more removed from the set-up of a 'farm' and tend more towards the set-up of an industrial production unit.

The condition was made that the family must have at least one child in the **18–22 age bracket**. This age bracket was chosen as these young people would have left school and had to make some choices. They would have had to reflect on whether or not they wanted to stay at home and/or be involved in the farm. Also, the chances were good that they had not settled with a partner in a household of their own, which would have added another dimension to my questions. The decision not to involve children or young teenagers in the interviews was piloted with friends and neighbours and proved itself during the field work. Both Innes girls say about their 15 year old brother in the presence of the mother: 'No, you don't really want to speak to him.' This I understand to mean, that he was not old enough to be consulted on these issues. Their body language at the time – nodding sideways towards him slouching in a chair – underlines this impression:

On the other hand, respondents have no definite ideas about a career for themselves until fairly late. Cindy Thompson, as well as Sandra Ballantyne, admits they have never really thought about what they want to do until they finish school. Three other girls still are not really sure whether what they are studying at the moment is what they really want to do.

The topic of succession and inheritance is a very private one for the family and none of the respondents have discussed this with their children until choice of profession has become an issue. Therefore none of them suggested I should talk to the younger ones, despite them often helping on the farm.

Also, I felt that including them would make it even more difficult for me to be able to speak to the fathers. These men make sure one way or another that they are not asked to discuss or even just comment on women's issues (see also gender segregation at accidental meetings under 4.5.2). Some of them I was able to interest over the phone to talk to me, others would wait and drop into the room to see 'what was going on' and then decide to stay or come back, after they have assured themselves that the topic is worth their while.

As **schools** play a major role in the socialisation process, families where the children had gone at least partly to fee-paying, as well as families where they attended local schools, were included.

To achieve the required mix of farms and families, 'purposive snowballing' was used (see also Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991; Robson, 1995). Based on personal contacts, friends and acquaintances, the first interviews were made and, based on the findings from them, further families were contacted. When asking informants for further contacts, the description I gave was for a medium-size farm employing at least one full-time worker and having at least one child in the 18–22 year old bracket. Overall, I followed three 'snowballs' who had been started from three very different individuals, who belonged to very different groups of farmers. As none of the families refused I ended up with at least twice as many potential families as I actually decided to use. It allowed me to make up my sample of a balanced mix between stock, arable and mixed farms and private- and state-educated children.

In line with 'grounded theory' (Strauss and Corbin, 1997) there was no initial number of interviews targeted, but during the interim analyses and after evaluating what the key people had said, it was decided to stop at 10 families and 38 interviews, because the findings were duplicating themselves.

The other six key informants were chosen from my personal circle of farming contacts and included a government adviser, a chemical representative and a grain merchant all known to the farm family I live with and to most of the other respondents. As the focus was on young people, the secretaries/presidents of two branches of the Young Farmers organisation were interviewed as well.

Overall, 44 people were interviewed directly. Wherever possible the whole family was included¹⁸. This resulted in multiple perspectives on the lives of these families. Ribbens *et al.* (2001) pinpoint the problems and advantages associated with this approach. They found that multiple perspectives reveal the complexities and tensions in individual accounts, rather than provide more general information. This allows the researcher to adopt, as they call it, a 'bird's eye view'. They warn that this is a powerful role, but results in individual accounts yielding multiple perspectives and commonalities being discerned in related family accounts.

¹⁸ In the case of the Hunters and definitely the Petries, I did consider to talk to the partner/uncle, but I felt it would have made the family members more careful if not reluctant to be as open as they were. It was never suggested by any of them. However, two of the mothers did mention their late fathers-in-law as interesting to talk to, but I did not ask directly why, because I felt a certain resentment about things the old men had done, but this was never really said at the time.

The involvement of all adult family members proved definitely worthwhile. However, it was not always possible. In some cases some of the children were away abroad or working in the South of England or were simply too young. Nevertheless, all 20 parents were interviewed.

The legal background and the way farm families dealt with legal matters were addressed by writing to 22 solicitors working with rural clients in my area. Their names had been given to me by the head of the legal unit at Edinburgh University. One of the solicitors acting frequently as an arbiter in rural cases confirmed that my list was representing a good spectrum of legal practices with farming clients. Seventeen replied, some in writing and some verbally.

To get a further input into the picture of the socialisation of the children, I made contact with schools attended by farm children. As half of the children went at least partly to fee-paying schools, I wanted to know whether there were any particular issues with children coming from farms. I was not successful in obtaining information on children whose parents had put 'farmer' as an occupation in the school role form from any of the state schools. The private sector was more cooperative. This was addressed by a phone survey of a select number of private schools who were known to be attended by farm children. These had been mentioned to me by the career adviser for Scotland. Vice principals or career counsellors were asked by phone to comment on three questions:

1. Has the intake of children from farming families changed over the last 10 years?
2. At what age do they start attending your school?
3. Are they in any way different from their peers?

All but one were very cooperative and open. The results are discussed in 4.2.4.

3.4 Interviewing

The interviews took place in the respondents' homes. I was always given permission to use a tape recorder. Asking for the power point somewhat relaxed the atmosphere and helped deciding who was going to sit where. I also felt that me having a piece of paper and a pen on my lap and writing down the odd comment, gave the whole situation more credibility.

The interviews were based on a one-page guide (see Appendix I) This guide was developed after a pilot study with six members of different farm families, which were all

taped and transcribed. It served as an 'aide-memoire' which included a 'vignette' (see below) and four specific attitude questions about gender and succession in farming. These questions were the result of comments I had heard over the years as well as during my pilot interviews. They proved very real indeed, because they were often raised verbatim during the research.

The guide was structured with the following in mind:

- to overcome the initial reluctance or shyness with a neutral, but interesting question;
- to begin with something the respondent felt comfortable with and wanted to tell me about in a conversation rather than a strict interview;
- to introduce myself as someone who understands farming and can appreciate what the family was trying to achieve.

The guide starts therefore with questions about the farm's past or present set-up. Questions about the siblings lead to gender attitude statements and the vignette(s).

Burgess uses Spradley's (1979) three types of questions for an unstructured interview. According to his theory questions can be:

1. descriptive – asking about the interviewee's activities
2. structural – asking how does the interviewee organise knowledge
3. contrasting – the interviewee compares experiences.

The questions for this project were mainly descriptive or contrasting (Burgess, 1984). The vignette yielded the whole range of questions and answers depended on the respondents' reactions to it.

Sometimes I caught myself asking loaded questions. This was either due to my inexperience or the feeling that on occasions I felt I had to ascertain my status as 'knowing what XYZ meant'.

The level of intimacy indicated by the interview guide had been carefully pitched and again and again checked with family and friends. ("Could I walk into X's kitchen and ask them that?") – it stood up very well in the field work. Certain questions were considered taboo by my 'personal panel', but still sometimes the interviewees chose to voice their opinion on a topic such as their business set-up or what they intended to put in their will

themselves. They were assured of confidentiality at these moments as well as at the beginning and I felt they gave me their trust.

I had memorised the topics very early on, but still used the aide as a check list to make sure I had asked all four specific attitude questions, should they not have been answered automatically in the course of discussing the 'vignette'.

Piloting had indicated that more conventional questions were likely to result in answers such as 'it depends', which would have led to too many different scenarios to make a plausible comparison (see also de Vaus, 1991). Finch (1987) defines vignettes as 'short stories about hypothetical characters in specific circumstances, whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond to' (p.105). She used it successfully to establish the public morality of family relationships in general. The disadvantages of using vignettes is that what people think and say is not necessarily what they will do themselves. Beliefs and practice remain difficult to link. However, I saw it as the only way to ask about beliefs, values and norms which gave me an understanding of morality amongst my respondents without being seen as nosy or even threatening. Given the very personal topic and my status as 'neighbour's wife' the vignette proved very helpful indeed and people enjoyed thinking about the case of:

Twin children on a farm; one leaves for eight years the other one keeps farming; the leaver wants to come back and the parents are ready to retire. What should the parents do?¹⁹

In my sample of farming families the story was generally well understood.

Judging by the responses the story was definitely believable. It proved to be very real for two of the families, so much so, that I had to go to great lengths to reassure them that no, I had not known about this event in their family, at the same time thinking, that probably my father-in-law would have known about it and what did it do for my credibility.

Finch (*ibid.*) advocates checking on responses to the vignette in other parts of the interview. I did not think that was necessary, because the respondents clearly distinguished between the abstract situation of the vignette and their own situation. Sometimes they applied it directly to their own lives, but this was clearly flagged up during the interview. The pitfalls in the interpretation of the replies and how to generalise from them did not impede upon the overall use of the vignette as an excellent tool for creating a general picture of peoples' attitudes to the matter.

¹⁹ The Innes family gave me a real life example of another vignette (b in the Appendix I) which I used, when the respondents did seem rather detached from the topic, as in the case of the two Philips girls and Mrs Urquart. In all other cases I did not think this was necessary.

I did not interfere but let the questions as to the gender and working conditions of the siblings evolve naturally. Quite often the further questions on their attitude to gendering in a farm situation had been already answered while discussing the vignette.

The interview guide was only used approximately with the other key informants, but the vignette proved useful there as well.

The interviews lasted anything from one to nearly three hours and were fully taped. Transcription took place within two days of the interview to make sure any gaps could be compensated from memory with reasonable confidence. I transcribed them all myself. This involved a lot of hours, but the benefits of being very familiar with the material outweighed the effort. I found that as soon as I was embarking on putting my personal opinion into the material, the actual tone of voice or choice of expressions brought me back to what the interviewees were actually trying to tell me. If in doubt (in five instances), I played the section of the tape to people I knew to be more familiar with the local way of speaking, but who were sure not to know the speaker personally.

3.5 The use of secondary data

Despite referring to examples from other countries, this thesis does not make use of statistical comparisons on an international level. The reason is the difficulty in taking into account the different ways of data assessment taking place in other countries. Hill (1996) points out the problems with the introduction of statistics on the 'Total Income of Agricultural Households' at the Eurostat Seminar in 1996 in Luxembourg. He shows that, for example, Germany has all the figures broken down into socio-professional groups, whereas Ireland has not, and that there are differences as to whether the main income of the head of the household is used as the basis of classification or total household income.

This is an important factor in the UK, as for agricultural households in 1991 the second most important source of income stemmed from property, whereas for the other EC members at that time it came from wages or social receipts. Hill concludes it is not easy to make comparisons from statistics generated in different countries.

This in-depth, small scale study provides insights missing in statistics. The level of analysis is highly sensitive to some of the small differences, which in official statistics are only commented on in foot- or end-notes or in the discussions.

In Scotland, the recently redrawn boundaries for the regions, the use of postal addresses for statistical purposes, and other changes, make direct comparison with different surveys difficult.

This applies, for example, to the many definitions of what is 'rural' (see also 2.1). The OECD has developed a territorial classification of regions in order to make international comparisons possible. This groups the area of the EU into 446 regions. It is based on population density. A density of less than 150 inhabitants per square kilometre is considered as 'predominantly rural'. The other two categories are 'significantly rural' and 'significantly urban'.

Rural areas are not homogenous. The European Commission (1988) as in Byrne *et.al* (1995) uses three categories for rural areas in order to highlight the different challenges its residents face:

1. Rural areas adjacent to large cities.
2. Some distance from urban centres and heavily dependant on intensive agriculture.
3. Remote or isolated areas with a more mixed but fragile local economy and struggling to maintain this population base.

Byrne *et al.* (1995) base their research in the West of Ireland, but they do not seem to be able to classify their area of research using EC definitions. They note carefully that (only) when compared to other European areas, Irish rural areas are normally regarded as falling, collectively under (3). However, there are traces of all three types in Ireland and the experiences of residents of each vary (*ibid.*). Ireland's overall low population density in comparison to other EU countries would suggest this outcome.

On the other hand, the Scottish Office (1996) uses Randall's classification for its report on Rural Areas. In it, East Lothian, which is one of my research areas, is classified as 'urban, but having a significant rural population', despite it having less than 50% of its population in settlements of 10,000 or more people (Scottish Office, 1996). Although more than half its population live 'in the country' the district is still treated as urban in the official statistic. When it comes to looking at regional industry in a detailed way, farming is overlooked. The only figures pertaining to agriculture are collected via the Agricultural Census, which covers every full-time farm, regardless of its location.

3.6 Gender bias in the official statistics

A further problem with the use of statistics lies in their gender bias. Official statistics are still showing signs of the old gender bias of the farmer as being male, the main breadwinner and the head of the household. Some have been amended but not all. Fennell (1981) in her illustration of succession in the EC states the assumption that a farm successor is male in the official definition used by the EC in 1970. This was 30 years ago, but some bias still remains.

Gasson (1992) analysed data from postal surveys from farms twice the national average in size in Ireland and the UK. She found that really only manual labour seems to count as 'work'. This could be explained by the fact that only 'manual' gets a wage whereas 'managerial' gets a share in the profit or loss, which makes it a less obvious item in the farm accounts scheme.

In a discussion of the contribution of farmers' wives to the farm, Gasson writes:

For example, at the 'official' level, the category of farmers/partners/directors in the Agricultural Census excludes wives/husbands of farmers even if they are themselves partners or directors. However, it has to be taken into account that being a partner might have happened purely out of fiscal reasons and the person in question might not make any contribution to the farming business. The Census category of 'spouses doing farm work' seems intended only for those doing manual work on a regular basis, ignoring the many kinds of contributions (managerial, secretarial, administrative, domestic, supportive) which wives make and without which the family farm could not function. In other words, agricultural work tends to be defined as the work men do (Gasson, 1992, p. 83).

Machum,(1999) after an intensive literature review, comes to a similar conclusion:

The industry and changes within it are understood to be an integral part of farm men's work but this analysis is not extended to farm women's work. The end result is that researchers have not treated womens' work in the same way as men's work. Men's work has been seen as unproblematic and located in the realm of the formal economy. Men are farmers who produce the commodities sold by the farm. The male farmer's experience is equated with the farm unit. We don't need to prove men are doing farm work. In fact it is assumed men are doing all the farm work (*ibid*, p. 60).

3.7 Analysis

The on-going analysis right through the project followed the outline of 'Grounded Theory' (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). However, the whole project was more field led than following a single theory.

The text analysis was greatly facilitated by using a software program 'ETHNOGRAPH v.5'. Compared to some other programs I looked at the initial learning curve was relatively low and in direct proportion to the benefits. Technical problems did occur but were solved by the software back-up service. It seemed a robust program, that was accessible and did not dictate a research structure. However, I needed to clarify my main data groups at the outset, but that was not a problem, because I was very familiar with the material myself.

While evaluating the different software programs I had to learn to structure what I actually wanted to know and how this information then fitted together to make a coherent picture. The most convincing order followed an individual's growing up in a farming environment. There was at first the parents' background, who was how and when involved in the farm or elsewhere, how was succession approached and where was gender made an issue. The code families resulting from these questions reflect this and are later represented in the order of the chapter of the thesis. They are: education and social life, family tasks and farm involvement, succession and gendering. These resulted in 'code families' and allowed for subheadings called 'children'. Emphasis was given to certain key areas such as 'cheque signing', 'expected', 'interested', 'stock versus arable' and 'conflict'. ETNOGRAPH v.5 made it easy enough to find quotes at any stage and to locate them in their wider context. It also allowed me to retrieve by code from all or selected interviews.

Overall, I felt the work benefited rather than was constrained by the initial categorisation into data groups, so much so that I decided to use these groups as frame for the structure of the chapters on research findings.

During the analysis, I took great care as not to let the demands of the coding for the software program such as the 'tree of code families' influence the direction the ongoing analysis was taking. The 'grounded theory' approach with its open-ended indexing system helped me greatly in trying to make sense of the huge amount of unstructured data. Despite initial doubts the data showed quite clearly when there was no new variation coming out of the constant comparative analysis (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1993). I felt encouraged by Burgess *et al.* (1994) who describe a large-scale multi-case study of four schools:

...at the heart of such a process is a set of questions and research procedures which, combined with creativity and imagination, results in the analysis of data: a key element of the research process that cannot be reduced to steps and stages. Indeed our multi-scale case study, like all such investigations, relied on the insights and imagination of the investigators who contributed the data. The data in each case study could be compared with that in other case studies so as to

produce four studies in one, **and** one study in four (*ibid.*, p. 143, emphasis in original).

3.8 Problems during field work and analysis

My main problem has also been my main advantage. My husband farms in partnership with his brother on a farm in the size range of the farms in the project. His family is the second generation. They know the 'locals' and are known by the locals.

I am a member of the local farming community, have been for the last 12 years and intend to continue to be so. As such I have not only the opportunity of 'Participant Observation', I am living as an insider. My knowledge of the community is embodied through all the senses. I do not just have to rely on spoken words but I can draw on knowledge beyond language (Okley, 1994). The resulting 'stories' about our lives here have been part of my everyday life. They form the basis of rural communication as Inhetveen (1990) describes. Stories and personal experiences, as well as facts and figures from other sources, give a very colourful painting. I have come to realise that it is possible for various truths to coexist as filtered realities, as analogous truths (*ibid.*). What comes across as 'truth' and 'fact' at one point might be interpreted and retold totally differently in some other point in time and place.

Thorsen (1994) distinguishes between two types of recollections: the *voluntary recollections* in the shape of often told stories from a person's repertoire. The father describing himself driving the combine at an early age or running home from school wanting to be in time to help with the milking are such stories; and *involuntary recollections* where the interviewer manages to get the interviewee to dig deeper. For example, when the mother talked about problems she was foreseeing, should a sibling want to come back to the farm to take part in it?

These stories came to light when people started to speak about controversial events from their past. They are less easily retold – Thorsen talks about the reproducibility being smaller – than the former. She thinks that one of the reasons this happens is culture. She quotes Hastrup (1988, p. 129) as stating that: 'Culture is the framework within which meaning is created, transformed and re-transformed, but at the same time, is the praxis that continuously sets meaning at stake'. If the mother talks about future problems on a different day to a different audience, she will most likely phrase them differently.

But, also, the researcher's personal input into the interview situation has to be remembered. The interpretation of what has been said is complex. For example, an

interviewee would tell me one side of a family event and I would hear the other side through the grapevine, perhaps through a neighbour, a tradesman or a tractor driver. How to deal with this extra information? It did not come out of the interviews, but I still 'knew' about it. The reader will have to decide whether my case has enough credibility to accept that my personal insider experiences are part of my interpretation of the data. As Hammersley states: 'Practice is context sensitive and involves judgement in which factual and value assumptions must be relied on, many of which must come from experience rather than research' (1992, p. 133).

Being 'local' has changed in recent years as the influx of commuters from the city (30–50 minutes drive away) has increased. Their children attend the local schools, the families mix at sports clubs and charity functions. But the local community is still small enough to make it impossible to do research in farm families and remain anonymous. I am so-and-so's wife and as such I am welcome to speak to them, but as such I also have to report how, for instance, our harvest is going in exchange to be able to ask questions about their own set-up. I am at the same time, as Jarvie (1994) puts it, a stranger and a friend.

Participant observation in my personal situation had its problems. The main problem was and is which proportion of the information came from the interviews, which from information before or after the interview from other sources or even from the respondents themselves, if I met them socially or by accident later on?

For example, before I had visited the farm I had heard that the father drank heavily, so during my visit I looked for signs of that, something I did not do in the other families. I could not help myself. And afterwards, while looking at the family's history I came to the conclusion that if he did drink, it was probably during a particularly difficult time the farm had gone through.

My research was field led. Only if I felt I needed to illustrate a point made by the respondents further would I resort to quotes from outsiders. These are put into apostrophes anonymously. The selection of these quotes and their context in the thesis is my responsibility and the result of my personal and academic history. The field work was facilitated and influenced by my status. The conclusions are a result out of both these factors. They are therefore a mix of ethnography, action research and participant observation executed by a person who after 12 years is slowly becoming an insider, but who will always be described as: '...I think she is German'.

There is a certain fear of rejection when the interviewee perceives me as a social equal and as such will be trying to impress me, make sure I will take him/her for that (see also

Foddy, 1993). This did happen. Once I was asked at the end how I thought “they were doing?” “Were they like other people?” All I could reply was that there was no right or wrong, just every family doing the best they could given their circumstances. Another time, I was asked outright for advice on how to best set up the estate and I could only give examples and again just refer them to their own circumstances as the main factor in their own unique equation. I kept in mind Hammersley and Atkinson’s (1995) argument that the goal of social research is to produce knowledge and not to change the world, not to be a missionary. Besides, the researcher has usually very little scope for ‘helping’ or ‘interfering’ as such anyway.

A device I used to diffuse such situations was to either blame politicians/prices or the weather. Then without fail nobody probed me for a more definite answer. Sometimes I did resort to this ruse knowing full well that it would take some time before I could get back to my research interest, but it took the pressure off.

Sometimes I had to change the subject when I could see the respondents were starting to feel uncomfortable. These situations were as difficult as they were tempting. If I had persisted they would have continued talking, but if I then had met them later at the farm dealer or socially they would have felt ‘awkward’. So I did not persist and just marked the instance later during transcription.

Like Finch (1993), I am very aware of the exploitative potential I have as a woman researcher to elicit information a man might not be given so readily. But I do not consider this a problem since I found it helped me in interviewing men **and** woman.²⁰ Husbands and wives and to a lesser extent sons and daughters were eager to talk to a person who understands ‘where we are coming from’ by her position as a neighbouring farmer’s wife. As soon as they felt comfortable in trusting my assurance of confidentiality they appreciated the opportunity to talk about the complex issues of ‘handing over’. None of them even queried whether or not I was handling the data myself or whether they would be passed on to a third party. On several occasions respondents have since let me know that they enjoyed the challenge to think about aspects they normally would not have addressed directly. This led me to believe that both parties profited from the research to some extent.

²⁰ In my earlier career I worked as an economist in a very remote area overseas. The farmers there were notorious for not wanting to speak to any public servants let alone give them details about their operations. However, the farmers I visited gave me all details willingly and openly, even some which my male predecessors had not even dared to ask for. Sometimes I would have to wait for the male farmer to come back and the wives would talk to me and gave me usually a lot of valuable background information or other pertinent facts. Discussing this with farmers and colleagues later, the consensus was that I, as a woman, was less threatening and therefore looked less likely to pass judgment than they would have perceived a man asking the same questions. So farmers had felt more at ease talking to myself than talking to my male colleagues.

Overall, the degree of openness was a very pleasant surprise, especially the fathers who were initially very reluctant to talk to me, saying they were too busy. But as ‘good neighbours’ they could not outright refuse me. So I persisted in contacting them. At one point it took me eight phone calls to get an appointment with a father. Once there he would not stop talking and we made one of the longest interviews, which continued long after I had switched off the tape. In many cases, I got the main information after the interview on my way out. As always I sat down in the car after each visit and took down my immediate impressions, which proved essential to capture these last comments.

As a researcher I also had to caution myself about introducing a personal agenda into the research process at various levels (Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991). However, the interviewee can also produce distortions (Whyte, 1960). He wrote 40 years ago that instead of the naked reality, an interviewee might report what should have happened – what did happen minus the uncomfortable parts. She or he might modify elements to portray a more favourable picture of him/herself. Especially the latter proved to be an issue when I was asked how her family (Mrs. Weston) compared to the others and therefore in my eyes. I will never know for sure whether she had or had not embellished her descriptions in order to paint a more favourable picture of herself and her family. I can only try to put it into the context that is available to me and hope to arrive at a convincing analysis.

These potentially cumulative distortions were discouraging in the beginning. I felt that I was ‘waffling’ about too many things. But in the course of the research a form started to surface which I could begin to believe in. It grew stronger as I continued working with the data.

All the time I was acutely aware, that the influence my nationality, gender, age and personal history as well as my standing in the community must have affected the fieldwork as well as my interpretations of it.²¹ The final writing of the text inevitably reflects these influences, for which I must accept full responsibility. This includes the use of the present tense wherever possible to engage the reader and showing that I am still a participant and that I do not wish to distance myself from the research.

Looking back, my personal history in farming all over the world created a challenge: to describe and emphasise what to me might have become the obvious and the normal so that other non-farming readers can understand happenings and implications on a medium-sized Scottish farm.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of these issues see the ASA Monograph edited by Okley and Callaway (1992) on Anthropology and Autobiography.



3.9 Summary

- Purpose: to describe the process of passing on and inheriting the 'role' of farmer and the family farm and how members of farm families receive, perceive and understand their share in the family estate with a special emphasis on gender.
- Sample: farm families in the SE of Scotland, who employ at least one full-time worker other than the farmer.
- Methods: multiple case study using:
 1. Insider observation
 2. Six in-depth semi-structured individual interviews with key persons from within the agricultural industry
 3. Thirty eight in-depth semi-structured individual interviews with members of ten families. The family view was sought in order to widen the range of perceptions of the process of change-over between the generations
 4. Information gathered from 17 solicitors and five schools.
- All interviews taped, fully transcribed and analysed with the aid of ETHNOGRAPH v.5.

CHAPTER 4

Education and Social Life

All aspects of bringing up and educating children are influenced by the way the whole of society develops and the way parents interpret these developments. Some of this happens consciously, some at a subconscious level. Farm families are members of Scottish society and therefore of the European Community. Their plans about the future are shaped by that grouping and their place in it.

The social divisions within a society manifest themselves at a professional and personal level and contribute and are attributed to people's education and their social life. These divisions are a product as well as a producer of the constant flux of society. Education plays an important role in this process. For the French philosopher Bourdieu (1984) (see below) it is the schools which are sanctifying social divisions in today's late capitalist societies. The school accounts for much of the time it takes to grow up and enter society. Peers encountered during people's social activities have a powerful influence. The two are quite often closely intertwined. This is the reason why education and social life are discussed under one heading here.

Bourdieu's main examples stem from research into French elite schools, but his findings apply to education in other societies as well. This chapter draws on his analysis of different cultural environments. In particular his concept of 'habitus', which defines the patterns of thinking, perception, judgment and action of a person and how these are influenced by the material circumstances and cultural environment specific to that person.

The link between 'habitus' and 'class', the connections between education and social life as well as what constitutes the issue of a farmer's identity are analysed (4.1). The term 'learning' is used in its widest sense: formal education at school and tertiary institutions (4.2), follows learning from an early age by observing and doing on the home farm as well as knowledge gained attending vocational short term courses. The concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (LPP) is introduced (4.3). Who wants to be a farmer is summarised in (4.4) with special emphasis on how the interest in farming is developed. Social life and peer group gatherings are addressed in the fifth section (4.5), which includes 'Young

Farmers' (YF), an organisation that still plays a major role for young people growing up in a rural environment.

4.1 Class differences amongst farmers? The concept of 'habitus'

All through data collection and analysis, but especially during the sampling process, the comment of a neighbour rang true: "Well, they farm as well. Good farm. But they are...different from us...you will see." And I did. I saw they were different from my neighbour. This difference was small, but was obvious to her the local as well as to me the foreign researcher. This difference is not usually talked about. If it is, it is called 'class', 'taste', 'language', 'lifestyle', but it has little to do with actual farming. Some large farmers become mainly office-bound, but are still considered 'working' farmers. Others spend all day on or under pieces of equipment in their overalls and still are invited to play golf on exclusive courses or are members themselves. This difference is subtle, but still so strong that it permeates all aspects of social life including education.

A theoretical model to describe these social practices is Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'. Kreil (1995) in her work on farm youths uses Bourdieu's concept to explain the 'Eigensinn' (stubbornness) of farmer's behavioural patterns through generations even after their exit from agriculture. The following is mainly based on Bourdieu's (1994, 1996) concepts of 'class', 'habitus' and 'taste'.

Based on his work with the Kabyl people of Algeria, Bourdieu developed a theoretical concept which bridges the dichotomy between structure and subject. Its applications in research are clear cut. He states that the researcher cannot read another person's mind, but can try to step into the person's shoes (Jenkins, 1992). This special type of participant observation will yield patterns of thought, perception, judgment and action of people which he calls 'habitus'. This 'habitus' is not static but will be shaped by economic conditions and specific 'Lebenswelten' within the respective cultures. It is 'sluggish' or 'opaque' (Kreil uses the term 'traege', meaning 'lazily inert') but still changes all the time. It is assimilated, integrated into people's minds but is also being constantly either reinforced or discredited by their actions. It is group specific and at the same time defined for each individual. It is subjective but not unique to an individual. It influences the way a person carries him/herself, walks talks, thinks and feels. As Kreil says: 'Der Habitus ist die geronnene Erfahrung von Generationen, er ist verinnerlichte Geschichte' (*ibid.*, p. 33) (habitus is the 'curdled' experience of generations, it is internalised/assimilated history. Bourdieu (1994) defines it as: "coming out of an acting agent, as a system of dispositions. The habitus, which is the

generative principle of responses more or less well adapted to demands of certain fields, is the product of an individual history, but also, through the formative experiences of earliest infancy, of the whole collective history of families and class” (p. 91).

In general it does not require thought. It is not consciously learnt and barely ever questioned. There lies the strength of the concept of ‘habitus’ in describing how people recognise differences and similarities without actually thinking about it. These patterns influence the way all future experiences are processed by the individual, which explains why it is so difficult to change the way we and others see ourselves. Identity is in the eye of the beholder in the same vein as our social identity queries and confirms as to who we and others are (Jenkins, 1996).

Based on Goffman’s work, Jenkins describes identity as something individuals negotiate within the interaction order. ‘Individual identity is generated in the relationship which is struck between self image and public image’ (Jenkins, 1996, p. 71), and as all identities are in one way or another about social identities, they determine who we are for whom and when and where and how others see us and we see them. As such the identity is forever changing even it is difficult to change. A person can have an official face and a private one. The judgment of how convincing either face is, is determined by the surroundings. If we want to convince we must act accordingly. ‘Farmer is as farmer does’ goes the proverb or – quoting my neighbour again – “They will always, you know, eat in the kitchen sort of thing,” as she tries to explain to me the subtle differences amongst her neighbours.

Bourdieu (1984) defines this process of education into the respective group as ‘primary’ education, that is via parents and local peers and ‘secondary’ education via formal education bodies (see 4.2). The former takes place without actual thinking, more or less subconsciously, while the latter is conscious, via taught subjects, and subconsciously via a school’s social environment.

Jenkins (1992) based on Bourdieu (1984) draws up the following schematic to illustrate the connections. ‘Objective classes’ are defined by occupation (e.g. farmer). ‘Constructed classes’ are determined through their mix of material and cultural capital – the person’s location in social space (e.g. working farmer). Bourdieu complements this schematic with the relationship between class, habitus and lifestyle. The ‘habitus’ is therefore ‘a structured and structuring structure’ which consists of ‘a system of schemes generating classifiable practices and works and a system of schemes of perception and

appreciation or taste, which between them produce classifiable practices and works' (Jenkins, 1992, p. 141) and thus a distinctive lifestyle (e.g. table manners).²²

People recognise each other's 'habitus' and accept that it puts them into social groups. Cutting comments about other families' lifestyles are not rare and happen from both directions. "Are they still sitting on flour drums round the kitchen table?" or "well, after this (bad) season he will need to get his hands dirty, sit on a tractor as well" to give two examples. They are not based on farm size, profit or turnover, but on a person's 'habitus'.

Only constant and conscious training will make it possible for an individual to be assimilated and recognised as a member of another social group. Bourdieu uses the example of hostesses, who by changing the way they smile, dress and so forth were trying to be convincing in overlaying the traces of their 'lowly' origin with the 'habitus' of a new identity, the 'suave hostess' (Bourdieu, 1984). This works to a certain extent, but as common knowledge shows, there are limits. People who are trying to 'be someone else, somebody better' can all too easily show 'where they come from'. In relation to this project the concept of the 'habitus' helps in explaining the way people belong to a group within a class. It helps to understand the subtle differences between farm families farming similar scale farms.

The class of farmers as a whole is changing in as much as for certain activities it now includes the urban commuters and to an extent the second home owners, who brought with them their urban lifestyle. Part of this lifestyle has been taken on by the local farmers. The respective groups within the class of farmers are changing with their members and the members are changing the group.²³ Membership in the group is not a conscious goal, but a fact of everyday life, which is accepted without much reflection. Only when confronted with other groups do people become conscious of the characteristics of their own group.

The most obvious enactment of a person's 'habitus' is taste, in clothes, food and the arts. Bourdieu went even further describing how taste for simple uncostly things and an interest in what is immediately useful has been made into a virtue by the lower classes. (Bourdieu, 1984) The same can be said of physical farm work. No matter how many times the accountant tells a farmer that there is more money to be made in the farm office than in

²² In an article on the family as a realised category, Bourdieu (1996) defines the family as such in the same fashion. To him the family's principle of construction is at once an objective social category, a structuring structure and a subjective social category, a structured structure. Both result in the reproduction of the social order.

²³ From personal observation over 12 years. I quote the example of the choice of family car or choice of holiday destination. For certain farmers to go skiing to the Alps or to Colorado or drive to the supermarket in a gleaming

the field, farmers, for example the respondents Messrs. Innes, Stone, Philips, feel more comfortable and more fulfilled working outside in the yard. Only that counts as hard work on the farm.

Kreil (1995) uses the 'habitus' concept to look at the gender specific allocation of farm work. This study will go further and extend the focus to include education, social life and the transfer between generations. The power of gender as a category in Bourdieu's work is stressed by Jenkins (1992). Gender affects many parts of everyday life and is therefore an essential factor of the concept. It is a social superstructure and as such also determines the sexual role of a person (Schäfer, 1998). This often begins unrecognised from birth onwards, but it is still the most obvious part of individual identity which is the result of interactions between people.

One of the main pillars of 'habitus' is its foundation in matters of the body. It is embodied. Despite that, the 'habitus' 'only exists in a person's conscious or subconscious mind, it needs the person and with that the person's body to act in order to be put into practice. And human bodies are either male or female. Wacquant sums it up:

Paraphrasing Marx's famous formula, one might say that, for Bourdieu, men and women make their own history but they do not make it through categories of their own choosing. And we may also say without succumbing to idealism that social order is, at bottom, a *gnoseological order* provided that we concurrently recognise the cognitive schemata through which we know, interpret, and actively assemble our world are themselves social constructs that transcribe within individual bodies the constraints and facilitations of their originative milieu (Wacquant, 1996; p. 161; italics in original).

As an example, a woman farming in her own right is such an unusual occurrence, that respondents were struggling to find a name for this phenomenon. 'Lady farmer' and 'woman farmer' or 'well there is a woman farming on her own down in Chester' were some of the expressions used. There is no official place for a woman in farming language and using 'farmer' does not make the point.

Another example of the constraints of the 'originative milieu' can be found in the disbelieving chuckles of farming neighbours at the idea of farmer X, who is the biggest grower in the area, being invited to socialise with farmers A and B.

At the time of writing there is a big debate about education as such. One of the arguments for keeping private schools' independent is that a large proportion of their pupils come from families where the parents themselves had gone to State schools. Maybe one of

four-wheel drive vehicle has become acceptable on the basis of what they, the neighbours do, we must do too (to keep up).

the reasons these parents choose to send their children to a fee-paying school is an attempt to overcome these constraints and have their children mix with a selected group of peers.

4.2 Formal education of farming children

In Britain the state funds education from nursery age onwards, but in reality education starts the day a child is born; learning finishes at death. Parts of these processes are formal and structured within a system, some are informal and just happen as we grow older.

Education and all other learning determine how well a person is equipped for life as an adult and which profession is open to them. Professional lives in general are more complex than ever. The period of formal learning is longer and career changes more frequent for today's children than for their parents. The way respondents describe their lives reflects their awareness of these developments. All feel 'education' is very important. This is in line with farm children from other areas.

Of the 20 parents in the project, seven have tertiary education and 10 do not (three unknown); of their 27 children, 21 are in or are going into tertiary education. Five are too young to know and one declined to go. Respondents agree that, in general, today, all farm children from medium size farms in Scotland go onto some form of tertiary education. This was not the rule while their parents grew up.

Comparing figures from a 1970 survey of farmers in England and Wales with a more recent survey, Gasson *et al.* (1998) confirm these results. Farming people in England still have few qualifications. These levels are rising but they are still lower than the national average.

In general terms, people from farming backgrounds have fewer secondary and tertiary qualifications (Gasson and Errington, 1993). Often the wives have more qualifications than their farming husbands. This can affect the next generation, e.g. in Ireland where O'Hara (1998) found open conflicts regarding the succeeding sons. Their mothers pushed for staying on at school to obtain at least their leaving certificates, while their fathers did not want to entertain delaying their sons' occupational apprenticeship. O'Hara also found regional differences. The bigger farmers in the West could make a better case for their sons coming home. They could offer status and a more viable farm, whereas the poorer farms in the East made the mothers' pushing for education as maybe a way out of farming or at least a safeguard against the vagaries of a life in farming with such uncertain prospects far more convincing. These mothers also did not understand the fathers' attachment to the land as

such. Father offering land and status as against studying as mother wants, demonstrates according to O'Hara firstly the bases of male power in family farming and secondly how this power is undermined if farming loses its standing making the 'other' world look more promising.

These findings have to be seen relative to the farm size in this Irish sample, where only one third of the farms in the West are somehow comparable in size or production systems to my Scottish sample. The 'habitus' of the Scottish children is therefore unlikely to be similar. The farms in this project differ from the ones in O'Hara's sample as they are on the whole bigger and employ outside labour, which gives them more flexibility and overall a potentially more secure future. Hence all their children have the opportunity to go onto tertiary education, and this is considered essential.

The acceptance of tertiary education as an essential part of bringing up children, becomes more evident when listening to the reasons the interviewees felt they needed to give in order to explain why two of the sons had dropped out (Elrick and Stone). Both are the eldest, both are back at home working on the farm. This is one of the occasions where it proves useful to talk to the whole family. Both generations had the opportunity to comment and both stress the importance of a good education.

Walter Stone had the chance to go to college, but had only a few months there. The reason for leaving according to his mother was a strong dislike for anything academic maybe due to his learning difficulties. His version is, that returning to college after an illness it turned out "not to be a good college" so he did not bother to go back. The way he says "not a good college", reminds me of the many times I have heard parents speak about schools, especially private 'good' schools implying that the grapevine has told them so. Hearsay is influential at many levels.

George Elrick gave up after the first year. The reasons given by his family are an illustration of the relative importance and shortfalls of further education for farm children. According to George's sister he wasted time there because things like injecting sheep and lambing he had known since his early teens²⁴.

According to his mother the "social life there did bring him out of himself a lot. He used to be very shy with people before" she says. He attended the local state school, which does not necessarily put as much emphasis on self confidence as a private school might do.

²⁴ Basic farming skills have to be included in the curriculum in order to give all students a common base to start from. Farm children's practical knowledge is usually very farm specific and most of the time needs broadening, which inevitably means explaining the obvious to some of the students.

Bourdieu reflects (in his book *Distinction*) (1986) on the characteristics cultivated in French elite schools, which influence most aspects of what George's mother would probably describe as part of being a 'shy person'. One of the characteristics that Bourdieu discusses is a self confident way of carrying oneself, something George seemed to have been lacking before he went to college.

According to George's father, he did not go back after his best friend died. The father is the only family member volunteering this explanation for his son quitting college. He must fee; a need to do so, maybe as an acceptable justification for either his son's lack of stamina or his own lack of support or emphasis. There is no hinting at the possibility of the son working somewhere else to broaden his range of experiences, only hidden praise at his help on the farm.

George himself says: "Ma pa and ma grandpa, they never went to college and they were doin' all right." His role models are from the older male generation. Later on he again uses history to justify his sisters' treatment within the family succession planning. For him, farmers are still male. This identity will only have to change if he sees successful female farmers and thus his perception of identity becomes incorrect or if he gets laughed at and thus his perception becomes unrewarding (Jenkins, 1996). If he left the farming community in Scotland and went overseas he could maintain this perception of a Scottish farmer's identity, but on the other hand he would have to confront the interaction with the identities of his new neighbours be they farming or non-farming.

O'Hara (1998) found that it was mostly the mothers who saw education as a chance to get away from agriculture. In my own study as well, it is the mothers who emphasise a good education for the girls in particular.

The Scottish mothers seem to want to see their daughters set up in a secure career, considering they were unlikely to get the security of the farm business. "It is terribly, terribly important especially for a girl, to have a good education...to have a qualification of some...some kind" (Mrs. Thompson). Her son, who did very well at college, did not stay on to do his fourth year, but felt compelled to come home and help. She had to come to accept that. Looking at the ready acceptance of George Elrick's father of the son leaving college, the regret of Bert Thompson's mother of the same fact and the initial reluctance of Mr. Hunter to his daughter's wishes, the assumption could be made that mothers put more emphasis on a good education outside the farm than the fathers.

In general, school work has priority with parents in my sample. If the children want to help after they have done their homework that is fine, but mostly it is not expected of them during term time. However, the Hunter children have their regular chores to do and the Innes and the Elrick children help regularly. All of them were educated locally, which meant they would be home earlier during the week. Other parents feel they do not want to demand anything from the children, but are pleased when help comes.

Parents do not necessarily help to any great extent with homework, but they expect their children to take whatever time it needs to do it and do it properly. In contrast to other studies such as Kreil (1995) on German farm descendants, none of the children in this project experienced a conflict between school work and farm chores. This may not be such an issue, because all of the farms employ people. Also, the school day in the UK is generally longer than in Germany, which means the children are often not home from school in time to help.

The Hunter girls were also very involved in school team sport and it was only there, that they experienced a personal conflict. "Sometimes on Saturdays you had to decide to play hockey or to help with the sheep and you wouldn't have liked it if they gave your job to somebody else" (Janet Hunter).

Contrary to Kreil's (1995) German respondents, it was not during school times that the demands of farm work impinged on education, but later on. Maybe the commitment to 'education' officially stops for some parents and children when they reach maturity, reach 18 and should feel responsible for their own keep. This means different things to the future successors than to their sisters. The Hunter sisters and Lauren Innes spend all their holidays at home working, but feel obliged to find work elsewhere after their courses are finished, whereas Jack Weston and the Urquhart boys will come home to work, which might allow for the hypothesis that there is room for male children from the start, but the female ones are expected to leave once the parents' educational duties are over (see 6.).

4.2.1 Qualified to farm?

Gasson (1986) looks at qualifications held by farmers and their spouses in connection with 'other gainful activities', namely off-farm jobs. She states that qualifications are more likely to be necessary to get into other occupations, whereas they are not essential to run a farm or a farm based enterprise (see 4.4: Are children trained or educated to be farmers?) In that context, she quotes Whitby (1985) who confirms that generally relatively fewer men have

higher qualifications in regions where agriculture is one of the main employers than in regions where this is not the case.

In a keynote speech at the Conference on Women in Agriculture and Resource Management (Canberra, 1997), Rowe takes it as a statistical fact that more than twice as many women than men in the rural sector of Australia complete a tertiary degree, and many more women than men finish secondary schooling. This is not what O'Hara (1998) found in Ireland. There, rural children are better educated than the national average, only surpassed by social group 1 (professionals, entrepreneurial and managerial families). Her explanation is that because farmers are so much used to filling out forms to get money and grants, they made full use of the government's financial incentives to pursue further education, more so than, for example, the semi-skilled urban workers' families. A direct comparison of O'Hara's findings with those of this study is difficult, mainly because of the farm sizes in her sample. They were mainly small dairy and stock farms, which generally did not employ permanent workers and whose sole labour resource was the family pool.

Parents and children alike in my sample are definite in stating the benefits of education. Research confirms their beliefs. Gasson, Errington and Tranter (1998) in their postal surveys of nearly 500 English farmers conducted in 1997 and in a similar format in 1990, show that better qualified farmers are the best financial performers, both in terms of rising income and assets as well as falling overdraft. The best performers in Gasson's English survey were the ones who were not only trained in farming, but had other qualifications (Gasson *et al.*, 1998). They found that: 'The 'low' pressure group was most likely to have non-agricultural qualifications' (p. 26).²⁵ The best qualified also tend to be the ones who were under 'medium' financial pressure. The 'highest' pressure was experienced by older farmers in their survey farming smaller acreages and holding the fewest qualifications.

However, 'pressure' is felt on all farms (see 2) and people see their future in farming as not as secure as it was for their parents. Families are looking for alternatives to support themselves and keep the farm. In some cases this means diversifying or taking up off-farm employment.²⁶ To prepare themselves for these changes, parents and children in this report consider obtaining further qualifications other than agriculture. They mentioned subjects

²⁵ It was not obvious from the report whether these 'best performers' grew up on farms, trained in something else and then came back or if they had no agricultural background.

²⁶ In Britain the farmer usually stays on the farm and other family members work off-farm (Gasson, 1988). In Germany the farmers themselves have taken on off farm work and it is often the spouse who farms and the husband who helps after work.

such as mechanical engineering, accountancy, book-keeping or business management. This is not a turning away from farming, but is to be understood as a response to the present crisis in agriculture. All these skills would give the children a 'second leg to stand on' and at the same time come in very useful on the farm. "I regret now that I have only done agriculture," says Jack Weston, an only son, who had just finished college and come home to work next to his father. He says: "...studying something not directly related, but could have practical uses in agriculture." Something like engineering is quite beneficial." He personally feels it 'unfair' that his generation is the one which has to face these particularly bad times. Three years ago when he started his college training, things looked a lot better in his eyes so he did not see the need to study other subjects. Now he feels it is too late to make a fresh start. Again he voices an obligation to the parents, that they should not have to support him through another course. The father on the other hand still feels fit enough to carry on while the son widened his experiences including travelling overseas. He would have liked his son to gain further non-agricultural qualifications. The parents bank on their only son to come home and farm, but they do not make a strong case for him to gain other experiences. Maybe they do not want to be seen as pushing him away too much for fear he might not want to come back. The son may be feels he should show commitment to the farm and come home now.

Many New Zealand and Australian farm children go for an 'overseas experience' (OE) after college (Keating and Little, 1991). There it is the rule, part of the parcel of tertiary education. Here it is still the exception, despite some parents looking at an OE favourably even pushing for it (e.g. Urquhart, Weston, Stone). Gasson and Errington (1993) recommend this practice as a means to create a certain distance between the retiring couple and the successors as well as a means of gaining further skills.

For an overall picture, this sample was compared to other Scottish children. The last general survey of school children in Scotland took place in 1989/90 and 1991.²⁷ The Scottish School Leavers Survey (HMSO, 1993) collected information from over 3,340 children leaving school in 1989/90 and of their whereabouts a year later (see Table 4.1). 2.4% of these young people were classified as coming from farming families.

²⁷ More recent School Leavers Surveys in 1997 and 1999 do not use the same categories for parental occupation, but follow general Census categories. The 'rural and from farming family' category is not assessed any longer. (Personal communication from John Tippett, Scottish Executive, Statistics, June 2000.)

Table 4.1. Excerpts from the Scottish School Leavers Survey (HMSO, 1993)

| Percentage one year later, who were | Farm boys | Rural boys | Scotland | Farm girls | Rural girls | Scotland |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|-------------|----------|
| in FT employment | 35.5 | 33.2 | 33.2 | 36 | 31.2 | 31.3 |
| in YTS | 38.7 | 26.9 | 27.1 | 16 | 21.4 | 21.2 |
| unemployed./ looking | 0 | 9.3 | 9.1 | 10 | 6.8 | 6.9 |
| FT at University/ College | 22.6 | 26.8 | 26.7 | 34 | 33.1 | 33.1 |

Over one-third of children coming from farming families are in full-time employment a year later (31.3 % of the non-farming girls and 33.2% of the non-farming boys). Another third of the farm boys but only 16% of the girls are in Youth Training Schemes (YTS). However, the statistics do not specify whether or not these young men are working on farms. This can only be assumed from personal observation. If the youths are skilled tractor drivers they can contribute a cost-effective resource on the farm . Any training will be ‘on the job’ and as a rule does not entail a lot of explanations. Ten percent of the farm girls, but none of the boys were ‘unemployed and looking’. These boys would more than likely just go and work on their family farm until they decided what they want to do: stay on the farm or seek employment elsewhere²⁸. Different options are presented to the girls. Mostly there is not even room for them to join in and ‘help on the farm a bit and make a bit of money’ as the boys do until they more clearly see what it is they want and can do. Girls are as a rule expected to leave the farm straight after school. The end of a farm daughter’s school life means a change of direction away from the farm and away from family. In previous generations, it was assumed that a farm girl would marry a farmer’s son. The college adviser confirms this. Now fewer farmers’ wives have a farming background (Gasson and Errington, 1993) and more farmers’ daughters have a career. Some choose farm-related careers, maybe because as so often mentioned by male farmers, ‘farming is all I know’. This phrase must apply to their sisters as well. After all, they grow up in the same household. If these girls actually choose agriculture as a subject for their tertiary education they themselves or their parents or peers will quickly suggest not to ‘go and farm’, but to do something else related to agriculture.

²⁸ For a detailed discussion on this form of unemployment see Errington, A.J. (1988). ‘Disguised unemployment in British agriculture.’ *Journal of Rural Studies* 4: 1-7.

Mary Petrie, asked whether she knew of any girls who had gone into farming, says: “The ones I could think of, they are all doing related jobs. They’re not back farming their parents’ farm or anything, but they are still may be in agriculture (pause). They can just make more money if they do something else than farming. Others just don’t want the responsibility of running a farm.”

The mechanisms through which this happens are again very subtle and initially difficult to understand, for example, Cindy Thompson’s comment, when we talk about her choice of career. I did not quite understand what she meant, but she explained.

CT: “As I go, I am slowly learning, that this (teaching) is the career I wanted to go into, but dad didn’t really encourage me.”

U: “What did he want you to do?”

CT: “No. He didn’t encourage me on the farm, he encouraged me to get a career elsewhere (laughs) and Bert (her brother) certainly didn’t encourage me, so (pause).”

This can be interpreted, that she was not told she would not be allowed to farm, but she was encouraged to go and find something else outwith the family farm.²⁹ Cindy worked on the farm, enjoying stock and tractor work. Still, she never seriously considered competing with her brother for a place on the farm.

4.2.2 Gender and education

The increasing financial problems facing farm families overshadow their attitudes to gender, formal education and to actual farming respectively. “It used to be a farm for each son and a farmer for each daughter, but neither is any longer on the cards,” says the adviser.

In general, one third of the girls and 23% of the boys in the School Leaver survey had gone on to college or university. (There are no data as to whether they choose agriculture as their subject.) In rural Australia and New Zealand, similar results indicate differences between men and women as well (Loveridge, 1991).

Scottish farmers’ sons and daughters are both educated, but under different auspices. For the succeeding son it is an accessory to farming, for the daughter and, increasingly now all non-farming children, it is the basis of their future existence. As the non-farming world has become more tangible for growing children through mass communication and other modern technologies and, as farming no longer offers the guarantee of a secure and full-time job, farm families are becoming more open-minded and reconsidering their attitudes. Now

daughters are not categorically turned away from studying agriculture and the sons' succession as full-time farmers is not taken for granted. So far, these new combinations are only just beginning to be talked about, but they are there.

The Hunter family exemplify this development. They are stock farmers and have two daughters, who have just finished agriculture at university and a son of 10, who shows all the signs of becoming a very talented stockman. All three children have been brought up to help outside and take on their chores on the farm from a very early age. All feel involved in and committed to the farm. When the time came to decide whether the daughters should go away for tertiary education, it was mainly the mother and the girls themselves, who pushed for it. The father had his reservations, but is now very proud of them. As things have turned out in farming over the last two years, he considers it a very good move that they did go and have done so well academically. However, the eldest daughter and the father confirm that if the eldest child had been the son, he would be at home now and be working on the farm, implying that he would not necessarily have gone away to university. The second daughter says she can imagine herself being part of the future set-up on the farm. "I would probably be doing the books" she said. She does not imply she would be in charge.

The mother says she would not have and will not send the son away 'just for the sake of it', but she would quite like him to experience another farm and another 'boss' and maybe have him study agricultural economics and machinery. The father makes a point in saying, that considering "the way things is now, it is better to do an education right through and then come back to farm at a later date". Both parents state that the boy is **now** very strongly encouraged to work at school. The emphasis on the 'now' implies that before the financial crisis there was no obvious need for the boy to do well at school. He would come back and farm anyway. Now he might need an 'alternative leg to stand on'.

In this example, there are two talented and experienced young stock women, who have proved themselves academically amongst other subjects in business management and bookkeeping, yet still the parents bank on the son, who was only 10 at the time of the interview, to come home and farm. This is despite them bringing all three children up to be equally involved in farm work and farm decisions.³⁰ When I ask Mr. Hunter whether he would mind if the young son decided he wanted to become a doctor he says he would not.

²⁹This method reminds me of advice I was given when dealing with toddlers: 'Don't say no straight away. Distract them with something else first'.

³⁰ The latter makes the Hunter family an exception and not the rule. All seem to be aware of this unusual fact. 'Oh well, maybe 10% (of the neighbours) discuss things the same in the family as we do' (Mr. Hunter). The Innes family would come closest to them in this respect.

And would he be quite happy for one of the daughters to take over? “I would be quite happy.” He does not elaborate on his short answers. Does that mean he has rehearsed his stance on gender issues, because this was my third visit on the farm, or does it really not matter to him, or is this such a hypothetical scenario that it is not worth talking about? I have no clear interpretation for his words, but I tend to favour the last option. He just cannot imagine the boy turning away from farming.

For any future farm wives, the respondents consider it a bonus to have an education and then have a career of their own. The respondent’s clear understanding is that a farm wife would continue working if she wanted to, and that her salary could come in quite ‘useful in a bad year’.

4.2.3 The case of private education and social class

Half the parents in the sample had sent their children to fee-paying schools for at least part of their education and a smaller proportion had gone themselves.

In order to find out how parents and children feel about the potential ‘distinction’ which might be achieved by attending private schools, they are asked what they would do different in bringing up their children. Here the younger generation does not have any open complaints about any aspect of their upbringing. The same as their parents, they wanted to give their children a good education, the best they could afford. This does not necessarily mean fee-paying schools, as Liza Philips points out, but in most cases it probably would. She and her two sisters commuted daily to a private school in town. The mother’s earnings as a nurse helped to provide the necessary finance.

The five families who had sent their children to state schools felt a need to explain why. It could be implied that they think it is expected of them to do otherwise, or it could mean that they wanted to justify to themselves and outsiders why they did not send their children ‘away’. Three of the parents whose children had gone to local schools (and some of their children) feel they would have profited from attending fee-paying schools. They feel they would have got a ‘better education’, ‘received more attention’, ‘would have been pushed more’ than in the state system. However, school fees would have been a major problem in these cases.

In one instance the children did not want to leave their local friends (Urquhart), in the other the parents only considered the daughter for a fee-paying school. The sons were not

even pushed to go to college⁶⁸ “it is up to them” (Mrs. Elrick). The boys’ career on the farm is undisputed by the whole family. In another case Mrs. Petrie says: “Maybe it would have been better if we had sent them to the school in Z (another State school), which would have meant I had to drive every day. There are more farming children there, but... There is no point in talking about ‘what if’ situations now.” This was a view shared openly or hinted at by all the other interviewees.

For the other two couples, private education was never an option they wanted to consider. One couple found the local school perfectly adequate (Innes) despite the father himself having been privately educated. The mother of the other couple, Mrs. Hunter, feels she does not want to let the education of their children out of her hands. Not only would it educate them away from farming, it would also mean this would instill other peoples’ values in her children, which is what she is not prepared to accept. She seems to want to distance herself and her children from a certain social class habitus, which is perpetuated in her eyes by the private schools. It is made clear by the tone of her voice when she talks about these schools or about her brother who has sent all his children to fee-paying schools: “But you know not all parents take the time to talk to their children after school to redress the balance to what they experience amongst their peers at these schools...” she comments. She appears to assume that I understand what she means by ‘needing to redress’ and from the rest of the conversation this becomes clearer. She is talking about snobbery and one-upmanship. She considers the teachers at private schools are not immune to that and she does not want her children to be confronted with it. It is more the way she talks about these schools (plum in mouth accent, body language – hand on hip and expressive hand gestures) rather than what she says that gives these impressions. The mother’s attitude is in a way supported by her daughters. Both are very happy with their education and say repeatedly what a good school they had been to. Speaking to the whole family proved worthwhile in this context.

I wanted to see how farm children fit into the habitus perpetuated through private education. If they do, it would put them into the same league as their professional commuter neighbours. In order to establish that, I asked: How do these private schools actually see their farming pupils? After consulting with the career guidance counsellor for Scotland, four fee-paying schools, who are known to have an input of farming children in the area, were contacted by phone.

⁶⁸ The term ‘college’ is used often rather loosely. Until recently, the Edinburgh School of Agriculture housed both the college and the university, which is reflected in the colloquial use of the term ‘college’.

The recommended key persons proved very helpful. This is a summary of their opinions. Farm children attend usually from the ages of 10–12 onwards. They fit in well, are sporty and hard workers, but not necessarily amongst the most brilliant academically. Quite often they have to compensate for very long journeys to and from school, which seems to bond them closer to their fellow commuters as such, rather than to their farming peers. Overall, the intake from farming children into the schools surveyed showed a slight decline. This was considered to be a result of the increasingly difficult times facing farming families.

The findings from this small informal survey fit into the overall picture. They underline the financial impact of the present agricultural crisis on farming families. To put the situation in an overall perspective, two thirds of all the families sending their children to fee-paying schools in Scotland have an annual household income in excess of £40,000. (MORI Report for ISIS, 1997), a figure which only a minority of farmers can match at present (see 2) and probably even less so in future. This trend has further implications because who attends what school has always had consequences for the social life of the families. Marsden (1984) highlighted in his report on farms in Humberside nearly 20 years ago that in particular large farmers put great emphasis on a good education of their sons and daughters. For the sons, this was considered a preliminary to their entrance into the family farm. Of his sample, 35 out of 51 farmers and spouses had gone to fee-paying schools. The sons coming from private schools were very likely to have married daughters from professional or entrepreneurial families, whom they had met in these schools (Marsden, 1984).

Going to the same school, taking the same means of transport and having the same sport interests strengthens peer bonds, but it also entails social obligations for the parents. Depending on the school these 'peer pressures' can be quite pronounced. One of the respondents, Mrs. Ballantyne, who is a part-time teacher herself, decided not to send their children to a certain school because of the social obligations she, as a parent, would be expected to fulfil. "X is fine, if you are in the social swing, but I didn't think it would suit us." Her children had gone to a local small private school to start with, but they had to make other plans as the school only went up to the age of 13.

Is it obvious from the way they present themselves which families subscribe to the private education system? My personal assessment of 'class' and not of the farming enterprise in this respect would say, "Yes it is, in general." The different habitus to the state educated children is more often than not clearly evident. They speak with a less obvious

local accent, have more confidence and use less colloquial grammatical constructions, most noticeably amongst the respondents Ballantyne, Weston, Stone and Thompson.

The Philips girls went to private schools, but their parents do not portray this in their lifestyle like some other parents. The State school families (Innes, Hunter, Elrick) are clearly in another 'class'. I think that the lifestyle they portray is on a par with self-employed trades people rather than with the local lawyer.

In the case of the Petrie family, who could not afford to send their children to private schools, certain aspects of their lifestyle would still place them in the group sending their children to private schools.

Not all parents are as clear about the consequences of sending or not sending their children to private school as Mrs. Hunter, who indicates that it will turn them away from farming as well as alienate them from their parents. The Philips parents both make it clear as soon as I enter the house, that none of their children (all girls) are interested in farming. Mrs. Philips muses "...maybe, if they had been educated locally they might have been more interested (in farming)." Mr. Philips thinks along the same lines: "They have no friends locally." Any peer group pressure will largely reflect the standards of the private school circles and the City.

4.3 Vocational training and learning on the farm: The concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation'

This section seeks to lay out what it takes to farm, what needs to be learned, assimilated and practised to enter the industry. However, it does not attempt to draw the line between what it takes to be a good and a successful or wealthy farmer. The criteria vary with the judges. The farm's profit is a reasonably straight forward measurement. In Australia, Rowe (1997) quotes research from Tasmania (Kilpatrick), which shows that qualifications or attendance at vocational training courses every year can make a significant difference to the farm's average annual profit. But does attending courses which focus entirely on an increased production do justice to soil fertility, commitments to banks, family and employees? To ignore any of these factors has drastic implications for the present and future well-being of the farm and its people.

Shortall (1996), in her article on agricultural training for women in agriculture and later (1999) her book, uses education and training interchangeably. For this thesis, I differentiate between the two, loosely based on Bourdieu's concept of 'primary' and 'secondary' education (see 4.1). The latter has been described under 4.2. The former in this

context is called vocational training as well as learning experiences which take place directly on the farm.³²

In general, learning on the farm takes place under very distinct aspects such as gender (4.3.1) as well as accepting and adapting to the ever changing demands and restrictions of a farming environment with its nowadays fairly sophisticated technology (4.3.2).

Lave and Wenger (1993) in their book on 'Situated Learning' (SL) offer a frame to describe the 'learning' of farm children. Their concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (LPP) applies to all situations where apprentices learn, work next to and then replace their masters.

It applies equally to all members of households where the place of work and display of skills is at the same time the place where they live. These specific skills are characteristic of their 'community' in this case of farming. This 'community of farming' does not have socially visible boundaries, but its members share an understanding of farming and life on a farm. It adds another practical aspect to Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' as introduced at the beginning of the chapter. Both concepts refer to learning as something that happens both unconsciously and consciously, which is assimilated and then becomes a 'membership card' to a group of people, who have similar characteristics, in this case 'know about farming'.

The definition of SL as focussing on the relationship between learning and the social situation this occurs in leads on to a definition of a 'learning curriculum' (in contrast to a 'teaching curriculum') which consists of opportunities and goals that are 'situated' in this case on the farm and which allow the child to obtain new skills (Lave and Wenger, 1993). Forms this can take are illustrated in the following quotes.

"They were always around when there was something interesting going on in the yard" is a comment from several of the mothers. Some fathers were more approachable to talk to on these occasions and answer the children's questions (Mr. Petrie); others were not and now regret it (Mr. Ballantyne); others put the children straight to work (Mr. Phillips, Mr. and Mrs. Hunter). However, farming itself is changing.

When the parents' generation was growing up farm work was far less mechanised. For example, at potato harvest time there would be over 20 people of all ages in the field picking, raking and burning shaws, driving the digger and the trailers. Today there is one digger driver, maybe 2-3 people on the back of the machine picking and 2-3 trailer drivers.

³² In order to keep up with technological and Health and Safety standard developments there is also an increasing uptake of more or less compulsory vocational courses for farmers. These are usually short term and subject specific.

No potatoes are roasted in the shaw fires, no school children are helping. There is not much room or time for teaching children.

Nevertheless it can be said that all farms with stock had the children going around the fields mainly with their dads when they were small. If the mothers were involved, the children came along, because it was not practical to leave them at home. Only sometimes was there a gran or somebody else they could be left with for a while. The Elrick children went to see their mother attend to the 'sheep away from home'. The Hunter girls watched their mother working the calves out of their prams.

For the non-native and non-male person the chance to become a trainee member of the group, in this case the 'community of farming', is liable to be manipulated. A new farmer in the district, but even more so daughters, in-laws and wives are often kept outside and only selected bits of information are passed on to them. Women are not allocated to operate certain pieces of equipment. They are not allowed to be 'peripheral' to certain activities and thus learn about them. They do not have access to, in Lave and Wenger's words, 'areas of mature practice' (*ibid.*). "He will come with me and you can help your mother", I heard fathers say many times to their daughters. In other words, only if the girls have access, are there, on the spot, can they start learning and then helping.

Just like apprentices, farm children are not expected to do a full job. They are learning. They can watch and as they go, get access to more and more 'master' jobs. All the time they listen and observe stories and practices. For some of them, the goal will be to one day become a full member of the farming community. They aim to acquire a 'farming identity' just like their 'master' has. Thus learning and a sense of identity are inseparable. The link between social and individual identity and the concept of 'habitus' are described at the beginning of the chapter. Habitus can be considered as a working concept which makes it possible to explain how social identity gets constituted to the extent that achievement of the identity can be 'measured' and thus empirical criteria applied in its widest sense to it. As the apprentice's identity gets established the master's identity is automatically questioned. The first time a child beats its parent at sport, weight lifting, ploughing, stock judging or whatever are memorable events. This has to and does eventually lead to a potential conflict between the old master and the newcomer, as will be discussed in the chapter on succession.

4.3.1 Gender and vocational training

From early childhood, farm children are socialised into the rather gendered world of farming. This entails the search for *role models*, especially the *father's influence* on the background of

the *technicalities of farming* and the *gendered invitations* to participate, be it with *vocational training* or not. On a stock farm they see the male animals being treated differently. On an arable farm they see 'hands on' males working big machines. These childhood images will be challenged in one way or another when the outside world provides more influence through school, university and the media. Mother and father are still the childrens' first role models, but what they do and how they do it will be questioned and compared with outside influences as the children get older. This is particularly problematic for the daughter, who is interested in becoming a farmer.

Role model: She will have to make her own role in life. Her mother may be involved on the farm. The daughter may have heard about women farming in their own right, but most of the time she will have to make do with her father working the farm and whatever she thinks she herself could do too. She will be striving to replace whoever is the full member of the community of farmers. This is usually not her mother but a male relative and therefore not a straightforward role model. As in any other male dominated profession, she will have to find her own way. Gasson (1987) found that amongst the 83 farm daughters questioned, none named her mother (all of the mothers had come from farms) as a role model (and only 13% married farmers). This new generation of farmer's wives came from farms more than 195 ha in size.

None of the hopeful girl farmers in this project can name a directly comparable woman farmer. They have no role models. Nevertheless their answer to the question if they know of another woman farmer gives the distinct impression they have seriously been looking for one.

When Schmitt (personal communication) organised her female farmer conferences in Germany, the participants appreciated most of all the opportunity to meet and talk to women in similar situations to themselves, because they felt alone in their field in their area. Apparently many kept in touch afterwards, just to have someone to talk to. In her book on female farmers, Schmitt (1996) points out the special bond some of her respondents have with their fathers. She even calls them 'Vatertochter' (dad's daughters). Similarly, to Cockburn (1987), she refers to the problems women encounter when they enter traditionally male work domains. Yes, they can do the work, but they work under different conditions than their male colleagues. They have to strike a balance between farming and 'woman's work'. Dad cannot help in showing them how to balance farming, housework and having children. They are torn between the two gender constructs. Cockburn states that 'most young women today are led to believe they can have enduring relationships with young men

built on mutual respect, understanding and equality. Given the gender system that persists, this is a cruel deception' (*ibid.*, p. 193).

Father's influence: Onken (1989) analysed the different patterns of daughters' responses to their fathers in general. One of the types she describes are the daughters who grow up with a (farming) father, who is not interested in them, who is perhaps too distant, too busy or tired to respond to them. And the little girl adapts to that. She continually tries to attract dad's attention, but gets more or less ignored. Onken reckons these ignored girls are worse off than the ones whose father is physically absent, because they know they have to find father figures elsewhere, whereas the ignored daughter gets ever more perceptive in finding out what might possibly make dad interested in her person and her actions. These responseless daughters, says Onken, excel with a high talent in adaptability. How many farmers take the time to play or talk to their little girls or their teenage daughters, if the brother or uncle is there with burning farm issues? Maybe these 'responseless' daughters become the perfect traditional (farm) wife, foreseeing and adapting to whatever they perceive as their partner's (business) needs.

Nevertheless, dad is very important for a girl who wants to enter a male domain. In an earlier study, Cockburn (1985) looked at the background of women who had enrolled in the 1981 Engineering Industry Training Board 'Insight' course. More than half had a father in engineering, science or education (more than three quarters came from a middle class background) and had considerably more A-grade O-levels than those interested in other degree courses. No wonder that Cockburn's study found young peoples' job training choices overall to be almost 100% traditional and sex-stereotyped. This is in line with the findings from this study, that the girls who were interested in agriculture would make sure they had more than average qualifications to show than the boys.

In their choice of subjects, girls on the whole tend to choose more stock oriented activities and boys more mechanistic ones (see 5.2.1).³³

Technicalities of farming: The technicalities of farming are officially taught in colleges and university courses. A lot of their course material is introduced to boys and girls as they trundle behind their parents from an early age. The knowledge about the farm's workload during the seasons becomes an internalised part of daily life. On stock farms particularly the arrival and dealings with young stock are events which the children learn without realising it. Only later some voice their surprise, when confronted with their fellow

³³ This reflects my own experiences at university, where the livestock subjects were predominantly taken by female students and machinery and economics by males.

students' ignorance. Nora Hunter says: "There is another couple of girls from farms that...they never had to help outside. And you notice just simple things like I mean when you would, you know, when you are making up budgets and things, when you would dose the sheep, or when you would sell the cattle or just simple things, simple bits of knowledge that you take for granted, that they haven't a clue about...they just don't seem to know and they don't understand and they don't...". She differentiates here between children who live and those who live **and** work on their farm, and the ones who come from outside farming. The latter are not expected to know about the life cycle of farm animals. Other farm children are expected to know more just as she has accumulated this knowledge without actual conscious studying.

Mr. Innes describes how times have changed on the back of technological progress. He was 10 when he had to show his father how to drive the combine. For some reason the hired driver was no longer available. The boy had been sitting in the cabin all through harvest and just watched. So he knew and could show his father. The combines then were simpler. Machinery in general was more manageable and people felt safer handling them. This becomes obvious when comparing the age farm children were allowed to drive a tractor.

Their parents were 'on it' as soon as they could reach the pedals. Today's children have to be at least 14 if not 16 before they are allowed to drive a tractor. By that age the children would have most likely made their interests obvious (see 4.4.1). The girls who had turned away from farming had done so before they reached this age. All parents seemed very safety conscious and did not need much prompting to tell of horrible accidents which had happened on farms involving children. However, children of all ages in the project and on farms in my neighbourhood usually had a quadbike or motorbike or even an old car to run around the farm on, which gave them confidence in handling motors later. When they finally are allowed to drive a tractor at the age of 16, any driving practice must be a good thing, considering that legally then they can be in charge of a big tractor pulling a fully loaded trailer on a main road at anything up to 50 km/h without a full license. It is much easier for children to get involved in learning to handle stock than machinery. There is young stock to feed and bed, gates to open and troughs to fill, all child friendly and relatively safe. Not many children can resist such an interesting range of activities, because in general little boys and girls like to watch and to feel useful.

Gendered invitations: Nevertheless, it is the little boy, be he a visitor or the farmer's son running round in the farm yard, who is asked whether 'he wants a shot' on the tractor, a

little girl has to ask whether 'she is allowed a shot'. This is the beginning of gendering in the farm yard. Statements made by Mr. Ballantyne and Mr. Philips, fathers who had daughters and no sons, illustrate this powerfully. They would have taken more time, made more of an effort, if there had been a boy. Especially Sandra Ballantyne recalls how they learnt not to be in the way, when dad was very busy. A boy would have been invited to become involved. The girls' chance to be apprentices and experience, in Lave and Wenger's (1993) words, (see 4.3) legitimate peripheral participation, was curtailed simply because they were female. That is the difference. It is as subtle and simple as that. Boys are expected to be interested and girls have to show and prove they are. "They have to show more interest," says Cindy Thompson. That is why they feel they need more vocational training than their brothers, if they want to remain in agriculture.

My own research suggests that there is also a difference between the generations. The mothers did what was needed to be done in order to keep the business a going concern, the daughters might choose to try and stay in agriculture. Haugen's (1990) research on female farmers in Norway addresses this issue. She found an age divide between older female farmers who were not all that interested in farming, but did it to keep the business going for the next generation, and the younger ones who chose to take on the farm. These latter women manifested their interest in modern farming by joining research and development groups to a far higher percentage than their male counterparts, who were more interested in the Farmer's Union. Two-thirds of these younger female farmers under 40 in Norway did tractor work themselves. Most had been in contact with farm work from childhood. Maybe they grew up under more gender-equal circumstances. For example, the young women in Kreil's study (1995) swore they would treat all their boys and girls the same. Lauren Innes claims under the same circumstances she would definitely take all her children, sons and daughters, out with her on the farm. (She herself is the eldest, then comes a disinterested sister and a brother five years younger.)

Vocational training: The Norwegian women who intended to take up farming as a career took up vocational training courses at a higher rate than their male colleagues. This corresponds to the findings from this project. The girls who are interested in agriculture and are hopeful, but not as certain as their brothers, of being able to stay in touch with farming, make sure that they go and get vocational training at a tertiary level. The boys are not that concerned. They feel they will be able to pick up 'farming' as they start to get more involved and if they need any additional courses for whatever reason, they will just go and do them. They do not have to prove anything to anybody.

Mechanically specialised work did not feature in the range of activities learnt by the female respondents specifically. The younger generation of women, if they were involved on the farm could handle tractors with ease, but none drove the combine harvester. The Norwegian study confirms that even the female farmers are not known to do much of the mechanical work themselves, ‘...girls mainly participate in the traditional tasks which do not include mechanical work...with little or no training (reflecting the different socialisation processes for boys and girls growing up on farms) in the mechanical sphere, it was not surprising that so few female farmers were actually working with farm machinery...the young female farmers want to manage machinery’ (Haugen, 1990, p. 207). Still, two-thirds of the Norwegian women stated they did drive the tractor.

In the same context, most interested women from this study would be able to sit on a tractor and drive it. However, it is unlikely they can set an attached plough or sprayer or seeder. There is a significant difference between (a) simply driving a tractor, (b) backing a trailer full of grain, loading with a forklift, ploughing, seeding or spraying and, as the most male domain, (c) driving the combine harvester. This seems to justify the assumption that it is this range that the young Norwegian women meant when they said they wanted to ‘manage machinery’.

If the urgency of extreme situations such as penury, illness or widowhood is removed and women are choosing to farm in their own right, it has to be seen whether they then learn more about machinery tasks on the farm (see also 5.3.2). There is still another large step to take from using farm machinery to actually servicing and repairing it, a step which some male farmers are increasingly hesitant to take themselves. Machinery is getting more complex, more specialised and more expensive. The number of farmers who are actually confident to undertake repairs on most of their pieces of equipment is dwindling. They might service their tractor, but not repair it. Their forklift gets serviced by outsiders which is mainly because of Health and Safety Regulations. More complex pieces of equipment are again dealt with by trained mechanics. Combine harvester manufacturers offer two day courses to teach the best use and routine maintenance of their machines, some of which come complete with radioactive yield sensors and computer equipped drivers’ cabins. During harvest the manufacturers’ mechanics are on call around the clock to repair combines in the field.

Farming technologies are changing at a very fast pace and create an ever changing need for learning new skills in order to keep the farm competitive. Health and Safety Regulations demand attendance at certain short term vocational courses, e.g. on the use of

chemicals, or forklift driving. These courses are attended by whoever is dealing with the particular aspect of the business and whenever it becomes unavoidable. This could be an employee or a member of the family – male or female.

An example of this pragmatic approach is the families' handling of computer technology. With paperwork demanding an ever increasing share of management time, the respondents felt computers were unavoidable. Some already used them (Stone) while others had learned or were going to learn to (Weston).

Bookkeeping and computer courses are taken by farmers and their wives, as the administration workload is growing. As computing is new to both parties (the Westons, the Urquharts, the Innes's, the Thompsons) they seem to choose to learn together and then divide the work load later.

There is a certain amount of computer literacy in all the families, sometimes limited to the youngest members of the household. If there is a computer it is mostly used in some capacity or other as a tool to assist with the paperwork. All families are envisaging using a computer in the near future (after Y2K was over).

All feel the internet has great potential, but some parents are not quite sure how this will apply to their own situation. The children foresee an increased use for the internet in agriculture although some have only really come into contact with it at college. Some say they will learn about it once it has an immediate application for them, others are already playing with it.

The three out of 10 wives who are considered actively involved in the running of the farms (usually stock or mixed rather than arable), are partners in the business and have their own domain within it. Two have had some administrative training either from their former work or by attending a separate course. All three are farmers' daughters and enjoy working with 'their stock' immensely. Four others are assisting with paperwork, two of them farmers' daughters. Nothing in these womens' replies gives the impression that they will hesitate in any way to search for, find and attend short term courses, should their role on the farm require it. None of the wives seem to want to extend or change her domain of work on the farm and maybe work more outside. The three women working with stock will not hesitate to attend courses on injecting sheep or anything else. The ones doing more secretarial work feel competent enough in it for the time being, but again they will educate themselves further if need be.

The main provider for vocational training was until recently the Agricultural Training Board (ATB). Their range of courses covered a wide spectrum and were well attended. They were particularly successful in offering courses in office skills for farm wives (Gasson and Errington, 1993). Vocational training now has been restructured and is offered by several bodies with different names.

Shortall's (1996) respondents, who were working mainly on dairy farms, deplore the lack of availability of training for women involved in farm work, saying what is available is tailored to and addressing men only. None of those concerns are voiced by the respondents or by any of the researcher's other social contacts. The women in this project have a different range of activities than the ones in Shortall's study. Here, their farms seem to allow them the choice as to how much involvement they want. Nevertheless, the women in this environment all give the impression, that within their activities, they are confident and prepared to go as far as they have to in order to keep the business going.

4.3.2 Accepting and adapting: Changing demands and restrictions in an agricultural environment

A lot of the 'knowledge' surrounding a farm is tacit and some of it is never explicitly stated. This is never more evident than when a 'townie'³⁴ comes to visit. Several of the younger respondents (Liza Philips, Tina Stone) recall visits of school friends who were utterly amazed at this totally different world.

The farm house might be a modern bungalow, the kitchen fully mechanised, but there will be dirty clothes and boots hanging at the backdoor. Phone conversations will be dealing with 'tons' of strangely named commodities and all timescales be it for meal times, weekends or holidays, depend on the weather, the machinery dealer or the breeding cycle of livestock. The whole family will take this for granted without any discussion. This is how it is and there is no point in asking why this is late or that is out of the question at this time of the year.

Especially the latter, the overall acceptance is rather difficult to come to terms with for an outsider. The visitor or maybe the 'townie' daughter-in-law or the visiting school friend is confronted not just with a family but with the antics of a fully functioning business organism. Explanations or introductions are rare especially during high pressure times like during harvest and at Easter during lambing or planting. Even their own children are likely

³⁴ 'Townies' are people who grew up and live in an urban environment and according to their rural fellow citizens 'just haven't got a clue' about farming today.

to get rather short answers and both visitors and children might feel not wanted and not encouraged. This is most likely not unique to farming.

Sandra Ballantyne recalls these incidents very clearly. Her father now regrets that he did not take the time to explain things to his daughters. He continues: "If it had been a boy, you would have made more of an effort even at busy times." Still there is a lot to be learnt just by being on the farm, sitting around the table, listening and observing. Lave and Wenger (1993) are very clear in pointing out the benefits for 'apprentices' to be around their 'masters' in this case the farmer or farm worker.

An outsider has a lot of learning to do trying to catch up with what the children, the native apprentices, have demonstrated to them every day. People just moving into rural areas are not always pleasantly surprised at how ever-present 'farming' has become in their lives. There is the dirt on the road, the different, not only pleasant, smells in the air, the traffic slowed down during certain times of the year. Some fight it, others just learn to live with it and accept it. However, accepting dirty roads on the way to the city is not the same as understanding farming in a way that allows individuals to accept the agricultural environment with all its complex demands and restrictions and thus adapt their lives within it. This acceptance which is part of farming life, needs to be internalised, especially by 'townies' marrying into a farm.³⁵

Working with 'nature'. German speakers use the term 'Natur' in its narrow sense to describe what has not been shaped by humans and contrast that to what has. As such they speak of 'Naturlandschaft' (a landscape in its natural 'untouched' state) in contrast to 'Kulturlandschaft'. Farming families are the main agents who transform the 'Naturlandschaft' to the 'Kulturlandschaft' all the while dealing with 'Natur' and its matter, forces, changes and laws. Some of these they have to accept, some they manage to harness for their own purposes.

It could be argued that this acceptance of 'Natur' predetermines members of farming families to accept traditions such as patriarchy and differences amongst the genders quite readily, because these are so often explained as being 'natural' or as 'just the way things are'.

Inheteven (2000) emphasises how agriculture is structurally different from other sectors of the economy, because it has such a strong organic character. As such, the process

of farming involves not only the person in itself but also its very specific communication with others: plants, animals, soil, landscape, weather and seasons. This 'communication' has its own language. In less industrialised farming systems, it manifests itself in country lore and hands-on often lived experiences passed on from generations to generations. A certain 'feel for nature' is required to understand connections and consequences. This feel becomes part of the implicit knowledge which accumulates while growing up on a farm. The increased mechanisation makes some of this 'feel' less important, but not all. Some of the fathers seem very aware of the need for this knowledge – Inhetveen talks about 'spueren' (sense, experience a touch-feel sense) – and voice the opinion that it is easier acquired if livestock is present. As Mr. Ballantyne says, "I think you make a better overall farmer if you were brought up with animals. You become a better farmer, because you learn... I think, aspects of farming that...you get nearer to nature and get nearer to farming if you have animals on the farm."

In reply to the question whether it would matter if the future partner of the children came from a farm, both parents and siblings think it would be easier for someone with an agricultural background, to 'know what to expect'. As Bert Thompson (21) explains: "I think if they come from a farm, they would be more understanding of the way agriculture works. That at certain times of the year you can't maybe go out on a Saturday night and odd times of the year you can." In other words, agriculture functions in a complex web of casual short, medium and long-term relationships which have to be understood, maybe even experienced, in order to make it possible to feel at home there.

But there are not only seasonal changes which have to be accepted. The needs of the business and of the family are ever changing. Farm enterprises get abolished or further mechanised, often entailing less work but requiring more capital input. Farm record keeping is increasingly demanded by buyers and official bodies, necessitating time and skill commitment. Children are born, need more, go to school, need less time input, come home and help. There is therefore some 'room' to manoeuvre for each individual. That 'room' can be used according to personal preferences (see 5.2) as in the case of Mrs. Elrick. She called a halt to certain of her outdoor contributions to the farm work, as soon as she could afford to. She used to drive the old, 'small' tractor quite confidently, but refused to learn to handle the new and 'big' one. The arrival of the new tractor coincided with her eldest son

³⁵ I myself have witnessed a number of only sometimes amusing anecdotes of fellow farmers' wives who came to live here often growing up as 'townies' and who had to go through this process of learning, accepting and adapting.

becoming old enough to drive a tractor. She now concentrates on the ever increasing, more complicated, cattle records.

Would she have learnt to drive the new tractor, had there been no son to take over? O'Hara (1998) suggests in her book on Irish farm women that the unwillingness to drive the tractor may stem not only from culturally prescribed gender roles, but could be a way of resisting being burdened with work the women were trying to avoid. She quotes one interviewee, who said: "I don't drive the tractor, although I suppose I would if I had to. My husband has said to me that it's a pity you don't drive the tractor. Whatever has to be done you just do it and that's it. It depends on what makes money" (p. 90).

A neighbour's wife makes no secret out of her avoidance of learning to drive the forklift. She does not want to be asked to quickly go and feed the cattle on a winter morning. She prefers the bookwork and calls herself lucky at having the best job on the farm. Again, she does not say she could not learn it if she had to or wanted to.

Luke, as described by Shortall (1992) in her work on power relations on Irish farms, advocates the observation of behaviour in 'abnormal times' as a tool for investigating power. The 'abnormal times' occur when the person who used to do the work is no longer available such as in the case of illness or death. Then women farm. The women farmers mentioned by my respondents were mostly widows or only daughters of ailing fathers. Another farmer's daughter and wife (aged 49, who was not interviewed for the project, but who is well known to the researcher) who was barely ever seen on the tractor in her childhood being totally absorbed in her horses, changed her approach dramatically, when her husband took ill for weeks at a time. As they have no employees any more and are childless, she ended up bringing in all the silage for winter and then took over the care of the housed cattle herd. She even learnt to drive the 'digger' with instructions her husband gave her over the phone from hospital. The 'digger', which is a type of forklift, is one of the most difficult pieces of machinery to learn to manoeuvre in an enclosed space. Would she have done it had there been sons and farm workers? She could not justify to herself to employ someone to help, so she just went and did it. The question remains what made her do it? Did the budget demand she drove the digger, or her husband? And before, did her husband refuse to let her drive it or did she choose not to in times when he was capable to do so and she chose to enjoy her horses instead? And will she continue driving the machine when he is out of hospital? This case is not an exception. When Mrs. Hunter was critically ill her daughters took on her role

on the farm, did the books, 'her' sheep and the lambing. A (male) helper was hired for lambing and more than once Mr. Hunter cooked the family meal.³⁶

Studies of German farm families found evidence of the passive resistance of women to learning certain jobs. It was their way of protecting themselves from then 'having to do it' in case of need. After quoting several examples from her interviews Wimer (1988) summarises: 'the quiet resistance of the women is often hidden behind seemingly insignificant reactions or otherwise as 'typical female' behaviours' (author's translation, p. 97). Kreil (1995)³⁷, in her study of farm descendants, also shows how girls growing up on farms were actively confined to home and garden or lower status 'women's' tasks outside (raking rather than driving the tractor forwards) than their sometimes even younger brothers. In their teens they wanted to learn the high status jobs such as driving the tractor, but the only time they were given a chance was when the brother was not there or there was no brother. The children in this project are growing up under different conditions. Their farms have hired labourers and tractor men. The highest status is not so much driving the tractor, the tractorman can do that, but being able to afford not to drive it, but still know how it can be used. In that sense change can work both ways. Now Mr. Ballantyne has finally sold his cattle, he can take his golf more seriously.

So what is it, that is so difficult to learn to understand or just accept? Firstly, farming enterprises are characterised by a distinctly seasonal pattern. This pattern dominates the farm household and all its members. They are complex and therefore difficult to learn. Disregarding them can have disastrous consequences for the farm business in the long, medium or even short term. Secondly, for most family farms the seat of the business is the home and *vice versa*. Problems in one domain have direct effects on the other. The implications stemming from these two facts are manifold and permeate every aspect of life of all the household members. They manifest themselves in a personification of the farm (see 1.3). The requirements of the farm come first, the individual second. Growing up in this atmosphere eliminates the possibly painful adaptation period for an outsider trying to live in a farming family.

Even though households are nowadays barely ever multigenerational, the influence of the expectations an incomer has to face are strong. Respondents especially of the younger generation are aware of all these problems facing a potential spouse, and they consider the

³⁶ His wife states that each case had to be looked at on its own merit and the fact that he can cook stems from his mother's early death and was *not*, she emphasises, a gender issue.

³⁷ It can be argued that some men will just not learn to work certain household appliances, so they cannot be asked to use them.

acceptance of them more difficult than learning about the technicalities of the respective farm.

4.4. Who wants to be the farmer?

4.4.1 Developing an interest in farming

Choice of profession is largely determined by a person's social group of reference which means in the first instance one's own family (Fasterding, 1996). The children's development within the farming environment shows certain features. Here are some quotes which typify this phenomenon.

- As the adviser says: "The ones who show an aptitude for farming will be out there fairly early on, when they are about six or seven."
- Mr. Stone talks about how during his time at primary school he used to walk home hoping to be in time to help to get the cows in for the milking. He does not talk about school as such, but uses it as a benchmark for his age at the time.
- Janet Hunter, asked to explain why some children are interested in farming and some are not, said: "Well it all depends how you were brought up. We were brought up to be involved, to be interested, to help whenever we were needed." Her statement exemplifies Bourdieu's concept of habitus as being consciously and unconsciously structuring and structured (see 4.1).
- "You can't get him off the tractor during harvest time" (mother about her five year old son, the youngest of five). "The girls, well they would get bored."
- Mrs. Innes found her own explanation for her two daughters' preferences: "It is in the genes. Why would the eldest daughter be so keen and the second one isn't?"

She does not consider that maybe there was no room for the second daughter to get involved because the first one was so keen and at the same time very capable. What would have happened if Gina was the eldest or if Walter, her third child, was the eldest. Would Lauren still be as well versed in all (stock related) things on the farm?

Interviews and observation suggest that at the end of primary school, aged approximately 10–12, children become more aware of life outside farming, or become more conscious of their own aspirations within it. The fathers point to the same age as when their

girls' interests changed. "She was such a keen helper and enjoyed going round the farm with me, but then she discovered boys and stopped coming out with me." This is a typical comment from a farming father. This change of interest comes at around the same age when the children actually can be more useful. Instead of being a bind they can now be a real help as they are starting to be physically and mentally more capable of taking on some of the farm routines.

In this crucial time between 11 and 14, the children have to cope with puberty, approaching adult work potential on the farm, school changes and a broadening of their idea of a future profession, all of which are unsettling and demand a lot of emotional energy.

Gina Innes, after being asked when she stopped wanting to help, replies "probably after I went to school...before THIS was all I knew...I know much more about the world now and what else you can do and I just think there are better stuff, yeah." Her older sister never stopped being interested in the farm, neither did her younger brother.

For Doris Philips, this was the time when she began to hide the fact that she was coming from a farm. She likes nothing better than stay in town at her friend's house. She remains the only one totally opposed to anything to do with farming or even life in the country. "Far too boring," she says. Both her sisters seem quite happy with the prospect of living, but not working, in the country at some point in their later life. "It is a good place to bring up children," said Lisa Philips, who is studying to become a doctor.

For the 'next farmer' the pressure is immense. He (and it still is mainly 'he') starts to see the outside world, but knows he cannot try it even just within his own mind. Medium and long term planning is the rule in farming. For a son it must be very difficult to sit and discuss the erection of a new shed, for example, which will be there for at least 50 years and cost a lot of family money, and think to himself that he would actually rather be a lawyer. He will have to make a decision very early on. Comments from grandpa Elrick to his 5-year old grandson such as: "This will all be yours one day" while overlooking the farm, or Mr. Urquhart "They can always put sheep in the new shed once I am gone" are not rare. Errington *et al.* (1995) found that by the time the eldest son is 10, a quarter of all surveyed English families with sons had chosen a successor. By the time he is 16 half of them had. And that 'chosen' person knows about it. It will become part of his (or her) 'habitus'. How can s/he sit at the kitchen table and not show interest?

4.4.2 Are children trained or educated to be farmers?

How is interest in farming created? Mrs. Hunter says, “It is a kind of family cooperation thing. I wouldn’t say it was ever expected, that they would do that and that and that would make them wanting to farm.” Her daughter describes other daughters who were allowed to stay inside on cold wet days, whereas she was told to put on an extra pair of socks and come out and help.

“He is only 10, but he can tell you exactly which were the lambs from this ewe for the last two years. His sister can as well. It is a gift, you can’t learn it” (says Mrs Hunter, about her son).

“The older one, he was always quite bright. So he has gone off to do something else and the younger one, he has always been more interested in the farm” (says Vicky about her two brothers).

At first the above quotes appear to have no common denominator. On closer inspection they give a reflection of a learning process under very specific circumstances: learning to become ‘a farmer’. What makes a successful, good farmer? Environmentalists, accountants, investment advisers, neighbours, farm workers – they will all apply different criteria in their judgment. However, the most visible of all is, I would say, the ‘successful’ farmer and that is a farmer who is still farming, despite all the economic, political and financial turmoil surrounding the farm. This success has come at a price. It may have been achieved through selling off pieces of property, perhaps channelling the funds into profitable investments outside agriculture³⁸, through timely introduction or abolishment of farm enterprises, through government subsidies or through a re-organisation of the labour force, which in most cases meant redundancies. Standing still has not been an option.

To prepare for succeeding in a business which offers so many opportunities for success or failure and involves so much capital is a complex matter. The farmers in the research have not necessarily had a college training in agriculture. Most of them came straight home after school. Some went abroad, some few did go to college. Their children are either all going to college or to university or will be going there. The ones who are showing an interest in ‘coming home’ are advised to get an alternative ‘leg to stand on’ (see 4.2). They are not really pushed to study farming as such. That you learn on the job. The problems as seen by the upcoming generation is their lack of real experience on their

³⁸ In the case of New Zealand farmers, who have been through a period of total abolishment of government subsidies and who are exposed to all fluctuations of the world markets, investments outside agriculture and even more so outside the New Zealand economy, have proven to be their best strategy for survival (personal communication from a New Zealand farmer with widespread contacts).

property, not their lack of access to formal training. With experience they mean 'hands on experience'. "I know this farm. I know what needs to be done and when and on what field. I wouldn't want to run a different type of farm" (Lauren Innes, eldest daughter, has always helped and shown a keen interest). "I wished I had had taken more of an active interest. I still have to learn the ropes. I want to start right at the bottom and work my way up until I know" (Urquhart, older son, one brother). "You don't really need to go to college to farm here. You just get out and help and then you know" (son, partner in the Elrick family stock farm). They do not feel a further academic qualification would help them on the farm, but they and their parents see it as an insurance for hard times. "If they had been away for eight years they wouldn't know what is going on. They would have to learn about the farm for quite a long time" (several interviewees commenting on the vignette).

What is it they need to learn? How can they learn it? Is it taught, demonstrated or just 'done'?

Farming is a composite of biology, soil science, mechanical engineering, financial and personnel management. It therefore requires a combination of different skills applied in the context of a particular location, the farm. Some of these skills can be bought from sources such as chemical companies, feedmills, fertiliser companies, accountants etc., but the coordination and the risk remains with the farmer. How to prepare for this task? "If they are at all interested, they will pick it up along the way," said Mr. Innes. This definitely applies to stock farming. The experience with stock is a schooling of the eye and it takes a certain 'feeling for the animals'. Watching a shepherd gathering and then counting a flock of even just 100³⁹ sheep coming through a yard gate and at the same time picking out the one sheep with 'something wrong', is an impressive sight. Breeding and selecting sires and dams is not as impressive for the onlooker, but still requires, even today with all the breeding performance charts available, an affinity with the animals to be successful. This skill, this affinity, can be learnt to a certain extent, but there has to be a 'gift', an interest there to begin with. Some people have 'it' for sheep, some for horses, for cattle, some for stock in general. Maybe the parallel can be drawn here between a 'good' doctor, who just knows there is something 'wrong', and the one who passes all exams with flying colours, but does not recognise a sick person or just goes about processing patients. A lot of this skill will be learnt by children growing up with stock, helping their parents with chores, watching them, opening gates, sitting on the back of the pick-up truck. These are the children who later at college or university are amazed by the ignorance of their peers regarding animal husbandry.

³⁹ Under today's conditions the general ratio is: 1000 sheep to one shepherd(ess).

They will never lose those skills, that feeling for animals and even if they live in town, they will search for a connection to some piece of nature, be it by keeping a pet, a country house, outdoor sport or an allotment (for a detailed description see Kreil, 1995 and 6.4).

Arable farming is different. “A field of barley is a field of barley” (Mrs. Hunter). “To grow it well, is a matter of routine and cost management. It can be totally done by contractors and crop advisers.” All the farmer has to do is sell it for a good price.⁴⁰ This statement comes from an arable farmer, Mr. Ballantyne. The young successor will at some point drive the first load of grain in from the field, change an oil filter or drive the combine. It will happen gradually, no explicit training, not much fuss. It can happen at any time, at any interval, at any age. It is happening later for this generation, because the machines are bigger and potentially more dangerous than during their parents’ youth. The skills required for purely arable farming are more mechanical, more learnable. They require less ‘feeling’ for nature. “She,” meaning his daughter of 23, who in her own words cannot even back a trailer to save her life, “could still come home and do it – if she really wanted to,” says Mr. Ballantyne. He continues, “Anybody can be an arable farmer.”

What distinguishes the farm situation from other family concerns is the overall lack of the necessity for a definite, formal apprenticeship. The tagging on of the toddler, becomes the gate opening, then the baler driving and the cattle feeding. You learn as you go, you grow into it every day, all day and all year. Which makes learning to become the farmer different from learning to become a jeweller, butcher, fisherman or other traditional family business successors.

On the whole, the skills for farming are becoming more specialised. These changes entail more mechanical know-how and less traditional knowledge, more administrative and financial management and less physical labour (see also 6.3.3). Theoretical knowledge is becoming more powerful, ‘desk’ or part-time farming more of a possibility. This applies in particular to the arable sector as we have seen above, but nothing will ever replace a ‘good eye’ for stock in successful stock farming. Even at industrial scale feed lots, piggeries or ranches, there is always someone in direct contact with the animals, proving that this instinct is still worth money everyday. Such an environment is far removed from the all round task facing the successors to the medium size farms in the research, but the principles are the same

⁴⁰ Speciality crops such as potatoes, soft fruit and vegetables are different, demanding more refined expertise, but this can still be provided by outsiders – at a price.

4.5 Social life of farming people

There are certain parallels between the social life of farming families and that of people engaged in occupations involving self-employment (which can often mean self-exploitation), seasonality and working from home.

Firstly, most farmers are self-employed, a feature which they cherish. The statement: 'I like being my own boss' is frequently mentioned. It means on the one hand they can set their own priorities, but on the other hand they are also responsible and accountable for any mis-management of time and other resources. They have to sacrifice weekends to work the land or look after stock and their children will have no family outing to tell the class about when they go back to school on Mondays (Janet Hunter). They may be financially able to afford to go on a summer holiday, but they cannot afford to leave the farm at that time of year. On the whole farm work is seasonal and to a large extent weather dependent. In that respect it has similarities to the tourist industry. However, family farming is somewhat different from tourism. Only under certain circumstances such as the 'Bed and Breakfast' trade is the family home simultaneously the seat of the business. Any tensions, pressures or events have an immediate effect on the atmosphere at the family table. A machine is broken down, dad is late for lunch. A spare part was not ready, mum is late picking the children up at the arranged time. A late harvest, the camping trip is cancelled.

The three factors self-employment, weather and seasonal dependencies and working from home determine how members of the farming household want to spend their free time.

In general the social life of farming families centres around school, sport, charitable work and farm-related gatherings. For the parents' generation, that means if they pursue any sport or other hobby it has to be on a seasonal basis. Six out of the 10 fathers play golf. They have arable or mixed farms. The stock farmers claim to have no real hobby. Messrs. Thompson and Elrick say that 'going to the market' (stock auctions) is their hobby. Some go shooting in the winter which is their quiet time. 'Going shooting' for most farmers is more of a social event, rather than a sport. You invite for a shoot and you are invited. You meet people, you talk. None of the women shoot, but some help with the catering. "I enjoy the shoots," says a neighbouring woman, "but I am also glad when it is over. It is a lot of work." Some of the mothers play golf, some curl in winter, some consider gardening their hobby. More women than men say they have no time for hobbies, but questioned further, they 'help' in some charity or other. This means that they too have their opportunity to 'catch up with people'.

Newby observed how the urban influx has brought farmers in general closer together with their few remaining workers than they were hundred years ago. He also found however, that when it came to council decisions the farmers sided with the two-car home incomers and not the offspring of the farm workers, in order to preserve the status quo regarding more housing in the countryside or other measures to help the rural poor (see Newby, 1980). From my interviews and personal observations, it can be seen that the farmers do work on a relatively even level with their workers, but they do not as a rule socialise with them. This distinction also applies amongst farmers themselves. The class differences between 'working farmers' and 'non-working farmers' also remained tangible throughout the research (see 4.1).

4.5.1 School and sport

The schools the children attend expect a certain amount of presence from the parents (see 4.2.4). This is particularly obvious in the case of private schools where both parents usually attend school functions. This gives a further opportunity, in addition to golf clubs, curling and selective shooting parties, to socialise with people who are sufficiently affluent to send their children to such schools and who are mainly non farmers. Farming fathers might not take much to do with their children's activities otherwise, but they comply with the schools' expectations and attend sports days, concerts and other functions. They might complain about work pressures and busy times, but they make an effort. Maybe they feel they are 'paying for this' so they need to see what is happening, how their offspring is performing. (It is tempting to say 'in the ring', referring to an image from the stock farm.) In contrast not many farming fathers are seen at the sports day or the Christmas Party of the local State school. Their wives are there, supporting the children and often quite involved in school activities.

Physical proximity makes contact between people a lot more convenient. This fact has further implications for the young farming peoples' social lives. The social grouping taking place via golf clubs and fee-paying school functions puts some farmers in the same social circles as the professional commuters living in the area rather than with their fellow farmers living maybe further away from the centres in the LFA (Less Favoured Areas) of the hills. This manifests itself not so much in the way they dress as in the way they speak and carry themselves. Some schools have a reputation to perpetuate a certain type of person. "She is a typical X girl." "With a handwriting like that he must have been to Y." "Just look at him the way he talks – typical Z." These few quotes picked up over the years from local farming people demonstrate the importance placed on the choice of school. The issue here is

not what type of private school produces what type of person, but the range of distinguishing factors and limitations involved in farmers making their social choices. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (see 4.1) describes the subconscious nature of these groupings. Golf, curling, bridge and, for younger ones, rugby, offer further opportunities to socialise.

4.5.2 Agricultural meetings

Farm-related gatherings such as agricultural shows, auctions, discussion societies and field days are other venues where farmers meet. Wives or daughters come to the shows but not often to other meetings. Usually if farming couples meet between stalls at these shows it is man talking to man and woman to woman. The topics are farming, the weather and the children respectively. Several respondents pointed at an increase in the number of women they now see at the livestock auctions. Mrs. Innes used to feel close to uncomfortable when she started to go to one auction in particular as she was the only woman there. But she feels this has changed and there are more and more women – mainly daughters accompanying their fathers on the benches.

Another important opportunity for 'a blether' are the accidental meetings. The farmers meeting along the roadside and talking next to their vehicles or at markets, farm sales and auctions, are well caricatured figures and a real feature of the countryside.

All these gatherings whether accidental or not, are places where any potential peer pressure will be conveyed. And like all class issues they are not often declared openly.

Children observe their parents at these meetings. They listen to what is said about it afterwards and at school and they soon realise to which group they belong. This they assimilate into their lives.

4.5.3 Social life of the children

The children's social life is focussed around school and sport activities. For many girls that meant 'Pony Club'⁴¹ during the school holidays and ball games for the boys.

The end of their school life marked a new phase and new friends. Some of the boys continued to play team sports if the work on the farm allowed it. The girls might continue enjoying their horse-based activities, but once they left home, the care for their horse became a chore someone else had to do and that was not always possible. Going on to university or

⁴¹ The ratio of boys attending Pony Club in my area is less than 10%. In areas where there are hunts it seems to be somewhat higher. (Comment from the local president of the club, has 120 active members, but not a high proportion of farming children. This is not surprising considering the percentage of farming families in the area, which is more or less still within the commuter belt for Edinburgh.

college gave new opportunities to see young people from other walks of life and these were very much appreciated by the families. The boys kept closely in touch with their home base, but some girls took this opportunity to turn away from their rural background completely and only pay friendly family visits from time to time (Rita Weston and Erica Stone).

All respondents' children still keep in touch with friends from school, college or university. Jenny Petrie, who had gone to a rather "rough school in a very cliquy fishing village" had no contact with her school friends, but now enjoyed her social life at university very much. Her sister, who attended a class above Jenny, still keeps in touch with her school friends, but again she seems to see more of her university friends and work colleagues than her school mates. Several respondents experience 'losing touch with people once you go to college or something'.

All through childhood and adolescence, wherever farm work would allow it, the families in this project will have meals together. Talks around the farm house kitchen table are legendary and still a major focus. Other family times such as the summer holidays, which are usually taken for granted by non-farming families, are overshadowed by the demands of the business. Real family holidays are rare and treasured. The mothers who managed to 'get him away for a week in the summer holidays' once in a while, describe this as a major breakthrough. The quieter times on the farm are usually in winter and do not coincide with school holidays.

The timing of the summer holidays is a further discriminating factor between fee-paying and state school children. The private sector schools often time their holidays according to the English system and are therefore later than the Scottish state schools. This affects all plans for joint activities between neighbouring families and therefore acts as a further divide. Any social events organised in the area by bodies such as 'Young Farmers' (YF) are equally affected.

4.5.4 The 'Young Farmers'

The YF organisation still plays an important role in the social life of young people from farms. In Scotland approximately half of all farm children aged 17–25 are members.

Asked about the percentage coming from fee-paying schools, the president of all the clubs in the Borders region sighs,

- P: Not many, not many. You tend...you tend to find that a lot of them, will be going to the same school from the sort of same general area. If not they will know people through other schools so they tend to stick

together and it is their holidays as well (see above). So unfortunately we don't get those people. Maybe when, if they finished school, they stayed at home and worked, it would be easier. But I think a lot of them go onto college as well, so that obviously gives them that extra few years and by the time they come back they have to begin to work or maybe move out the area and they never really come to YF at all. So you find that there aren't many from fee-paying schools at all.

U: That seems to be the same in EL.

P: Yeah it tends to be when they are away during term time when most of the (YF) things are on (e.g. stock judging competitions, mock auctions, social gatherings). They meet up with their own friends when they come home and...and they know probably a fair amount of the people who actually go to YF, but they will not get around to...just gonna go there. Because they have got other people to go. There is not much organised...we have a quiet period through the summer and Easter and that is the time when they are mainly at home and there is not as much on. So we lose that one...lose, those people.

This quote speaks for itself. The division is a very real one.

Young people coming back to their home district after going to private schools and then college quite often do not know the locals, the local farmers. Then they think they should attend the YF to meet local people, as in the case of Jack Weston. After college and working away, he is a more mature YF than his local counterparts aged 17 or 18, straight out of school and starting to attend club meetings. Maybe this curbs his enthusiasm for the club, but he still maintains he is trying to make an effort and go to their meetings, as he says, "to get to know more people in the area."

Some clubs seem more welcoming than others. Both the Hunter girls and Lauren Innes, who live close to two clubs, found one of them not very welcoming. "She went there and nobody would speak to her all evening," Mr. Innes recalls. "She is going to the Z club now and that seems a lot friendlier." The mainly arable area where the first club is located also seemed to have far less girls involved in outside farm work. All three girls feel a lot happier joining clubs where the members come from more mixed farms and the daughters are more likely to be involved in the farm operation like them. Then they feel they have something in common. One of Janet Hunter's arguments for being involved in farm work at all is that she would not have anything to talk about to her friends at the YF meetings, if she was just inside watching TV.

The YF image seems not uniform. Both Petrie girls, who helped outside on the farm during holidays, think of YF girls as having more to do with baking competitions than with stock judging. (Jenny Petrie is hoping to continue farming once her father retires.) Like most of the other respondents of both generations they had been to dances or other social

events organised by the YF. The term ‘marriage market for farmers’ results in a giggle but not a denial from the president. There are still quite a few couples who meet through the YF. They will have a very similar ‘habitus’, which will be different from the ‘habitus’ of youths having attended private schools.⁴²

The comment ‘an excuse to get drunk’ now made by one of the fathers, when he compares the YF of his youth with today’s, might stem from occasions he has had to observe YF at the local show. Maybe this behaviour is not the rule. Observing this very club he was referring to at a mock auction, I can only voice my surprise at how little they actually did drink and how disciplined they were as a group and as driving licence holders.

The difference which is made colloquially in describing a farmer as a ‘working’ farmer and the other one as ‘not a working farmer’ is subtle. One or two generations ago the ‘not working farmer’ would probably be classed as ‘gentleman’ farmer, meaning a man who coordinates the work of his labourers, but not necessarily gets his own hands dirty. A similar difference seems to distinguish members of the YF. They are considered ‘working farmers’ children’. This is probably what Mrs. Petrie means when she speaks about her daughter as not being the ‘YF-type’ and the older Philips daughters when they laugh and say they never went to the YF ‘or anything like that’.

Regardless of these different perceptions, YF still remain an important meeting ground for young people coming from farms. With a dwindling farming population, the clubs are trying to attract non-farming people living in rural areas, but with limited success. The older generation remembers the club’s programmes to be more farming oriented than they are now. The present generation is trying to make it all ‘more fun’. “Farming is enough doom and gloom just now, so we decided to put in things like skating, which was much more appreciated than a look behind the supermarket counter,” says the president.

4.6 Summary

Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ as a system of dispositions is used to describe class differences amongst farmers (Figure 4). The habitus is perpetuated through ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ education. For the latter, state versus private schooling brings further distinctions. Families who send their children to fee-paying schools see themselves more often than not as closer to their professional commuting neighbours than to their fellow

⁴² There is still a proportion of children who attend boarding schools out of necessity, because they live too far away to commute, such as children from Highland farms. However they are State funded and none of the children in the two regions of this report would come under this category. They all have access to local State schools.

farmers. The overall resulting peer influences affect all aspects of the families' social lives and confront their respective identities.

Learning about farming takes place for all children as part of growing up in the working environment of the farm, but girls have to show more interest and push harder to become involved, whereas boys get invited to join in, just because they are male. Any further training happens as the farm needs it. All persons involved are expected to adapt and accept the farms' changing needs.

Tertiary education is an accepted option for all children growing up on these medium-sized Scottish farms. Overall, it is the mothers who emphasise education more than the fathers and if that means that they have to go out to work to finance private education they do. However, formal education is not considered a prerequisite to farm. Especially arable farming is seen as needing less and less of personal expertise, but rather more management skills. Respondents consider the interest in farming, as such, a product of the respective upbringing on the farm. It suits some individuals' personalities and their rank amongst the siblings, but not all.

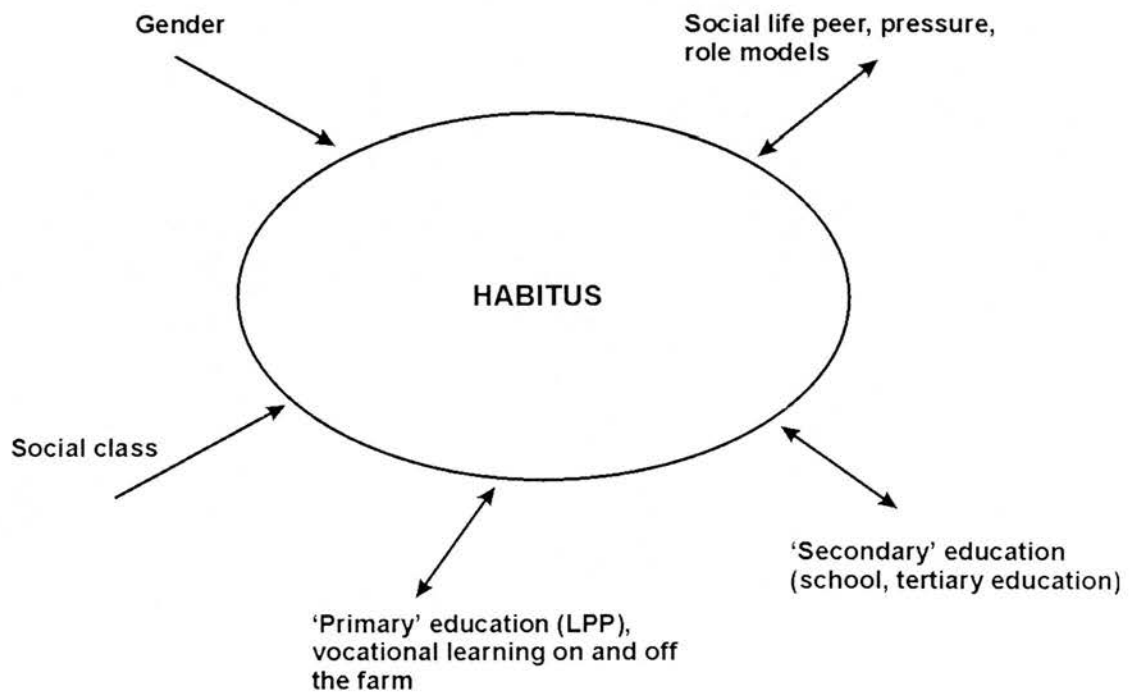


Figure 4: What constitutes the 'habitus' of a person.

Chapter 4 describes and analyses education and social lives of parents and children. This results in multiple perspectives of the same aspects which in effect bear a certain likeness to the pointillism techniques used by impressionist painters (see 3.3). The overall picture of who has what opportunities, whether son or daughter, private school pupil or state educated, oldest or youngest child is clear, but the individual differences of the 'points' are subtle.

Nevertheless, these differences find an expression in the involvement of the different family members in activities on or off the farm. Who is seen to do what task and how this is decided is the topic of the next chapter. The influence of gender plays an important role, because the habitus is expressed via the body and the body is either male or female as are the role models in the farming environment.

CHAPTER 5

Gender, Farm Involvement and Family Tasks

Gender permeates most things that are happening within the farm boundaries. The impact this has on the socialisation of the children into their respective roles is the topic of this chapter. It looks firstly at tasks within a farm family business, then at who does them and how this is decided. How an interest in farming can and does manifest itself is addressed (see also 4.4.1). As a summary the case of a female farmer is analysed in the last part of the chapter.

It can be argued that whoever deals with a respective domain will favour a particular meaning of the tripartite meaning of the farm (see 1.3). The person who does most of the family tasks could favour the meaning of 'home', the one who works with the animals the 'production unit' and the one who deals with the banker the 'asset aspect'. This might be the case in certain circumstances, but in the same vein as the work and decision domains are interchanged and intertwined, so are the tripartite meanings.

The stock person will not want to leave the farm lightly even if all the animals go;⁴³ the homemaker still accepts that the farm demands loyalty, if nothing else for the sake of the next generation; the slogan 'get bigger or get out' reminds everybody involved of the asset value of the farm when a bank loan is considered to invest in the business (or to pay off the overdraft). All this could change the moment a family member intends to, for example, start a new enterprise within the business, or someone becomes very ill or wants to leave the farm for whatever reason.

Gender is an issue in all of these aspects.

5.1 Tasks within a farm family business

There are three main domains within the boundaries of the farm: farm business tasks, family tasks and office duties. Items such as household expenses, 'dirt' and business entertaining fall within more than one domain.

⁴³ Not many of the Foot and Mouth affected families are leaving their farms. Most want to restock.

5.1.1 Farm business tasks

This heading was chosen to indicate that farms of the order of this project are far removed from the romantic picture of a farm yard with a few pigs, ducks and hens running around the manure heap, with dairy cows and their calves in the distance and the farmer ploughing his field with horses or a small tractor. They are more or less specialised agricultural family businesses, but nevertheless they have to follow the seasons and are severely affected by weather conditions.

There are seasonal and daily routine tasks as well as one-off tasks on stock as well as on arable farms. Crops require timely attention, especially during sowing, spraying and harvesting, whereas stock needs to be looked after more on a daily basis, but demands special attention during calving and lambing as well as seasonal irregularities (e.g. drought, snow). The update, repair and maintenance of machinery play an important part in the smooth running of most farm enterprises as does the erection and maintenance of sheds, fences and other capital improvements.

All these tasks need to be assessed, allocated and checked. Their coordination has to be as smooth as possible and necessary changes enacted swiftly. To be cost effective a close eye needs to be kept on the financial management of the whole business now and in the future. The weather can wreak havoc in these balancing acts. For example, wet weather in spring means late sowing, late spraying, lambs dying of hypothermia and cattle running out of feed, because the pasture is too wet and there is no food left to keep them in the shed. Management has to decide whether on the first dry day they should sow, spray, fertilise or shift livestock. The result is stress of all resources to their limit. Theoretically the profit margin of the respective enterprises should make it easy to decide what to do first, but this is not often the case. "Well, you just do the best you can," says Mr. Innes and his wife adds, "And try not to get too grumpy and depressed about it."

5.1.2 Office duties

The terms 'paperwork', 'doing the books', 'bookwork', 'doing the office', 'paying a few bills', 'catching up with the stock records', 'doing the xyz government forms' to name but a few are invariably accompanied by negative body language from the farmer and in particular the spouse. They are not considered 'farming' they are 'a chore, a headache, a waste of time better spent outside'. Not much kudos is to be gained by keeping the office in order. The farm office might just be the kitchen table, but in most farms of this size there was a special room in the house or steading assigned for the purpose. (Mrs. Elrick uses her bedroom floor

for all the cattle paperwork, which has reached enormous proportions.) The annual turnover of anything between £120,000 and £700,000 must be managed and accounted for next to government schemes on set-aside payments, VAT returns and the bi-annual census. All this has to be put in order and processed. Computer programs can help, but the data entry on top of the learning curve involved in changing to a computerised system, still puts a few people off (Elrick, Weston, Stone). However, those in the sample not yet using pcs are considering doing so. All employ accountants who come and go through the books on a regular basis. The banker usually comes and discusses things like the overdraft limit or a loan once a year.

5.1.3 Family tasks

The term 'family task' in this context includes household, garden and the bringing up of the children. In a sense these are not much different from any other family living in the country. The houses tend to be bigger, the gardens more expansive. Some farms are still growing vegetables or bottle fruit for their own use. Public transport is rarely used and the families tend to rely on their own vehicles for transport. The children have to be ferried a lot more and are less independent in seeing their friends who live in settlements. In most cases, friends frequently come to the house and stay overnight. Space is generally not a problem.

However, overall there are three general differences between farm households and other households in rural areas:

- (a) 'Dirt' (see 5.1.4).
- (b) Times of increased activity during the season resulting in basically no household routines, no regular mealtimes and no standard working hours.
- (c) The need for a backup workforce to do the odd jobs such as going for errands or helping in the yard to, e.g. help backing a trailer or hold a gate. Being available to answer the phone has nowadays lost its importance, because of the use of mobile telephones.

Only one generation ago, farm households were catering for large numbers of people. Mrs. Hunter remembers that only eight years ago she still had ten for lunch on a regular basis. This is a thing of the past. None of the respondents even lived with grandparents to any extent and was not planning to do so in the future. Farm households are therefore in line with the overall trend in the UK. Co-residence with an adult child has become much more unusual (Wall, 1992).

5.1.4 Overlapping domains

There are different tasks specific to the farm family business which overlap between the domains. A lot of farm activities cause 'dirt'. Clothes, roads, vehicles all show signs of farming activities and therefore the seasons. This 'dirt' means extra cleaning work for a farm family. Yards need to be swept, clothes, floors, people and cars washed a lot more often than in other households. Pets are more prevalent especially on stock farms (pet lambs and calves, young dogs) next to the usual mix of dogs, ponies and ferrets. They all increase the cleaning (and feeding) workload.

Secondly, the farm entertains numerous more or less official visitors (accountants, vets, dealers, representatives of government agencies or agriculture trade firms). Many just drop in, some phone first. It all means more dishes, more dirt and more time.

Thirdly in general it is difficult to allocate items like gas, electricity, the (family) car, petrol, insurance and telephone to any enterprise in particular. They are used by several including the running of the family home. For example, the family car is not only used to take the children to sports activities, but to pick up spare parts on the way back. The phone is used by all and is located in the house. Farm-related calls come at all hours. Computer and the internet where it is installed, are used for homework, email and the farm accounts.

Farm management tasks including budgeting, whether formalised or not, have to take the needs of farm and family into direct account. For example, family and school commitments have a direct effect on farm resources and vice versa. The farm budget might be drawn up on the farm computer, but allowances will have been typed in regarding a child's or spouse's labour or expenses, e.g. school trip, second car or off-farm wages to cover some of these expenses.

The importance of these overlaps lie in the fact that they tie the family together in an intricate mesh. If, for example, a child or spouse wants to buy a car which is essential to being independent in a rural setting, the purchase of the car might not be with 'farm family money'. Maybe it has been earned in other non-farming related ways, but how should this car be insured? The premiums for a young driver or even for any single user are a lot higher than if the car is insured (and taxed) as a farm car. What comes first – the principle of 'this is my car and I am paying for it!' or the principle 'we are all together against the outside world'?

Similar problems arise if other goods and services are needed. The independent person, who is used to making decisions as to what is repaired or installed and by whom, will

have to think twice, whether it is not better to use the usual farm supplier, because the farm as a bulk buyer gets a discount. The drawback is that this supplier or tradesman cannot be spoken to directly. It all has to go via the farm and that means mainly the farmer⁴⁴. If we take an example such as installing a handrail at the backdoor, the joiner will come and do it for a cheaper rate once he has finished the new sliding door on the farm shed – and that has to wait until the shed door is not in constant use, such as during harvest or fertiliser application. The person wanting the handrail urgently has to weigh up whether it is worth foregoing the discount and just ‘get it done’ or to wait in the queue behind the farm tasks until it suits. To be in the ‘mesh’ can be advantageous and at times nerve-racking, but it also ties people and resources together around the farm business.

5.2 Task allocation on family farms and the decision-making process

How is the decision reached who does what and when on the farm? Farm tasks are initially assigned not according to skill and knowledge but according to gender. In some families this can be negotiated to an extent as long as the ‘patriarch’ goes along with it (Gasson and Errington, 1993). If frictions occur there is little room to escape as the business is home and home is the business. This applies especially to women. Middleton (1986) describes in her study of a Yorkshire village, how the men could always ‘escape’ to the pub or take a walk along the river if they wanted to be alone. The women had to stay home otherwise they were considered to be ‘asking for it’. Endevelde (1994) argues that rules apply for women and men in farming regarding their gender as well as their agrarian identity. However, she shows that women – and most farming spouses are female – do have room to manoeuvre and most definitely do not see themselves as helpless⁴⁵.

Members of the farm family appreciate that for most of the time there is an obvious need for a job to be done and done well. Generally this means under time pressure of weather, season or just because ‘it needs doing’.

Who does it depends on **availability, expertise** and maybe **personal preference** (see also Mansfield and Collard, 1988, and below). Later on it becomes routine and as such, is barely ever an issue to be talked about. ‘That is his/her job’ was a common statement by all respondents.

⁴⁴ Byrne *et al.* (1995) quote the ‘Second Commission on the Status of Women (1993, p.196–7) for a definition of ‘farmer’: ‘The term farmer can refer to the person who legally owns the land. More commonly, it refers to the decision-maker; the representative of the farm in farming organisations; the person subject to taxation’.

⁴⁵ Komter (1991) refines the ‘oppression model’ of men against women and differentiates between power as such and a combination of respect, intimacy and cooperation, as well as describing power as enabling and constraining.

Mrs. Hunter illustrates this concept in her description of how it came about that both her daughters and herself are so interested in farming.

No, I wouldn't say that I was ever made to be interested and in the same respect I never expected them (her children) to actually be...interested. What I may be did expect is for them to have a certain responsibility, that there were certain things they had to do. Whether they actually liked it or not that was just part and parcel of living on a farm...Just the responsibility that any child could have for certain tasks that are here. And living on a farm there are certain things that were expected of them in the house and certain things outside. Help was needed and they were there. Well... .

This statement can be seen as a summary of task allocation on the family farm. There is an obvious responsibility. Jobs need to be done and whoever is there and capable of doing these jobs will be expected to do them maybe from time to time (standing in the gate in the stockyard, at harvest driving a straw baler) or maybe every day of the year (feed and check the chickens). If a job has been done well and there is no change in availability, necessary competence and the person is not 'being difficult' or 'scared' or 'better at something else', the job becomes routine. It becomes X's job until things change.

Children and other incomers such as 'townie' wives are faced with the result of these task allocations. They observe who is doing what and when, but the 'why' is open to interpretation or such as most likely in the children's case total acceptance. Who does what shapes and is shaped by the habitus of the family members. Whether this is influenced by the social class of the person is open to speculation (see also 5.2.6.6: Do involved wives and daughters belong to a special social group?).

Resulting from this research and my own experience, I would say that nowadays on medium sized farms all types of people can be seen to get involved. When the pigman or dairyman is unavailable it is the farmers and their families who step in. If the irrigator needs shifting, farmer and maybe spouse will go out into the field after coming back from a special social occasion and shift it. Anecdotes about wives making their husbands take the dinner jackets off before they attend to urgent farm tasks are numerous.

Children grow up in this environment. It shapes habitus and thus personal preferences. Spouses go through the same process but a lot faster. To be very specific is to ask: does the spouse at one o'clock in the morning actually resent helping the farmer and ruining good clothes. Mostly it is just an accepted part of being a member of a farming family. The degree of expertise is directly linked to the habitus via learning via, in Bourdieu's words (Bourdieu, 1994), primary education, learning on the farm. The degree to

which the midnight helper is physically strong and technically skilled enough will determine how useful s/he can be.

Availability changes through illness, childcare demands, school hours etc; **expertise** changes through the introduction of new technology or a new enterprise; **preferences** change through personal developments or new alternatives opening in other fields socially or on the farm.

Certain tasks have more status than others. Driving a big machine feels different from sweeping the yard. However it can be said that status needs an audience and as argued elsewhere (Schwarz, 1993), farming is becoming more and more an occupation where isolation is a serious problem. The tasks of combine operating and drain cleaning will be used to illustrate this. The combine is still one of the most status-laden pieces of equipment on an arable farm, yet quite often the farmers themselves are not the most experienced combine drivers available. Someone who was not doing anything else at the time the combine instruction course had to be taken took it on and soon it became their domain. Come lunch hour and to keep the grain dryer going, someone else will drive it for that time. This someone can be the farmer, his/ her sister or another farm worker. Once it has become a person's domain, increasing expertise is a natural progression. But who wants to become the combine driver? It means being confined in a cabin for the nicest part of the summer and for all hours. The same applies to the sprayer. Who wants to operate it, having weekends and evenings dictated by the strength of the wind and the moisture content of the soil, on top of dealing with dangerous chemicals at close proximity? Neither the rep. nor grain merchant I interviewed had ever seen women operate sprayers or drive combines on a regular basis.

Some girls are known to be expert tractor drivers, but do not want to do it for the rest of their lives, day after day. Mrs. Elrick was adamant she was not going to learn to drive the new tractor. "Then I can't be asked to just get on and do a job." She refused to gain expertise in it, by using her personal preference and the fact that her son was now old enough and available to take it on. Wives who were available to help outside in various capacities withdrew as soon as the first child arrived. Schmitt (1997) found that even dedicated and active female farmers on German farms found that, after the birth of the first child, they were no longer available to do certain jobs and soon they lost their expertise. It became routine for another person, in the German case the husband or father, to take these tasks over while mum looked after the child.

Who will do the really dirty jobs such as cleaning a drain or a ditch or repairing the roof? **Personal preference** would point presumably in the opposite direction. Like some

people are known to clean the house before the cleaner comes, farmers often end up doing these dirty (or dangerous) tasks themselves. It would be considered unacceptable (or uninsurable) for many, if not all of them to ask a worker to do 'that'. And who will wash the clothes after such a task? Again it is unlikely to be the home help if there is one, but the wife who will do it. The expertise and the availability for both tasks will be with everybody from teenager onwards, but personal preference says to do it yourself. Again some farmers and spouses are 'known' to do the really low status tasks themselves and some are known to pass them on. I would argue that the question as to who cleans the shoes within a family does not have a universal answer either. In both cases the (farm) family will decide respectively. It may be that certain individuals are in a position to force others to do it, but prefer not to be seen to do so and therefore choose to clean the shoes or the drain themselves.

As a rule the farm's demands come first. In the Innes family it was always the eldest girl, Lauren, who helped her dad bedding the cattle. This involves going in with the beasts, which can sometimes be dangerous. "I was always dancing about, but Gina would just be petrified. I don't think she would even get in. I don't remember when she like started not liking it (farming) or decided when she didn't want to have anything to do with it, really." The younger sister describes how she does actually help on the farm. As she lives there, she is 'available' and helps when asked. "We have got a calf at the moment and I feed that and lambing time I do all the pet lambs and bedding and stuff like that. Just in the busy times. I don't mind doing that. It is just if it was all the time..."

The older farming-interested sister sees Gina as not wanting anything to do with the farm. Nevertheless Gina still helps, she is available, has sufficient expertise and allows the needs of the farm to overrule her personal preferences. Only when it comes to cattle, in particular the bulls, is she close to refusing to help. The others know that and so someone else will do it. She will probably not be asked to help then. This is not necessarily a soft approach to a whim, but it is common knowledge that animals will sense if someone is afraid and act accordingly.

If a person claims to be afraid to handle a certain piece of machinery on the farm I live on, if at all possible someone else will do it. The risk of damaging people or equipment are just too high and too costly. If there is an opportunity then maybe in quieter times the person will be introduced to the task more gradually and with more guidance. In busy periods there is no spare time to deal with a frightened beginner or teach a child. But an interested child will be 'around' at all times and will have picked things up along the way, so if the time comes, s/he can actually be put to work safely.

Wallace *et al.* (1994) have addressed the issue for small, marginal farms in the far South West of England, where the children's contribution is more important than if there are employees on the farm. However, they think their findings could also contribute in more prosperous farms like the ones examined below. Their findings are very similar to the ones from this project: (a) there is as they call it a 'household work strategy' used by the families in their planning which is not purely rational; (b) gender plays an important role in the division of labour; and (c) roles can be negotiated in line with a more modern form of reflexive individualism within the family.

All job allocations need to be checked and coordinated on a daily basis; existing routines need to be sanctioned. The whole family farm needs to function smoothly and efficiently. This management task is officially done by the fathers, but in some cases (Hunter, Innes) it was clear that the mothers have a large input in the balancing of all the factors and people involved.

After discussing the above concept of task allocation with a colleague, she mentioned definitions used by Mansfield and Collard (1988) in their study on newly weds. Similar to the reservations I have about the frequently asked research question in the literature on women in agriculture and their work on the farm, they questioned the wisdom in asking 'who does what' and basing this on the assumption that there are specific roles for husbands and wives and that these are allocated according to gendered traditions. They preferred to direct the same question not at husband and wife, but at two adult individuals living under the same roof. They found that their (still mainly childless) couples had allocated the household chores according to **circumstances** (who is home first?), **competence** (who is the better cook?) and to a lesser extent **preference**. However they also noted that the men who worked as cooks did not cook at home, whereas the women who worked as caterers were expected to. This reflects the belief that traditionally it has been the wife's responsibility to organise the household and the man's to go out and be the breadwinner.

The parallels between the above research and this thesis are interesting. Both describe how tasks initially allocated end up becoming routine. Only if circumstances change regarding **availability** (children go away to school or come home to help), **expertise** (a new piece of equipment needing different skills) or **preference** (livestock enterprises are sold off and some people do choose not to get involved in tractor work) are these routines changed in order to allow for the farm's new scenario. And again beliefs play a role for some people as Mr. Thompson who found it difficult to get used to a female vet and still now questions

female grain samplers climbing up into the high storage bins. And he definitely has great difficulties in ‘haggling with a woman (grain merchant) on prices’.

Even it was possible to keep the description of the tasks under 5.1 gender neutral, it is impossible to look at the actual involvement of the family members in these tasks in gender-neutral terms. Right at the beginning there is the difference between stock farming and arable farming.

5.2.1 ‘You can’t love a field of barley’. Gendered preferences in farming

If girls show an interest in farming and have the choice between the stock and arable side they always choose working with stock. This is the experience of the (female) YF regional secretary. Why is this the case? During the period of the interviews, the media had been portraying the actual differences between ‘little boys and little girls’. Anecdotal and scientific evidence was discussed. The stereotypes of boys liking mechanical things and girls liking to interact with ‘something alive’ became the subject of conversations. For some people it just followed common sense and year long experience. This trend at the time was quite helpful as respondents were more confident in voicing what they felt to be a difference in the way sexed siblings ‘should’ be treated, were involved or showed talent for farming.

Following Bourdieu, Kraus (1993) calls the division of labour between gender a social construction and a social structure. As such it seems to represent the ‘natural’ order of the world. As ‘doing gender’ is unavoidable (West and Zimmermann, 1987), the division of labour becomes embodied and guides our perception (Kraus, *ibid.*). The body has to be male or female. ‘With this bodily point of reference and with its embodiment the division of labour between the genders is not only deeply rooted in the social agent as it also seems to refer to nothing but ‘nature’” (Kraus, 1993, p. 161) she continues to show how this gender discrimination in the labour market operates by society recognising or denying relevant competences and skills.

The prescribed roles of farm children (Wallace *et al.*, 1994) according to their sex is only one piece of the ‘mobile’ of farming which needs to balance in order to keep the family afloat. If one piece of my metaphorical mobile gets heavier, a counter balance must be found somewhere. For example, for a girl to put more active weight into the business either a boy has to move and add weight in a different capacity or she has to make more money than the system would have otherwise have earned. The balance needs to be redressed. Maybe this metaphor is too simplistic, but it seeks to reflect the ever changing micro and macro

equilibrium of farms in today's climate. I think it helps to portray a need for balance despite changing elements in their construction.

Parents as well as children have been socialised into a gendered 'habitus' which must include by its definition the division of labour.

How does it evolve in a farm family context? In general most small children are interested in (young) animals. Daily stock feeding and checking routines are welcome distractions in a young child's day no matter who is doing them. As long as the child can have access and later be involved with them, this is how the interest in farming starts to develop. Even purely arable farms have at least a dog, a pony or some other pet, which need to be looked after. Later on machines, tractors and forklifts are their 'funfair'. But here the gender difference seems to start. In as much as the girls enjoy the thrill of the moving machine and the company of the driver, they get bored more quickly and prefer the 'company' of animals. And, because they are girls, they are not expected to go out and shift a tractor as readily as their brothers are. As a mother points out, her now five-year old boy will sit all day on the tractor or the combine. None of her girls would have ever volunteered to do that. Yes, the girls were out around the sheep and play with their ponies all day and every day, but they do not sit on the tractor for that time. It does not mean they cannot do it, but they choose not to. Animals seem more interesting to them.

Discussing this issue with informants on numerous occasions the answers centred around the comment: "This is how you are" and "This is what is expected from you." The only time when informants could recall a female machine operator it turned out to be a farm without boys and without hired labour. Janet Hunter said: "Has to be stock. Yes..., I would get bored on an arable farm I think...I think there is far more to do when there is stock ... like all year round. You have your busy times with arable like harvest." She shrugs her shoulders as if to say: "Big deal. But not for me." Both Hunter girls want to have stock in their future lives, Janet Hunter goes even further and stipulates 'her' favourite sheep breed. Their mother puts it in a nutshell: "A field of barley is a field of barley. You can't talk to it." Later on in the interview she says:

Once a year you sow the grain, then you watch and you spray it and you feed it. You don't have to go twice a day to check the barley field. If you got animals it is actually much more intensive. For a period in their existence somebody 'goes' and if somebody is going I think kids go. If for nothing else, but father gets you to open the gate.

From personal observation I can comment that at some point then the little boy is not so little any longer and gets called away to do machinery work. Someone has to help and

unless the girl is a lot more obvious a choice, it is the boy who will be asked first. One neighbour says when I discussed this with him: “Well, he won’t have a choice, will he”. The girl has the choice to continue with the (stock) work they both did until then or turn away from farming as fast or as slow as she chooses to, providing her labour is expendable. The kudos for the boy to be ‘one of the men’ is strong. The girl might enjoy doing the boy’s job as well, having all the previously shared stock in her care. How the gender preference develops in each individual case is open to speculations, but the gender-specific preference for stock was evident in all interviews. Jenny Petrie, the only potential female farmer in the sample, did a lot of tractor work and barely any stock work. She had tears in her eyes when ‘her’ tractor had to be sold (just the same as some now grown-up men, in the sample and otherwise, told me they had had tears in theirs when ‘their’ hand-reared calf walked onto the butcher’s lorry). Asked about her preference, she said she never really had a chance to work with the cattle, because they were her uncle’s side.... “And you couldn’t work with him. No way!” but she was a keen pony club member and looked after her own horses. The first thing all four members of the Petrie family want to see reintroduced once the two businesses are properly separated, is cattle. The implication was that she as well would have been drawn more to the stock side of the farm, if she had had the opportunity without disturbing the obviously already fraught atmosphere between her uncle and her father.

Mrs. Hunter also points at the pure scale and complexity of the machinery now used on arable farms, which makes it even more difficult for small children to be involved or to ‘toddle’ along. Their safety would be at stake. Whereas where there is stock some of it is usually accessible in a child-safe manner. Mr. Hunter recalls fondly: “I mean I have seen them sitting in their wee buggies watching their mum working the calves.”

When they get older the different preferences still prevail: “At agricultural shows you see them boys walking round the stands and looking at machinery. There is very few you will see watching the cattle being judged or the sheep, bar a few that are maybe showing, but you see plenty of them walking round a tractor or a combine.” Mr. Hunter’s observation has to be seen in the context of profitability of different farm enterprises. At the time of the interview on mixed farms it was the arable side which made the profit (SERAD, 1999). He continues: “You see there is a lot of the arable men they are stopping working with cattle. The big cattle courts are standing empty through the winter. A lot of that is happening since the last three years since BSE started.” He sounds sad.

Mr. Petrie, now an arable farmer himself, goes further and declares that, “You make a better overall farmer if you were brought up with animals...you learn ...I think aspects of

farming that...you get nearer to nature.” Is it this ‘nature’ aspect that girls find so much more appealing than machines? On farms where brother and sister work together, who were mentioned as examples of women in farming it was always the girls who were ‘more animal oriented’.

But all the men in the project say they miss their cattle after they changed their business structure to purely arable farms. Bert Thompson, when asked why he wanted cattle back, because after all it was the arable side that made the money, says, “...Why do we miss it? (smiles) It is good to go out in the morning and know what you are doing, gives you something to do the cattle that we are going to have.” This comes from a young man who works very long hours and gave up his studies to come home and help set up the present farm. There surely is enough ‘to do’, but no daily routines. Stock will mean routine and he seemed to like that idea.

The chemical rep. confirms that yes, definitely there are more girls involved when there is stock but he specifies “Yeah. And that leads to...you possibly want to be a vet and not necessarily a farmer.” The grain merchant thinks that girls are far better at lambing sheep and most farmers I spoke to nowadays are quite happy to employ girls for the lambing. “But,” he says, “You don’t see girls spraying crops. That is something you don’t see. And that is a very technical thing.” Does he imply that girls are not capable of grasping the concept of a sprayer or of how to mix up a tank of chemicals? Questioned about that at a later date, he says they could if they want to, but none of them want anything to do with spraying and prefer to do other things. Nina, the female farmer confirms that (see 5.3).

The YF secretary sums it up when she says,

A lot of the girls enjoy working with stock...a lot of girls have their own horses anyway...I would say there is a great proportion of the lads that prefer just to sit in the tractor and go and do...all the crop, ploughing and what else, but a lot of them as well rather work with the stock. We have a high proportion of people in the area that have pedigree stock. It is mainly lads. Once they get interested, they get very keen on it and work very hard to produce the best stock they possibly can.

This is not necessarily a contradiction, because the farms that have pedigree stock will most likely have done so for some time. Any future successor will have to be seen to be interested and competent in the farm’s pride and joy and what gives the farm its reputation. She continues:

...you can only do so much in a day and I think a lot of them (the girls) prefer to do...they will do the tractor work that needs doing quite happily, but they prefer to maybe work with stock. At mock machinery auctions the lads are

usually a bit more...mainly lads seem to have this strange fascination of how much tractors cost and I really couldn't care less. So after 6,7,8 years I have got a better idea...and at the Highland Show the two top marks in the stock judging were from girls. I have got girls who can judge dairy cattle a lot better than the lads, because they have been involved with them. I have got some lads that come out and look at a sheep and can't tell one end from the other.

The fact that more girls are involved on stock farms has a strong regional impact on the proportion of active female members in the YF. There are few girls in the East Lothian club and hardly any who work on farms compared to the Borders club where girls account for roughly half the membership in a region, which has more livestock (and possibly fewer counter-attractions and opportunities for meeting people of their own age). A similar picture is reported by the grain merchant from his native Perthshire.

Also, working with animals is often split into small units of work that can be fitted in with other commitments such as the running of the home. Wiebe notes that in Canada women involved with stock work more hours, more evenly distributed throughout the year than the ones on arable farms (Wiebe, 1995).

The overall stock management rewards expert handling, but still there is scope for people with all levels of commitment and expertise to be involved as long as the overall organisation of the farm business can accommodate the extra pair of hands.

Some farmers claim that women are more successful with stock, especially young stock, than their male counterparts. 'They care more, are more prepared to give a weak animal a chance' are frequent comments. This is not the place to discuss whether or not women are more caring than men, but the fact remains, that where there is more stock in an area or on a farm, girls are more likely to be involved.

5.2.2 Farm tasks

The tasks in this section labelled farm tasks are: repairs and maintenance of fixtures and machinery, stock work and the tending of arable crops. The planning of rotations and stock policies are closely interlinked with budgeting and the management of human resources. These latter tasks are everyday occurrences and run parallel with everything else, which makes them difficult to allocate. During harvest, the yields might trigger decisions like: "I am not going to put potatoes in this field ever again." Or while shifting stock: "This cow is going. I can't stand her temperament around here any more." Or: "He is no use on the combine. I'll put him on a trailer tomorrow."

5.2.2.1 The fathers' involvement

All fathers in the sample are working full time on the family farm as what is generally known as 'working farmers'. Maybe Mr. Stone due to the high number of staff in earlier years, is less likely to be seen on a tractor or in the stock yard than the other farmers. Their hands and especially their fingernails tell the story of physical work. All employ at least one other full-time farm worker other than the father owner/occupier. According to Gasson *et al.* (1988), roughly 75% of all holdings counted in the English agricultural census do not employ hired labour on a regular basis. The farms in this project are therefore amongst the 20% family owned businesses which are large enough to do so (see 2.2.2 Employment in rural areas). In the case of the Petrie family, this is not the case as they were in the process of restructuring after splitting from the other partner. They had to make both of their workers redundant and were not running as an independent business at the time of the interviews.

5.2.2.2 The mothers' involvement

An article in one of the leading farming magazines looks at a class of women who had gone to a school for farm wives 45 years ago. Unfortunately, only one of these students is described in any detail. The other women active on the farm were all younger. Nevertheless the final comment in the article is from a woman who calls herself a 'farmer'. She puts a full day's farm work in, together with husband and three sons. However, when asked who does the household chores she says cheerfully, after a slight pause: "Oh, I do all of that as well!" (*Farmers Weekly*, 29 December 2000).

Based on the Agricultural Census and the Farm Business Survey, which for this purpose assessed 180,000 and 3,800 farms respectively, Gasson (1989) calculated the manual labour input of farmers' wives into the farm. Overall, they contributed regularly on 27% and at least occasionally on 60–80% of the farms, which for 1986/87 amounted to 7.5% of the total labour in agriculture. She suggests that this is a conservative figure, because of the way in which these surveys are done. The manual contribution of wives varies according to size, type of farm and by region (Gasson, 1992). The smaller the farm and the more stock it carries, the more likely she is to work manually. Hence, in countries with a higher proportion of smaller farms such as the former West Germany, where the average farm is 17 hectares (63ha in the UK), *Eurostat*, (1996), more wives have to contribute manual labour. The bigger the business, the less likely is the wife to work manually in it. Likewise, the

more regular labour is hired, the less likely she is to be working with them. (Gasson, 1992). Gasson quotes a wife from a 1,000 ha farm in England as saying she is not really a 'proper' farmer's wife, because she is not doing any manual work. These are her feelings despite putting 30–40 hours a week of non-manual labour into the farm. Her comments symptomise the devaluing of women's contributions. If it is non-manual it does not get counted, but if a man is doing any managerial hours these should be counted at least as twice as valuable as manual hours, according to management consultants and Gasson (1989) in Farm Business Survey terms. These hours might make or save the business a lot of money.

The type of farm also determines the type of labour required (see also Machum, 1999). Arable farming means long hours of monotonous work under time pressure, such as harvesting, sowing or spraying. If animals need to be looked after, there is always more scope and more demand for short, flexible work input, e.g. feeding young or sick animals, cleaning milk vessels, shifting stock. This is essential work, but, depending on the numbers involved, takes only a little time in the day and is not permanent. Generally this does not warrant employing outside help, but a family member 'fits it in', which in many cases means the wife does it in between other things. These 'little jobs' soon mount up.

The emotional labour⁴⁶, the invisible little jobs like errands, phone duty, book-keeping, entertaining farm visitors, in the earlier days that also included catering for workers, are usually taken for granted. Farm women are expected to perform them smoothly next to all the tasks to do with reproduction of the farm household.

While the importance of agriculture within the national economy is in decline the wives' contribution is becoming more important either on the farm itself or through bringing extra earnings into the household from off-farm jobs. Their input to the farm varies by farm size and region, but in particular by the presence of hired labour (Gasson, 1992). Together with Winter, Gasson establishes that there is no association between farm size and women's work (1992). The mothers in this research have various degrees of involvement in the farm, which have been changing over the years. The farms' and the families' demands change as do the mothers' expertise and interests. The involvement varies by degree and by task. These range from homemaker and receptionist, to secretary, bookkeeper, having her own enterprise associated with the farm business, within the farm business to fully integrated partner.

⁴⁶ For a description of the roles wives fulfil to keep their husbands happy and what they can 'reasonably' expect in return see Delphy, C. and Leonard, D. (1994).

Berlan-Darque (1988) presents an image of strict specialisation in domestic and farm tasks on her 368 French farms. Decision making is shared for 'big' domestic and farm decisions as well as relating to the children. However, any decision relating to an increased mechanisation is still equivalent with 'masculinisation' for most tasks relating to arable farming practices.

Nevertheless 38% of the UK sample and 59% of the Irish wives had one part of the farm enterprise, e.g. calf rearing, bookkeeping, organising a pick-your-own business or bed and breakfast, in their sole jurisdiction (Gasson and Errington, 1993). Quite often the profit from these enterprises is expected to flow into the 'farm' or on occasions is used to buy 'extras' for the house (Bouquet, 1985, Whatmore, 1991), or even pays for the running of the household in general or child minding or extracurricular activities for the children in particular. Many of these 'sub-businesses' operate on a 'cash only' basis. They use farm inputs, such as land, labour, machinery, electricity and quite often the person running it confuses turnover with profit.

Despite limited official 'say' in the business, around half the wives on Irish and British farms are legally partners or directors of the business (Gasson and Errington, 1993, p. 160). Under certain circumstances this can be an easy option to save on paying taxes and does not necessarily mean a softening of the patriarchal regime.

At the time of writing, there is still a tax allowance for farm spouses. That means that as a 'wage' for their contribution to the farm business the farmer can write off up to £76 per week (which keeps the spouse's earnings just under the threshold of National Insurance Payments) if the spouse is not fully employed elsewhere. It used to be less and it also used to be 'not really paid out' to the wife. It just stayed in the 'big pot'. Now the taxation department wants proof of the money actually changing accounts. I can only presume that the wives who were not partners would get the same amount paid into their accounts regardless of the extent of their involvement, but how is that counted in the census? I would be very surprised if this money was used for anything else other than 'the big pot' in the shape of school fees, holidays or furnishings⁴⁷. But I did not ask questions about it. I felt it would have been too intrusive and not appropriate considering my status as a neighbour's wife.

⁴⁷ These items come under 'private drawings' and are totally separate from the business in accounting terms although they often come from the same bank account.

5.2.2.2.1 Mediator

Bourdieu (1996), in looking at family as a social category, argues that women in general are held responsible for maintaining relationships, of continuously creating family feelings.

This manifests itself as well on the farm. There the role of the mediator is a quiet one but nevertheless crucial in the functioning of the family farm (see Gasson *et al.*, 1988). It often goes unnoticed. Mothers are aware of this role as mediator between farming fathers and their children.

This balancing act can be very stressful for the women, as Mrs. Ballantyne points out. Even though none of her three daughters is in agriculture, there are tensions between the 'factions': her husband and the most farming inclined daughter against the youngest, or husband against the oldest. Mrs. Thompson is trying to protect her farming son from his father's expectations and finds that often very difficult. "He has to work too hard," she says. She would also quite like him to go back to university. I ask, if the father was stopping him. She says, "Nothing is ever said and he just stays on." The father does not make him feel guilty, but also does not say to his son: "Go and do it, do another year at college."

It remains difficult to determine how important and productive this mediating role actually is in the overall functioning of the farm. It could be argued that the domains on some farms are so clearly demarcated between farm and home that any tensions will have only a minor impact on the business. This is not the case. Any overlap of use such as phone, car or paddock is a potential minefield even for officially non-involved family members, such as Tina Stone's and Jenny Petrie's use of the car, Mrs. Petrie's use of paddocks for the charity she is involved in, Walter Innes's use of the computer, Doris Philip's extensive use of the telephone. Discord is felt by all the family, which gives mum's task as mediator a lot of weight. West and Zimmermann (1987) look at this interactional work more closely for women in general. They found that women had to ask more questions, fill more silences and use more attention getting beginnings in order to be heard. This interactional work is not considered as 'work', but as part of being a women. Male comments summarise this in their study as 'women just talk all the time'.

For Hastings (1984), mothers tend to act merely as mediators but do not become involved in management decisions or what the son should or should not be doing on the farm (they did speak up regarding the sons' education, see 4.2). Only if the father have health problems will mothers interfere.

In this project, the picture looks slightly different. The respondent mothers covered the whole spectrum from non-farming background, working off-farm, to homemaker and occasional secretary, to partner but not involved, to partner and fully involved. Mum might not look responsible for any major financial decisions, but she is involved, she knows about the farm's financial situation and she knows she has to balance her family. This is surely potentially exhausting at times, because the question as to who helps mum to find a balance for herself, remains unanswered.

In times of crisis this role becomes ever more important as Wiebe (1995) points out in a quote from a Canadian farm wife whose farm was experiencing problems 'it's his farm, it is our debt and it's my fault'. She does not explain to what extent the woman is actually involved in the farm.

5.2.2.2.2 'Outside'

Most mothers had an active input 'outside' work before the children were born. Even non-farming Mrs. Philips remembered how she bottle-fed the lambs, while she was pregnant. The ones who did not, continued with their off-farm work until such time (Mrs. Urquhart). Another woman from a non-farming background is Mrs. Stone. She explains:

...until you have children you know, I used to help outside, but he (husband) reckoned he spent as much time explaining to me how to do things, that it was quicker to do it himself. And as soon as I had a family there was no way that I...and because the farm was so big it had a set routine and there was no need for me to go outside...you know it all depends whether you have enough money to pay other people to do things and that.

Later on, she talks about another family:

Is she (the daughter) doing agriculture? But mind you that wouldn't surprise me, because her mum does all the stock. I think it very much depends on what the mother does. I mean let's say if I went out and was working on the farm doing all these things and obviously the children would come with me from you know a younger age...because I have always been based in the house. Well, H and I had a pact when we got married. If I wouldn't help him outside, he wouldn't help me inside.

Looking at Mrs. Stone's situation in more detail, a young woman from the city marries the only son. She comes to a big farm and very big house, with an extremely active father-in-law and several farm workers all experienced in agriculture. She spends time outside on the farm to be with her husband, wants to help and be appreciated. Soon he explains to her she is not very helpful and they agree to stay in different spheres. Nobody misses her contribution outside, she gives birth to their first child soon after. However when 23 years

later the decision is reached to restructure the whole family business drastically she says she is involved. Her husband says he discussed it with her, before he asked the children, which is in line with her saying that he always talked to her about things happening on the farm. Despite her being 'in the house' she feels involved and he feels he is involving her in the decision making process. This does not mean she has the last say or is held responsible when things go wrong.

This 'being involved' is mentioned by other respondents such as the Philips family, who have just undergone a major business restructuring process. Again, the parents had talked about it, but the crucial question remains: would a 'No' from the wife have changed the outcome? The farm was in his family before she came into the picture. Now it is shared between him, his brother and his uncle. What 'weight' do the wives' opinions have? The term 'weight' in a sense is self explanatory. There are no units of measure to weigh a person's opinion.

The weight the family members have within business decisions is not constant. It changes with personal expertise and interest and as such is dependant on the technical processes involved. This was particularly evident in deRooij's study of Dutch dairy farm women. They experienced a de-skilling and degrading depending on their type of work with increasing modernisation. This went hand in hand with their voices bearing less weight in farm decisions. If, however, the same work was done by men only, these took turns with the then 'lower' tasks unlike in a male/female partnership where hierarchies would establish themselves (de Rooij, 1985). In line with the other researchers, she thinks that the labour process is the point where notions of masculinity and femininity are (re)produced.

The women who are actively involved in the running of the farm and working outside (Mrs. Hunter, Mrs. Innes and to a lesser extent Mrs. Elrick) are all partners. All three families state that they discuss all decisions beforehand. All say they only disagree on priorities between the respective enterprises, but not on major⁴⁸ things. It remains difficult to raise an 'important question' such as 'who will be the successor, have you made a will, do we give up dairying, sell property to pay someone out' at the end of a long day during a difficult season when the important other person is physically and mentally exhausted.

These wives are working inside and out, all of them mainly with stock. For example Mrs. Hunter has been lobbying for a certain type of sheep against her two male partners. She wanted to expand that part of the flock even further, but only once the market situation

⁴⁸ Respondents considered selling a cottage or a field as 'major': the purchase of a tractor not necessarily, but still noteworthy; questions of field rotation were seen as not so important.

proved her right, did the others 'come round to it'. She looks after all shedded sheep, does all the paperwork, but does not sign the cheques. Her husband does that. She could sign them, but she wants him to cross check, as far as I understood as a safeguard, keeping in mind that his brother is the third partner.

The impression of 'getting on well' together is still there at least on the surface, despite what 'other people' might say about the exploitation of one by the other. Maybe Porter is right when, after looking at couples in fishing villages in Newfoundland, she concludes, that women focus less on their actual work and more on their contribution and its benefits to their particular household (Porter, 1991). Maybe this contribution includes acquiesce to decisions which put the farm first (see also 1.3) and not the spouses themselves, and maybe the benefits include fewer arguments in the family? But overall outside work is still considered 'male'. This was made very obvious in the way Janet Hunter refers to her mother's yard work: "My mum, he (!) works outside as well." Maybe this is just a slip of the tongue, but it could also be interpreted as to what extent gender influences the thought patterns of even the younger generation.

Mrs. Ballantyne (teacher) and Mrs. Philips (nurse) work off-farm.⁴⁹ According to Overbeek *et al.* (1998) they should be better educated than the others. This might be the case. Mrs. Urquhart, Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Stone, Mrs. Weston and Mrs. Petrie are home-makers and help wherever needed in the office or running errands. It is not obvious from the interviews whether their education is in any way better than the above two. All of them will have many opportunities like the one above to be involved in an unofficial capacity. There is a certain preference for women to want to combine farm work and household chores, which can be interpreted as a sort of hidden unemployment (*ibid.*). Their work is definitely not always valued (Pile, 1990). When asking Walter Stone whether his mother would have time to talk to me, he says she is not doing anything all day anyway.

None of the home-maker wives ever feel encouraged or expected to have any involvement in the farm yard. They do 'the odd job, holding a gate or something like that,' says Mrs. Ballantyne about herself and her three daughters. "Are you involved at all?" "No, never have been. It has never been encouraged. For any of us." Both parents and the daughter regret that now, especially Mr. Ballantyne who would like to see more commitment

⁴⁹ Sachs (1996) quotes a study of Gordon and Marlow (1990) who found that US farm wives who were working off-farm – as half of them did – on average contributed a higher proportion to the family income than non farming wives in 1985. This was not obvious for the respondents here, but in both cases their earnings were considered essential for the children's school fees.

to the farm from one of his daughters. After all it is him who states, that anybody can run an arable farm as long as they can manage money and get on with people.

5.2.3 Office duties

'Paperwork' as office duties are often referred to are one of the major complaints farmers have mentioned in surveys (McGregor *et al.*, 1995 and 1996). Their ever increasing load is bringing many of them close to breaking point. Anecdotal evidence to that effect is plentiful, especially stemming from the time when the government IACS payment scheme was introduced in its present form. However, under the term 'paperwork', a whole range of skills and tasks is referred to from simple bookkeeping to the compilation of a five year finance plan to convince a banker to extend a loan. In the same vein as farm machinery skills have several levels of necessary expertise, so does bookwork.

Each task is essential for the functioning of the others. Researchers or statisticians who are trying to label these interwoven skills and assign values or wages which maybe derived from other sectors, may have to admit that their figures can only be rough estimates. With more and more regulations being enforced in connection with livestock identification in the wake of the BSE crisis, some male farmers feel overburdened and pass this part of the paperwork on to their wives (Innes). These women do not complain about the extra workload, but none in the sample had small children, so maybe they feel they can fit it in without too much problem.

Each family in the sample has their own setup for the office duties. Overall three of the wives have no involvement in it. Mr. Stone used to have a secretary and now does it himself. Mr. Philips does it for the partnership he is in and Mr. Ballantyne does it himself with the help of a part-time secretary. Both the latter's wives work off-farm.

In some families the younger generation is keenly awaited to take on more of the paperwork. Mr. Petrie says his daughter is very welcome to it once the business is set up after the split and even should she decide to work away from home for a while, she "can jolly well come home once a month and do it." Mrs. Elrick hopes for any future daughter in law to take it over from her. Janet Hunter sees her role as the main book-keeper should she come back to the farm. Mrs. Hunter and Mrs. Elrick do most of the bookwork, the others assist to varying degrees.

Paperwork is not popular, but is it appreciated? None of the wives or children doing it seem to get paid for that. The family just 'saved' the expense of an outsider doing it.

However, the tax allowance for a spouse is probably presumed to be sufficient payment for these tasks.

Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Weston both do some secretarial work for the farm. As on farms this size the employment of a secretary is often too costly, somebody else has to do it and this somebody in most cases is the spouse. Mrs. Innes did all the cattle paperwork and her husband the business, but from next year onwards she will take over the respective government payment schemes "...but I am gonna do them next year. He LOVES them, so – apparently that I have to go and do them next year." She did not seem to want to protest or show any other sign of resentment. She will just go and do them.

She just accepts the extra work to come her way. Certainly her husband will find something else to do for the farm, but why is she prepared to take something on he hates? Maybe she hates it less, maybe she feels she has more time on her hands now that both girls are not living at home any longer. The respondent did not see any need to give a reason. All know the books need to be done and maybe the one who is least busy otherwise, will just go and do them.

The adviser confirms that more and more wives get involved in the paperwork side of the farm. Asked whether that was by necessity or interest, the adviser states, that it was happening out of necessity. They cannot afford an extra pay cheque.

The grain merchant describes bookwork as something he himself would not volunteer to do. He does not say he would REFUSE to do it. "I think it (bookwork) is just something that you maybe fall into, because it is there, you can do it, you can save money." But it is also something that is considered menial and as such should be done by women.

Lewenhak (1992) questions the value of cash as a measure of a task's worth. She quotes a New Zealand study where 32% of the farm women got paid for jobs such as answering the telephone, seeing callers, keeping the farm accounts, paying bills, deciding who does what each day, listening to workers' grievances, deciding cropping policy for the coming year, keeping stock record (p. 100) (in the same survey – those women who were not sole farmers, 60.6% were partners or directors). She suggests replacing 'menial' tasks with 'vital'. This might increase their prestige and bring them closer to being appreciated, but will they be remunerated? Without comparing the fiscal laws of both countries a valid comparison is difficult. The actual power distribution in the family businesses decision making seems to be what matters most.

5.2.3.1 Decision making

Farmers' decision making has been a focus for agricultural economists for some time. Substantial efforts have gone into trying to model this process with the help of modern computer technology.⁵⁰ Farm production processes are complex and have quite unpredictable outcomes. Even the slightest change, e.g. a feed ration, tractor capacity, feed rate, even meal times, have implications for the rest of the business and the family living with it. Bigger decisions, such as buying land or giving up dairying, make this more obvious. Gasson (1992) found that typically wives are much less involved in technical day-to-day decisions (42% in her UK and 27% Irish sample), but only nine percent overall were not involved in major policy decisions.

It is often very difficult to determine who in the family came up with a new idea and whether the main goal behind it was family or business driven (Buchanan, 1982 as discussed in Gasson and Errington, 1993).

On the day to day running of the farm it is mainly the men who decide. Trade representatives and government officials reflect this in the way they address the male farmer (Shortall, 1992). Women themselves feel they would only 'interfere' if they voiced an opinion on daily decisions, however, they do feel co-responsible for major decisions such as loans, property deals and new enterprises (43% in the UK; Gasson and Winter, 1992).

From personal observations I would like to add that most members of a working farming partnership will be hard pushed to say who in the end decided on a particular tractor, seed or bloodline. The decision process I observed takes on the following shape. Everybody at some point voiced an opinion depending on their interest and state of expertise, and at some point someone will have said: "Well, what are we doing about this?" And then: "So I just go and order/sell that" and then it will just have happened. Yes, there have been figures done, but still straight comparisons between the options of say different tractor deals, are usually difficult to assess so 'gut-feel' overrides.

The mothers' involvement might be nothing more than being present at the discussions, overhearing phone calls and then at a certain moment saying: "Well, wasn't that the same green tractor, that had such a huge repair bill, that we were so tight that year and couldn't go and do X?" The result of this comment might tip the balance and a different tractor is purchased from a different dealer. This is not to say that wives only know the

⁵⁰ For an overview of the relevant literature see McGregor *et al* (1995). 'Edinburgh Study of Decision-making on Farms: Modelling Farmers' Decision-making'. *Agricultural Systems*, pp.289-297.

farm's tractors by their colour, but some of them would be hard pushed to list the number of tractors on the farm or their brand, age and horse power, let alone which of them would be suitable to work what implement. Technical expertise amongst family members varies widely from close to zero to very competent.

To the outside world it is still the father–farmer–owner who represents the farm and officially makes decisions and is responsible for them. However, any partner will have to bear the consequences if things go wrong as well as the official decision maker.

Bryson (1994) compares the percentage of totally dependent women in 10 OECD countries. In her native Australia she notes a gradual movement of women from private dependency into a more central role in the economy. This might influence her other finding that 'decisions within the family, particularly about who does the presenting, have been shown to be significantly influenced by the superior earning capacity of the male partner' (*ibid.*, p. 185). Foremost there is the authority to sign business cheques.

5.2.3.2 Who signs the cheques?

After splitting 'paperwork' into its components such as census inventory, stock records, VAT and tax returns, government payment schemes, Health and Safety forms, field records, bill payments and budgeting, the one item which stands out is the signing of cheques! As the rep. so clearly puts it "when I go into a new farm, the first thing I want to know is who signs the cheques?" Anecdotes about fathers who would still hold on to their cheque book and make the 'boy', who might well be in his forties or fifties and have a family of his own, come and ask for a signature are common knowledge. "You will always get those", confirms the grain merchant. The decision when to pay bills is the last step in the 'succession ladder'⁵¹ found by Errington and Tranter (1992). They confirmed this in their later study (1997). The grain merchant in this study agrees: "I would say maybe the buying and selling sort of depicts when...the control power is being transferred."

However, he uses the words 'control' and 'power'. This statement begs comparison with the work of Pahl on Money and Marriage (1989). She follows the allocation of money within couples from the Middle Ages to the late nineteen-eighties. She chooses to use the word 'control' to indicate overall direction of the finances in the household, incorporating ownership of money and property and the word 'management' to indicate administration of

⁵¹ For a detailed discussion of the ladder of succession see also the Gasson, Errington and Tranter (1998) study on how English farmers have adapted to the changing pressures on farming. The authors compare the 17 steps=decisions and activities handed over at some point within the process of succession with earlier surveys.

household finances as an activity which includes the payment of bills for daily living expenses (*ibid.*, p. 29). The point where the money enters the household is where control is mainly exercised. It determines which funds will be allocated to what sphere of the family. In a farming context this might be slightly different. Bearing in mind the households in Pahl's survey⁵² were either waged or on benefits, their money would come in on a regular basis and their expenses were of a different order than on a medium sized farm. There the planning horizon is medium to long term, the expenses erratic and of an order which far surpasses the purchase of a family car (but not a house) and the income (and the timing of it) is equally erratic if not uncertain. Budgets rarely work out exactly as planned. If we take the payments for grain harvested in August, it might not be sold until March and there is no price guarantee. All the profit might already be swallowed up by an essential repair, which had to be done during the autumn sowing well before this grain money came in.

Cattle have an even longer period of uncertain income for daily expenditure such as feed and labour. The food bill or the price of a washing machine are insignificant amounts in comparison. Such decisions of when and what to pay come under 'management' which concerns itself with putting the respective allocated funds into operation. Pahl's finding, which is most important in a farming context, is the fact that out of all her couples, only three disagreed when asked to define who in their relationship really had control over the incoming money, when they were asked together, but in separate interviews 29 out of 102 couples disagreed about who 'controlled' the money (*ibid.*). This result was even clearer when the couples were asked about the decision maker. Only 48 out of the 102 partners were in agreement there. Based on these findings, she sees a need to point out the dangers of studying personal relationships only through the eyes of one partner (*ibid.*, p. 172).⁵³ The multiple perspectives resulting from involving the whole family in the research limit this pitfall.

The rep. wanting to know who has the cheque book, is not really interested in who pays and signs for the bill. His real concern is that the person who orders £10,000 worth of chemicals is in a position to pay the bill. This could be crucial in the case of a partnership or a father/son team, where not all functions have been handed over.

This makes them support the suggestion that the ladder of succession is something shared across all farms (*ibid.*, p. 90).

⁵² Only 9% of the women and 4% of the men received their earnings in other ways than weekly or monthly. The few self-employed people had very low earnings and the only farmer ran a very small fruit farm, giving his wife weekly household allowances, as did all his farming neighbours on similar farms.

⁵³ My decision to involve all adult family members resulted in a well-founded picture of the decision making process.

Of the ten couples in this project, six wives are partners, one farm is run as a company, one is in the process of restructuring, with the status of the remainder unknown. Theoretically, in a partnership any of the partners can sign the cheques, but usually only one of them does. In some cases cheques need two signatures as a safeguard; in others it might be a more or less voluntary control.

However, it is not obvious if the person who signed the cheque is the one who made the decision that it should be paid or the one who carries the responsibility. Take the case of Mrs. Hunter. She is a partner, she works outside, she does all the bookwork and even her own daughter thinks she signs the cheques, but she herself says her husband signs them. She does not seem to resent this. What does this mean? That she is not allowed to sign them or does not want to? That the third partner, the brother would resent it? That they have agreed to have an extra safeguard mechanism built into their system? Maybe she does not want the ultimate responsibility of it; an assumption which seems justified listening to her stating that no she would not want to be a farmer in her own right, even though she herself has no doubt that she could actually do it.

Mrs. Elrick is in a similar position. She does all the stock records and the other accounts, but in her own words: "He signs the cheques. I can sign them, but I make him sign (laughs). It is just a safeguard to make sure.... If I write them out, he checks them. In that way there is no mistake. Once it is away, it is away." Does that mean he carries the responsibility? If they make a mistake all partners in the partnership will have to bear the consequences. Does it therefore matter who prepared the accounts and who signed the cheque in the end? There are problems with different levels of expertise, but there is no resentment with the set up as such. George Elrick acknowledges the situation and explained that when they sell cattle, "Dad goes in and mucks them (the stock records on the bedroom floor)⁵⁴ all up (laughs). That is kind of how it works." His mother is looking forward to the day when she can hand over the accounts to a daughter-in-law.

Mr. Elrick himself got the cheque book at the age of 16, because his father had a bad heart.

Mr. Innes had similar responsibilities from an early age. He started to help with the bookwork as soon as he finished school at 16 and then gradually signed certain cheques as well. Donald Urquhart foresees that his father will be quite glad to rid himself of 'some' of

⁵⁴ I assume, he is looking for certain beasts' passports in a hurry and just tries to find them. The question remained unanswered, who decided which beasts should be sold. If she keeps the records, she will know what is a good performer and advise accordingly. If it is him who goes to the market he will have to decide there and then on a price for buying or selling.

the paperwork in a few years time. Mrs. Weston can sign cheques and does, but wants her husband to keep an eye on and check, which she does not seem to mind.

Mr. Thompson makes it very clear that “yes, his wife signs some cheques” and adds immediately thereafter that they had been in a different partnership until recently, which meant the responsibility went further than their own family. In a way this is similar to the Hunters and there might have been questions if the wives had signed cheques then.

The case of the ‘cheque book’ typifies the complex set up under which office duties and other tasks are arranged on a farm.

It could be argued that there is only one factor that is of any importance for the family business: “The job just needs to be done.” Who will do it, is a matter of preference, convenience and expertise and not a straight demonstration of power. The wives and grown up children are generally not confronted with a tyrant who will not give up power as long as he lives. They live with a man whose ‘habitus’ is familiar to them. Is he conscientious about the paperwork or does he need to be reminded to make payments or keeping records? Is he careful with money or does he tend to spend too much at farm auctions? Family members who know the farm accounts, may be heard telling the father that he cannot spend any more than X at an auction, because the money is pencilled in for something else such as school fees, a new car or the repair bill for the combine. They know their father’s weaknesses and strengths. He has power, the power, to influence their wants, their thinking and feeling. In short their ‘habitus’ is the domain he can exercise power over, but this applies to him as well. Family members socialise each other. According to Lukes as described in Shortall’s (1992) analysis of power on farms the man (usually property owner) has all the official power, but there is no king without subjects and the father/ spouse/farmer is part of the farm kingdom. Should he choose only to dictate, he would perhaps lose the spouse’s full cooperation, the children would be socialised away from farming. They would no longer want to help, let alone be considered as successors, or the successor might not be able to find a partner. Whatmore (1994) states:

Evidence is growing that this patriarchal structure of gender relations in family farming is increasingly being contested by younger women who leave the land, unwilling to accept the limited opportunities for entering farming as a successor or business principal in their own right, or the conventional status of ‘farmer’s wife’ (p. 43).

A cartoon in a farming paper illustrates this trend. Two farmers watch their neighbour mucking out the pigs. In the caption they worry that he will have problems convincing any future wife of the attractiveness of his ‘scent’. This depicts two major changes; the farmer

mucks out himself, and it is not considered such a good wicket to become a farmer's wife any longer. There might be unfamiliar surprises in store for the bride to be. It is important that all involved see the decision criteria in the same light. They have to agree on which of the meanings of the tripartite ones (see 1.3) are relevant to them at that moment in time.

The farmer can enforce the decision to buy a new tractor and not renovate the bathroom or kitchen, but can s/he live it down within the family? If all the members of the family accept the needs of the farm as all important, that is, if they see it (see Figure 1b) in the same light, then there is no problem. The 'farm' as an employer will determine how the money can be spent. To achieve this agreement it is important how the family discuss their respective plans and who is present at these discussions. The actual signature on the cheque would then often just be seen as a symbolic gesture or even "I have oily hands. You sign it."

The grain merchant believes that of the wives who know enough to do the accounts, about half of them will also sign the cheques. However, it is the farmer who is still considered the decision maker and therefore responsible. Merchants and others still come to *him* first. There is a difference between the gas bill = 'management' and the hire purchase contract for three new tractors = 'control'. Who will that be decided by? Do the wives or children have the expertise to decide whether this contract is a good decision financially and essential for the operation of the machinery park? In the parents' youth, the grievance assisted in making equipment decisions, the farmer decided and the secretary put it in the budget. Today it is mostly up to the farmer or farming couple or family and maybe their banker. Based on a general review of the 'Theory of the Firm', Gasson *et al* (1988) suggests that in farm family businesses as well as others, the decision processes may well involve more than one member of the family who might have different objectives and responsibilities.

A decade later the divisions between family, office and yard are even more blurred.

5.2.4 Family tasks

Under the heading of family tasks in this context the following domains are summarised: cooking, cleaning, laundry, shopping, gardening, ferrying children and childminding. They were not discussed in detail during the interview, but mentioned in reply to the questions of how the children spend time with their dad and whether all members of the family could cook. Again all men would pick up milk and bread on their way, stack the dishwasher and put a pizza in the oven, but in general the household is not their responsibility. In a postal survey situation it can be assumed that all men would say that yes occasionally or often depending on their personal circumstances they would go shopping, cook or help in the

kitchen or pick the children up from the train, but in reality they do not have to concern themselves with the overall management of the home. That is in all farm families known to the informants, respondents and the researcher still the domain of the women. (Assuming the three informants know about 300 households well enough to judge that, researcher and respondents at least 50, that brings the total of the indirect survey to approximately 3000 farm households including some who will have been counted more than once.)

5.2.4.1 Household chores

Husbands who work from home will intentionally or not involve a spouse in their plans. They see her every mealtime, she deals with callers, answers the phone and can be sent for errands. Even if a wife says she is not involved in the farm, she will find it impossible not to be a sounding board, not to know in broad terms what is going on next to running the home.

Here an example of a woman who calls herself a 'homemaker'. Asked whether she has any input in the farm, Mrs. Weston replies: "Me? Phh! I do a bit of office work. I do that and...I pay some bills but H. really has to see to check them over, you know. He knows what is what, so.... Well you know I go for bits and pieces that are required, a bit...I do the garden! And general housekeeper."

At another time in the second interview she explains why she finds it so difficult to imagine that so many women can have their own careers... "with mealtimes and the garden and the housework and all that". She has a big and elaborate garden and no home help. She still feel she ought to be 'there', especially at meal times. She talks about the wives whose husbands are away from eight to five and who don't have 'the bind of mealtimes and things' as she experiences in her own situation.

Mrs. Thompson talks about similar problems. In her case they are personified in her husband who "doesn't like it when I am not here.... Like me going back to work is a non-starter, because if I do go out, when I come back I always get such a lot of flak: Where have you been? Why have you been? You know just ohhh this is going wrong and that. So it just...I find it easier if I am here to be honest (laughs)."

The introduction of modern technology of 'gadgets' to today's households has not reduced either cost or time spent on housework. The work is not less, it is different. As MacKenzie and Wajzman (1985) found, it has rather enforced the gender division of labour and locked women more firmly into their traditional roles.

Two of the husbands are considered by their families as 'good cooks'. Mr. Hunter because his mother died when he was in his teens, and Mr. Weston because he enjoys it. None is responsible for the daily menu.

Cleaning and washing again is the mother's task. However, both the eldest sons in the Stone and the Elrick family are given full credit by their mothers for being the best of the children in helping with the 'hoovering', if need be.

Some of the daughters never learn to cook while they are at home, only once they live on their own at college. However, some of them still resort to buying ready-made meals like most of the boys tend to do when left to themselves. According to the mothers, all would manage somehow.

Mrs. Urquhart says that none of her three men can cook. "But they would get by. They wouldn't starve sort of thing."

Mrs. Ballantyne, who is teaching part time, recalls comments she heard when she started to work away from home:

She can't do that, she has to be home and answer the phone. But these things can always be got over. There are answer phones and dual access and that sort of thing. And farmers are not that special. They can manage perfectly well. And I think nowadays people grow up much more independent and do their own thing.

The situation has changed to an extent, but the boys will still try to be looked after. Mrs. Thompson would think her son doesn't have a clue. "They (meaning her husband and son in the event of an off-farm working daughter in law) would just expect me to do it. He would come here (for the main meal). I don't think the younger generation could afford to not have their wife go out and work."

The grain merchant feels things have changed. "We do far more in the house, than our fathers did. There are quite a few farmers in EL where the wives work and they muck in with the kids and whatever. So that is change to 20-30 years ago."

The YF secretary puts it very succinctly: "The lads expect the girls to do a bit more than the girls would want to do." According to her observation, the boys who have lived alone at college are a bit better compared to the ones who have never been away and their mothers spoiled them. It would be difficult for the mother to make a point and refusing to attend to the teenage son, when he does the same work as his father and works the same hours. She would have a difficult case on her hands unless he is used to help in the house

from an early age and does it voluntarily. A few mothers do educate their sons to cook and help with the cleaning (Mrs. Hunter, Mrs. Petrie).

The future wives will have it easier than their parents, but still “the girls may want their husbands to do half the housework, but once you are in that situation...and especially once young children are there”. The YF president grimaces. She estimates that out of the 60 male members of her club 50–75% will end up doing no housework to speak of. “And if they get a chance, they will do nothing,” she concludes. In France, Berlan-Darque (1988) sees young women trying to persuade men to help in the household and at the same time mark out a more professional place for themselves on the farm. She does not say how successful or wide spread these attempts are. Wiebe (1995) found that for Canadian farm women an average week consists of approximately 100 working hours split up between domestic chores, farm work and off-farm work. Shortall (1992) heard that most farm wives in her Irish study detested housework, but still did it. This, she concludes, means that these women were subjected to a power which made them do something against their wishes. I would argue that a lot of people do something they do not like doing and still accept the necessity for it to be done by somebody. Porter (1991), in her study on women’s lives in Newfoundland, realised that women focussed less on the actual work they were doing and more on their contribution and its benefits to their particular household. If we take the case of a newly wed woman coming to live on a farm (e.g. Mrs. Stone), the farm in a lot of cases would have been fully operative before her arrival. What is there for her to do? The husband’s role within this organisation is clear to everybody and after a short while to her as well. What can she do? Depending on her background she will be more or less experienced in farm work of the type required on the new farm. However the first domain which is not spoken for is the new household she and her husband have created. She is expected and welcome to make this function well. It might be different if they both start afresh on a farm. Then there are no established routines and there is room and a need for extra labour. Pile (1990) describes one case where the wife was very instrumental in the setting-up phase, but then took an off-farm job once things were established (see also Mulholland, 1996). Mrs. Hunter did not work outside as much on the big farm they left three years ago, but is now on their present farm far more involved with the sheep and less with the house.

Shortall (1992) quotes what Bryson and Wearing found in Australia in 1985 that ‘where women were not prepared to adopt the traditional subordinate helpmate role in the family, the marriages were unhappy. Women who challenged the male right to define their interests and who demanded more autonomy in their lives found that harmony, consensus

and stability were no longer inherent characteristics of the family unit and that conflict had only been averted by acceptance of the male definition of the situation and acknowledgement of male power' (p. 358). The women in her Irish study reaffirmed the male status by understating their own and overstating their husbands' role on the farm. I would argue that the chances that a farm being new to both spouses and therefore offering more negotiable roles, are higher in Australia than in the UK. I do not want to enter into the debate of different nationalities as having different attitudes to gendering. Suffice it to say that Morris (1990) quotes Hiller and Philliber (1986) as saying that even in 'modern, dual-earner families tradition endures and the husband's view of marital roles strongly influences behaviour' and therefore is critical to marital stability (Morris, 1990, p. 96). Furthermore the scope for a newcomer to get involved is bigger on a farm that does not employ non-family members (as all the farms in this project do).

5.2.4.2 Paid help in the house

Half the families have regular help in the house. As the representative observes, the housework is either done by the wives or the paid help, rarely ever the children (Hunter, Stone, Urquhart, Ballantyne, Petrie, Thompson). Looking at professional women in general Morris (1990) observed that their husbands did not help any more in those households, but that these women just bought services in from outside.

None of the respondents appear to have used child-minders or nannies.

5.2.4.3 Children related tasks: child-minding, ferrying, homework

All fathers shared the ferrying of the children to and from sports activities or the school (bus), although some more regularly than others.

All stock farmers took their children out with them to check the stock, feed the lambs or open gates. They would not call this child-minding, but in effect it was. Mrs. Ballantyne considers it is a certain attitude which prevented her husband from involving the girls more, but she would not let him get away with that, if she had to do it again. He says he himself regrets not having spent enough time with them and not having introduced them more to the farm as such. Still the girls recall being 'out' all the time and if there was something interesting going on, they would just go and watch, presumably regardless of whether they were wanted or not. "We were real pests," recalls Sandra Ballantyne.

The adviser confirms that. "Dad child-minds? Generally not, but Dad is always there and if he is doing something interesting they watch. But they need to show an interest to

start with...if there is any interest at all, it gets encouraged fairly strongly...and I think it is this mindset, that it does not matter whether it is a boy or a girl, that is changing.” With this statement the adviser, who after all has a good insight into approximately 500 farms, falls in line with what is happening on the continent. In Germany the parents are happy to accept any of the children as successor, if only to prevent the family from giving up farming altogether (Hoffmann, 2000).

The rep. recalls an extreme case where the father does his work at night to child-mind during the day, while his wife works to support the farm.

5.2.4.4 Gardening

Country gardens are usually quite big, some more, some less elaborate. Their care and maintenance falls generally under ‘household tasks’ and is therefore the wife’s responsibility (see also Bouquet, 1985 who found that it is the women’s domain on the farm, but non-farming men in the same village took to gardening quite often.) Other than the odd farmer who is interested in growing his own vegetables, I have not met a single farmer or heard of one that enjoys having anything to do with the garden. They might mow the often huge lawns or pay someone to do it. They might spray a weedkiller onto the drive, but that seems to be the extent of their interest. The often very beautiful and well kept gardens are credited to the women. Some get paid help; some prefer to do it themselves. The hours and the money spent on these gardens are substantial. Only if the garden affects the overall appearance of the home, does it become an issue. None of the gardens in the research was in that state.

5.2.5 Off-farm employment

Off-farm employment has now become a permanent feature of agriculture in several European countries, in the US and Canada. Depending on the jobs available and the level of education, this can become a significant factor in the farming families’ income. In Gasson’s (1986) study of figures for over 50,000 farms in England and Wales, she shows, that farmers who work off-farm hold down manual or business occupations, the majority of the spouses white collar or professional jobs, half the working sons have manual jobs and more than two thirds of the daughters white collar occupations. The larger the farm, the more likely the spouse will be qualified for her off-farm job and the less likely that the farmer will be for his. This demonstrates how important it can be for the farmer of a small farm to have qualifications and for the spouse of a big one, a fact which is also reflected in the very

regional character of work allocation between family members of farms with other gainful activities (*ibid.*).

Like many others, the women in Shortall's (1992) survey of 20 Irish farms saw off-farm work as a way to increase their independence, status and personal identity. This 'escape from their undervalued position on the farm' (*ibid.*, p. 438) can also mean extra income, which, in some cases, is essential for the farm's survival (Ghorayshi, 1989) or, in other words, 'By reducing financial constraints, farm wives with off-farm work may help male operators to concentrate their efforts full-time on the farm' (Shortall, 1992, p. 581).

The number of wives working off-farm is in proportion to the rest of the population for the US, but US farm women contribute a higher proportion to the family income than do their urban counterparts (Godwin and Marlow, 1990, as quoted in Sachs, 1996).

Sachs (1996) describes how farm characteristics seem to be more likely to predict the male farmer taking up off-farm work in the US, whereas for the wives it is the level of education and not the number of children. She goes further and speculates '...that men's off-farm employment threatens farm success and can only be risked on certain types of farms, whereas women's contributions to the farm enterprise are expendable' (p. 150). In Whatmore's survey (1991) of English wives only 15% held off-farm jobs whereas of the 70% who had held a job before they got married, two thirds of these had given up with marriage and not, like the rest of the population, with the birth of the first child. As one woman from the pilot study of this project put it: "You just were expected to stay home and have tea ready for the men."

Lauterbach and Shanahan (1998) also found that if German women chose to combine helping on the farm with off-farm work, they had to be prepared to accept a lower status in their jobs than if they confined their activities to off-farm work only. This might be due to a lack of higher status jobs in rural areas (see Jamieson (2000) for a discussion of this topic for youths in the Borders Region).

Data from a survey in Devon found that more wives than husbands were working in non-farming occupations at home, but roughly equal numbers had found off-farm work. The women working off the farm were found to be younger, more educated and from non-farming backgrounds. Surprisingly, while even they worked fewer hours on the farm, they were not at all excluded from the decision making (Gasson and Winter, 1992). The authors speculate that in the future farmers may negotiate more gender equal roles with their non-farming wives, who have chosen to work outside agriculture. This will detract from the

traditional 'the farm comes first' thinking and, say the authors, result in children being socialised away from farming and divorce becoming more common. This means more frequent shifts between the tripartite meanings of the farm (see 1.3).

Of the ten couples in my sample, two wives (Ballantyne and Philips) were earning an income in their own right. In both cases the children went to private schools. Mrs. Philips makes special reference to the fact that her earnings were necessary to allow the children to do so.

The attitudes to women having their own careers, seems to have and is still changing. None of the younger generation saw it as a problem if their partner chose to work in a non-farming capacity. The problems such as listed by Mrs. Thompson above, are not paramount any longer. Mrs. Ballantyne thinks they can all be overcome. She does have a home help, an answer phone and works part time as a PE teacher, but she still knows exactly what is going on financially.

For any future farm wives, the respondents consider it a bonus to have an education and a career of their own. These women are usually not expected any longer to stay home and have a hot meal ready as their mothers were. The clear understanding from both generations is that a wife could continue working if she wanted to and that her salary could come in quite 'useful in a bad year'. However, a recently married and full-time working engineer I know is still expected to pick up (which is the part she resents) and wash (which she accepts) her farming husband's socks. Just as his mother had done all his life, but now the household is his wife's responsibility.

Burns (1994) looked into the reasons why women in general put up with the double load of household and other work. The first of her six reasons shows they feel they have no choice as patriarchy is still alive and well and what men do is important, what women do is not, it is only supportive. She cautions that some surveys may be misleading as the working man is seen as not at home whereas the woman is actually working as well, but she works shifts to fit in with the family's needs. The third reason describes women as believing that men have different interests from women. These women play by different rules and find caring more rewarding and the games that boys enjoy frustrating. This means they resign themselves to a heavy domestic workload. This does not look an attractive prospect for young women. Burns therefore concludes with the prognosis that in North and Western Europe 40–50% of today's young adults may not marry at all but will live together, which means splitting up is easier and the roles less predetermined.

5.2.6 Do involved wives and daughters belong to a special social group?

A cartoon in *Farming News* (October, 2000) shows a rainstorm scene and a disgruntled farmer and his wife feeding sheep. She is dressed in patched-up clothes, her hair tangled by the wind, but wearing lipstick. A cosy looking apron donning plump woman is taking a cake out of the oven. The caption 'frankly, sometimes I prefer the public's stereotype of a farmer's wife' refers to an article in the same issue which gives the results of a survey about the general public's opinion of a farmer's wife. The public still picture the farmer's wife as rosy-cheeked, plump and always making cakes. This is contrasted in the same issue with NFU statistics which show that almost half of them have a key role in managing the farm business and 65% are partners. This thesis does not concern itself with the composition of NFU's members regarding farm size and spouse's input. However the comment seems justified, that farms which rely entirely on family labour are on the increase all over the UK (see Chapter 2) and that there can be a tax advantage in making the spouse a partner or use the official tax allowance for a spouse's contribution to the business, regardless of to what extent the spouse is actually contributing physically or to the decision-making process. Still, it is not obvious what this woman would normally do from the cartoon or what role she would play on the farm. However, the weather conditions are such that sheep need to be fed. Maybe the person usually doing it is ill or does not exist, but the wife is there in the storm and she helps. Maybe just for that day, maybe every day.

Amongst my respondents there is a range of views about the way girls should be treated within a farming context. Mr. Urquhart thinks that mothers want to bring up little princesses and would not approve of a girl with oily trousers and dirty fingernails. Mr. Ballantyne thinks anybody can be an arable farmer, that includes women as long as they are good at (man) management. Mr. Thompson finds it difficult to cope with female grain samplers, vets and merchants, but had no qualms in getting his daughter to drive a tractor during harvest, when her help was needed.

'Frankly, sometimes I prefer the public's stereotype of a farmer's wife!
(Printed with permission from *Farming News*, October 2000.)



Wives of all 'classes' do help on the farm with tasks like potato dressing, cattle work or lambing. Others cannot be imagined doing any physical work 'outside' and perhaps do all the bookwork or play an essential role in the investment planning. Some are not involved at all and would not even know the difference between stock breeds or between wheat and barley. Some work outside the farm business, some are dedicated homemakers, gardeners, sports women or involved in charities. Some do it all. From the data researched and personal observation, it was impossible to conclude that there is a class difference between the wives who are and who are not actively involved in some capacity or another in the running of the family farm. As Mrs. Hunter says: "It is entirely up to the individual and the situation they are in." Sandra Ballantyne thinks it is even admired around her area, if a wife is involved and thus pulls her weight in the family business. But what about a daughter?

The involvement for the daughters quite often comes via their interest in horses. Horses need fields and maybe stabling on the farm. These fields need to be maintained,

which might be done using farm resources such as the fertiliser spreader or rake. Horses might graze together with farm stock, therefore parasite control needs to be coordinated and fences maintained.

The issue of 'horses' is important as the work with them is not as much affected by the respective timetables of the private and state school systems (see 4.2.4) as, for example, the YF activities. Horses are there all year round and need to be looked after just like any other livestock on the farm. If the girls are used to being outside in all weathers to tend to their horse, it can be assumed that they are more inclined to help with other farm chores should they see the need to do so in their later life. By comparison, the ones who were always more interested in other things and stayed in the house, might continue to prefer indoors work. But even there the researcher found anecdotal evidence from neighbours and respondents of women doing exactly the opposite.

There is plenty of scope for girls from different social groups within the farming community to make direct contact with farming practices in general. They might not get involved in farm work other than with their horses while they are at home, but many of them do so once they marry onto a farm "if they are that way inclined," says the YF secretary. And that does not seem to depend on 'class'.

5.2.6.1 The children's involvement

This section addresses children of all ages. Even small children of as young as five years old are capable of very productive work. Only five out of the 27 children did not help on the farm at least occasionally during their school years. Towards the end of secondary school this proportion had not changed, but it included different children. Some had lost interest and others had become more involved.

What are the rewards for working on the farm? It is not always 'fun', quite often very repetitive and involves long hours in bad weather. Some children did get paid for their help, particularly if they actually replaced a paid hand. I cannot imagine they got much verbal praise. A day's work well done would have to suffice. The overall goal 'to get the job done' is clearly set. If it is done, the sheep shorn, the field harvested it is obvious, no need for extra words. There is the next job. Why talk about this one? Nevertheless job satisfaction paired with the experiences of working in a team is one of the fondest memories children take away with them once they leave the farm (Kreil, 1995). This used to be an everyday occurrence, but nowadays farmers work alone a lot of the time. So much is mechanised and on a larger scale, especially on arable farms, where much of the work happens in

hermetically sealed cabins ranging across big blocks of land. Nevertheless as Kreil (1995) shows, the young adults she interviewed, who had grown up on, usually smaller, German farms, still have very vivid memories of childhood chores they had to perform in their summer holidays and out of school time and how they rather jealously looked on as their classmates went off to the pool. This is similar to what the Hunter girls had experienced.

Parents, but especially the children, note clearly which of their peers shows an active interest on the home farm. George Elrick talking shoulder shrugging about his neighbour's son: "He doesn't seem all that bothered about the farm. When he had the chance to quit school and come home, he just stayed on."

5.2.6.1.1 How useful?

The parents' motivation to involve their children in farm work is not pre-meditated, but evolves from them being there. Children have to be kept busy and work has to be done. If the two can be combined, it is a bonus. The point is, how useful can a small child actually be? This will depend on the farm household's set-up and how much scope there is for child help. This can be seen in the example of 'doing the gates', a very important task on a stock farm. Without going into ergonomic detail, it is obvious that every paddock has at least one gate and often two. To open and close a gate takes twice as long for the driver of a vehicle than if a passenger can open it, hold it while the vehicle passes and close it. If stock has to be moved through it, an extra person is vital to open the gate at the right moment to let the right group of animals through or to block the wrong group from moving. Both tasks can be performed by a small child with a little bit of guidance and can save a lot of time or even set an adult free to do other chores. However, not much will be said. Everybody, including the child, knows that a job has been done, in this case the stock was checked and who was involved. This soon mounts up. The Elrick and the Hunter children both had farm chores to do before and after school. These were mainly to do with stock and did not involve machinery to any great extent. From doing the gates, other tasks are soon added on or other interests develop. The parents and the overall farm set-up dictate the extent of the children's exposure to and then involvement on the farm. Obviously the children's availability, expertise and personal preference change as they grow older, stronger and more capable. The demands of school and their developing social life compete for time. Carrying out farm tasks demands a certain amount of responsibility and time commitment.

If there is livestock on the farm then it will usually be easier for the children to get actively involved. Stock needs more routine attendance than most crops and children get

simply taken along. Often the farm's enterprise structure will influence where the farm buildings, the 'steading' is located in relation to the farm house. For (small) children a close proximity of the hub of activity, the parent's place of work, makes contact more likely. Dad is not far away. He can be visited or look after a child much more readily than if there is car travel involved or a busy road to cross. Under favourable circumstances children need less supervision and their involvement including tractor work can start much earlier.

5.2.2.1.2 Safety

Some parents are more safety conscious than others. All showed a high level of awareness of the potential safety hazards. In the case of the Urquhart boys, who grew up on a purely arable farm, it was particularly the mother who was very concerned about how dangerous a farm yard can be for small children.

The children, especially the Hunters, the Ballantynes and the Stones, spoke of the freedom they enjoyed while playing or riding around the farm on their horses or motorbikes.

Despite anecdotes from their own youth on the farm, none of this generation of children was allowed to drive machinery before reaching their teens. Things just have moved on too far in technology to allow children to be handling equipment before a certain age. However, they can still come and observe school and daylight hours permitting. These two factors set Scottish children apart from some of their counterparts on the continent. In Scotland, their school day is longer and in winter they leave for school and come home in the dark.

5.2.6.1.3 How do children get involved?

'Socialisation to farming occurs at an early age, as individuals are exposed to parents, relatives and the farm environment' (Molnar and Dunkelberger, 1981, p.65).

Even on the purely arable farms and where the mother is not involved in 'outside' work, such as the Urquharts, there was some involvement of children. The father would come into the house frequently to make phone calls, receive agents and at mealtimes share some of the happenings on the farm with his family. There, it is the eldest son who has always been showing the most interest in the farm. The younger son, asked whether he worked there in the holidays replied: "Not very often. I drove in the grain...not a lot at all, because my brother was there." This statement can be interpreted in two ways. There is only a limited scope available for apprentices to be incorporated in the harvest's organisation and that had been filled by his brother already. Any more beginners would be too disruptive

for the smooth running of the operation. Or the second son himself feels unwanted or not as qualified as his older sibling to try to get involved. If this second child was a girl, it could be argued that she was not involved because of gender reasons. As he is a boy, it demonstrates that gender is only one of the factors determining involvement. Others include farm organisation, the match between persons available and capable and the tasks to be done, as well as the personal interest of both generations.

In general, the parents' expectations would foster the children's interest and involvement. This happened initially just as 'help' and later as 'work'. Some children got paid Award⁵⁵ wages for their help in the summer holidays, some did not, but were told it was going to be theirs at some point anyway (George Elrick). Some were paid in kind: clothes (Joanna Elrick), petrol (Jenny Petrie), the use of a car (several others). Only the older Philips girl voiced discontent. When she questioned the amount her father paid them for their sheep work, referring to the general Award rates, he just replied, he would get someone else who would do it for nothing. None of his three children, all girls, show any inclination towards farming. None of them used expressions such as 'working in a team, working together or just helping with whatever is going on' like the farm enthusiastic Hunter daughters did.

The now grown-up sons of the Westons, Elricks, Urquharts, Stones and Thompsons have always helped, wanted to farm, and now work full time on the farm. None of the daughters who are interested and have always helped (Hunter, Innes, Petrie, Elrick, Thompson and to a certain extent Ballantyne) are working on the home farm other than on the odd weekend or maybe at particular times of the year such as lambing or at harvest time.

5.2.6.1.4 Gender bias

This indicates a gender bias in the socialisation of siblings regarding farm involvement. As Endevelde (1994) states, 'on family farms all over Europe the gender division of labour is such that women have the responsibility to care for the household and their families next to their professional work on or off the farm' (*ibid.* VIII). The gender division of labour⁵⁶ as Wallace *et al.* (1994) found for smaller farms, is very difficult to challenge for the girls. In general they are tarred with the same brush as their mothers. Housework is the women's domain, but they are also sometimes drawn into doing heavy manual work outside, whereas the men, the fathers and even very young sons work outside only, but do not help to the same extent in the household chores as the women work at the 'male' tasks. The socialisation for

⁵⁵ 'The Agriculture Labour Award' sets out the hourly and weekly rates for agricultural labour in Scotland.

⁵⁶ van Deenen (1982) as quoted in Schmitt (1989) found a gendered division of labour for women in farming in France, Austria, Poland, Sweden, Hungary and Germany.

the respondents in this project must have been successful as none of the children, whether they were involved or not, voiced open resentment of these facts. Children want to be seen as competent, socially and otherwise. They want to be accepted into the ranks of the adults, into the community of masters (see Chapter 4 on Situated Learning). The adults around them are 'doing gender' as West and Zimmermann call it. This means the youngsters will be looking for a gender identity in their environment (West and Zimmermann, 1987). The authors warn that if we fail to 'do gender' appropriately, we as individuals – not the institutional arrangements – may be called to account for things like our own character, our motives or our predispositions.

Cockburn (1987), in her work on the Youth Training Scheme, found an asymmetry in their work experience between the sexes. However, she doubts that sex relations in the family fully account for gender-related problems at work. These are created at both sites, which, translated into agriculture, means they are double fold. But even amongst YTS youths, non-traditional choices are rare and not often supported by the parents.

Socialisation includes learning about home farm-related skills and gaining expertise. This was made easy for some of the children while others would have to push hard to get it. Sandra Ballantyne calls herself 'not involved', but she helped most holidays in a group of four to six youngsters on the potato harvester or helped shovelling grain up using a forklift, and is now planting hedges on the farm. Only when she and her sister planned to go abroad and foresaw that they would probably have to work on farms for travel money, did they take the tractor and trailer out and practice reversing. She had never really done it before. She describes how slow she was using the forklift helping to shift grain,

...it is not difficult, but it takes a long time, because I am not used to it, you know. It is still, it is not automatic how to think...yeah! It is difficult, but I mean dad...when you are busy and...patience goes out the window, doesn't it...(and in her father's voice) you can't get that...it is just the mentality of... 'you can't'.

This feeds into my argument from the section on maternal farm involvement, that if something has to be done, someone will find a way of doing it somehow. Necessity will override any hesitation to learn a skill. Only now, closer to retirement, was her father prepared to reflect back and say that he should have taught his girls more about farming even though they were not 'sons', and the mother stated that she would not let him get away with having so little input into his daughters, if she had to do it again.

Children grow up as part of the farm and its people. The extent to which they are involved reflects their parents 'habitus' and the farm's respective set-up. This in turn will mould the children's 'habitus' and thus their preferences.

As Wallace *et al* (1996) point out '...it is wrong to assume that the family consists of a normative set of roles in an economic unit following the economic rationality of the household head – as most agricultural studies do' (p. 124).

5.3 Gender and the female farmer – a case study instead of a comment

Gender affects a person's 'habitus' and therefore, in Bourdieu's (1984) words, the 'primary' education on the farm as well. Later on it determines the expectations under which people are approached. As they approach each other the perception of each others' habitus will influence the responses they are getting from the other person. The case of a woman farmer serves to illustrate.

Nina is a neighbour I had not met before. She was mentioned as the only woman involved in arable farming known to the grain merchant and the rep. In the middle of my analysis of the data I decided to go and talk to her. I knew that at approximately the age of 30, she would not fit my criteria for the sample. There are problems of keeping her identity concealed as she is rather an exception and in her own words prefers to go unnoticed. I shall therefore limit myself to the strictly gender relevant comments she made and refrain from describing her personal circumstances in more detail.

5.3.1 Education and learning from dad

Nina is not an only child and grew up with the understanding that her male sibling(s) would continue the family's tradition in farming.

However, her brother(s) could not cope with the responsibility and the forward planning that farming entails, and the father turned to her at an early stage. Her father, in her words "the least chauvinist person I have ever come across," was delighted when she announced at the age of 16 she was going to leave (the fee paying) school and go to agricultural college. Her mother's response was: "Ohhh! Why?" But as Nina continued to explain, "A lot of parents would have been horrified, but they let me do it." At another point she reflected, "Maybe when it comes to the youngest child you let them do what they want as long as they are safe. There were (only) 4 girls in my year (at college). One works now at the research station, one has her own stables, one I don't know and one is married to a farmer and is the Scottish wool handling champion."

Her socialisation into hands-on farming started early. She grew up on a mixed farm and still remembers the smell and feel of the pails of warm milk that she used to take to the calves. Her father spent a lot of time with her. “Dad would pick me up from school with a packet of sandwiches and a change of clothes and take me straight to the markets. I loved it. None of the others wanted to go.” She remembers that at the age of 13 she felt for the first time being really useful at harvest and driving the lorry, while her dad loaded the bales. “It was magic. The best.” She still beams at the memory of it. From then on she found quite a few opportunities to stay off school to help with sowing or at harvest time. It was not evident whether her father initiated her absence from school or whether she wanted to do it. Nevertheless, her parents must have tolerated this behaviour, though none of her siblings ever missed school. From the money she made at harvests she bought herself one-day-old calves and brought them up. That was at the age of 17. All the others were sold when she was ten, which meant there was no stock on the farm when she came into an age where she could be more helpful.

She is not involved with livestock any longer now, but has a family to look after and has let the grazing out. So there are still cattle grazing in front of her kitchen window. “It is the paperwork that got me. Too much paperwork especially with cattle.” I mentioned the stock versus arable preferences of the other female respondents. She confirms that in a very definite voice: “I would have taken to stock a lot quicker than to a tractor.”

5.3.2 Farming an arable farm

The way she ended up farming is in the words of other neighbours ‘circumstantial’, meaning she slid into it. Family health and farming circumstances dictated it. Nina describes it: “I lurched from one disaster to another. It started already while I was at college. In the morning I would tell the men what was going on and then go to college, come home, see what they had done and then do my homework.” Her father was not well at the time.

How is she finding it now? Her parents are both dead; her siblings away. Her husband is not a farmer but helps with childcare and the household. She has a home help.

Nina is very aware of the problems she might encounter as a female farmer and employer. These problems were also pointed out by other (female) respondents of the older generation. However, the sister of Jenny Petrie, the other female farmer in the project, thinks that she herself will experience more problems of that kind going into the oil industry herself, than her sister will in agriculture.

When Nina's father died, she asked the remaining full-time (male) worker whether he wanted to stay, pointing out to him, that there would be gossip about him taking his orders from a woman. She would not hold it against him if he chose to leave.

His reply: "I have been taking orders from you for the last 10 years and anyway I don't listen to gossip, so..." He is still there. "He is very good with anything to do with machines and I would never question his judgment when it comes to deciding whether this thing needs welding or is not worth it or anything like that," Nina says. Then after a short pause she continues, "I have part-timers for the summer and they always seem to want to come back. So I must be doing something right. And some of them have actually said at the end of the summer that they enjoyed working for me and that I was a very fair boss and that I was good to work for." To make such statements is very unusual and it suggests that these men must have felt the need to reassure her, something they probably would not have done for a male boss.

What other problems does she experience?

Well, you know tradesmen and things. They can't seem to be able to cope with me being the farmer. They come to the door and say to (husband), 'Hello! I am So-and-so the new rep for this area. Pleased to meet you.' And he gets cross and tells them that it is his wife they want to speak to and they can't handle that. And when I go to the Highland Show looking for a new tractor or something, I get totally ignored. So I just quietly go there and take away some leaflets and phone them later. But when I go with (husband), they are over him like a rash. 'Yes Mr. X. Would you like to look at this Mr. X,' and then I ask the questions, whether this tractor is strong enough to lift our seeder and he gets the answer and I ask about their discount and they still answer him. And even if he says, 'It is my wife you need to speak to, she is the farmer,' some of them still look at him when they answer.

Another woman farmer whom I told this story to commented,

"Och! Aye! What do you expect from these guys? They are conditioned that way. But," she continued, "You get it quite often from the farmer as well. The rep. comes in and he will go to the one in the yard who looks most like the farmer, you know the tweed jacket type. And the farmer himself is standing there in his overalls and sometimes when asked where the boss is, will tell the rep. he is out, chuckling to himself."

What are her personal attitudes to bringing up children? She said that if she had a boy and a girl as children she would make very sure they would have equal chances to become involved in the farm. I presume that means, this is not normally the case. In that respect she feels the same as her German counterparts in Schmitt's study (1997). Like most other respondents, she thinks that in general boys are more likely to show interest in the farm and it is made easier for them. "I fight every day, whereas they (the boys) are encouraged by

everybody, by salesmen, by the workers.” She uses the present tense, even though she talks about her past. This implies she still experiences the same problems. But despite that she does not believe that boys are inherently better farmers than girls.

At the end she asks me whether I thought she was ‘normal’. She is laughing, but she still feels the need to ask me that. She seems reassured, when instead of replying directly, I describe my own life’s history. We both laugh and say we would like to arrange to meet again.

I arrange for her to meet the other female farmer I know (see above). Both women agree.

At the time of writing I came across an example of another woman, who had succeeded in a very male domain as farm manager. In an issue of a farming magazine (*Crops*, 11 November 2000) the front cover depicted three men and a woman all similarly dressed and of similar age grouped around a biggish tractor. Their business case story for the month was describing a large family owned farming business in Gloucestershire. The caption: ‘Dedicated team: farm manager Diana N. with assistant manager Duncan M., self employed spray operator Derek H and full-time employee Brian K’. A further photo shows the managing director for the family trustees. The article described how Ms N. had been the farm’s agronomist since 1987 and then had been given the job to restructure the then loss-making business. The article does not tell us whether she is married, has children or is a member of the family who owns the farm. It would not concern itself with this background if she was male. I take this article as a sign of the changes that are taking place. She must give orders to men, she must have made people redundant and she must be considered to be good at her work, but the article does not herald her as a heroine for feminism, but as a very successful farm manager.

5.4 Summary

This chapter looks at the overall tasks arising on a family farm. The research showed that who performs these tasks is determined by availability, expertise and preference and follows gendered traditions.

The division of labour on a family farm is a combination of the habitus of all its members, the farm set-up and the socio-economic climate the farm business is situated in. Wallmann (1986), in her study of British households in general, finds that the household system which works the best is the one with the best combination of resources. This, she

argues, is a matter of knowing what the options are, of having a sense of self that provides the confidence to use them and also of having spent the time to get the household system organised. Her findings can be applied both to the farm business as well as the farm household and its family. The farm in its personified sense has to be the winner.

Girls generally seem to prefer working with stock to machines. The presence of animals calls for daily routines. Usually these are in small units and less dangerous than farm machinery. They require less expertise, but reward expert handling. Children of both sexes get involved in farm activities at a very early age and it is often stock activities that lend themselves to involving little helpers. Then, as they are getting older and more capable, the boy is more likely to get called away to the machinery side, the girl remains in charge of the stock-related chores or drifts away from the farm, altogether unchallenged. Only very determined girls, backed by open-minded fathers, stand a chance in continuing to be involved and get onto machines on a more permanent basis. As machinery is getting more complex, this happens at a much later stage for all children compared to those of the previous generation.

Decision-making on the farm is not clear cut, but a 'fuzzy' process, involving more or less actively all members of the family plus the accountant, banker, tradesmen and adviser. The goal is not purely to maximise profits, but to strike a balance between the survival and prosperity of farm and family.

The father-owner-operator is responsible to the outside world, but he lives in a tightly knit community, who can sanction him. The mother might choose or has to work off the farm. Her earnings in some cases are essential to the farm household. This trend is expected to rise. The next generation of farm wives is very likely to be better qualified and have less traditional ideas about their roles on or off the farm. However, the responsibility for the household as such remains 'hers'. There are signs that the involvement in the children's upbringing will be more shared than for the older generation of parents. The chapter closes with a case study of an arable farm owned and operated by a married young woman.

Chapter 4 lays out how the habitus of each individual is influenced by education and social lives of parents and children. The forum where the individual can or cannot express his/her habitus, expertise and wishes and expectations is in the first instance the home farm. Farm and family tasks are there to be done, decided upon and evaluated. Chapter 5 describes how this is handled on the medium farms in my sample, with the addition of examples from the literature and neighbours.

Both chapters explain under what conditions children grow up on these farms, who can, wants to or is expected to do what. The key word seems to be ‘interest’. Who can, does, but this does not show the type of interest the parents and others around them accept as ‘interest in farming’.

Gender plays an important role in this context, as it is expected of the males to do certain tasks whereas the female family members have to ask to get given the same opportunities. This gendered environment has its ultimate outcome in the handing over of the estate from one generation to the next. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

The Process of Succession, Inheritance and Retirement

When you are old

There is only death in front of you.

When you are young

There is your life in front of you.

The question arises – which of the two is more alarming?

(Schopenhauer, 1788–1840; author's translation).

For any firm, and in particular any family firm, succession is a crucial part of the overall management strategy.

It surfaces in all aspects of planning. A family business concern has to take into account the natural generation gap of its members. The family's cycle and the firm's demands have to be coordinated (see also Gasson and Errington, 1993). Compromises become inevitable and need to be accounted for.

Succession is as complex as it is important for the future of all family members. It touches on their lifestyle, occupation, attitudes and values, all of which are supported by a characteristic agrarian ideology (Crockett and Gray, 1997). In addition, anything to do with agriculture is to do with natural processes and as such has a predetermined time frame. Farms can adapt but it all takes time. So when Fasterding (1996) found that, despite the changes in the CAP of 1992, there was no obvious change in the West German family's inheritance behaviour, this did not come as a surprise.

How farming families go about handing on their 'bit of dirt' so as to keep the family in farming, is the topic of this chapter. Like the rest of the thesis, the approach involves the whole family in as far as possible. However, special emphasis is given to the daughters' situation. The general questions asked are: who will be able and willing to continue the family's tradition in farming? Who will be the best judge of that and on what grounds? Who needs and gets help in other forms such as capital, land or emotional support? Who gets what and when and then uses it within the farm or takes it out? Is it important to keep the farm in the family, the family in farming, taking into account the perceived future for farming at the time?

A literature review on the topic of succession looked at succession in different countries under 1.2. The legal background and the experiences of several law firms specialising in farming clients, are the subject of the first section. Will making and the laws regulating inheritance tax are an integral part of the hand-over between generations. Gender (6.2) permeates the timing and mode by which the future successor is announced (6.3). Both clearly affect who is to be the successor and what happens to the non-successors. How are the other siblings treated and what are their feelings on the matter? This includes statements by the respondents as to what they would consider as an acceptable share in a fictitious situation (vignette) (6.4). Retirement as a distinct step or a gradual never-ending process is described in 6.5. How families try to deal with the ever-present threat of conflict and thus the threat to the future of the family business is addressed under 6.6 in general and with the case study sequences of three of the families in particular (6.7). A look at the practical implications and the overall picture conclude the chapter.

At the time of the interviews, farming was in the middle of a crisis and had been for some farms for at least two years. However, the general feelings were that it all just had to be sat through and better times had to be around the corner somehow. At the time of writing, the economic situation had not improved. If anything it was worse, mainly caused by the weak Euro in relation to the Pound Sterling (the pound is actually weak against the US dollar). The outbreak of Foot and Mouth had further unsettled farmers and other rural dwellers. The careful optimism in the community at the beginning of the project started to be replaced with outright pessimism. Still, there has been no pronounced increase in farm sales in the area of research.

6.1 Solicitors' experiences with farming clients' estates

6.1.1 The legal background

The law of primogeniture was amended for Scotland in 1964 to allow all children to become heirs to an estate. This change still does not imply partible inheritance as such, which other countries have subscribed to, following Napoleonic law. The estate can remain intact should the testator intend to keep it as such, but s/he can now leave it to any of the children, not just the first-born son.

In Scotland today, the general inheritance practice is for the eldest son to have first choice, failing which it will be the next willing and able son. Only if there are no sons as potential successors, will the daughters get a chance. The law gives the testator full authority to dispose of his or her assets the way s/he sees fit. The spouse is not automatically entitled

to the house, but to a third of the moveables⁵⁶, if there are children. The children get another third and one third is again left at the testators's discretion together with any property, e.g. the farm and house. That is not open to challenge by spouse or the children. The law is so clear in this respect that if there is a will, it is not usually contested. Only if there is no will or the will is not clear, for instance regarding the boundaries, is there room for dispute. However in most cases, if not all, says one solicitor acting as an agricultural arbiter, this settlement is reached out of court.

If there is no will, the spouse is entitled to certain Prior Rights in respect of the house, furniture and money⁵⁷. The children inherit the rest, divided equally. Should the surviving spouse want to favour one child, s/he can add that share to the child's share and so possibly create a viable unit. If then s/he makes a will all her/his share can be left to that child and the unit may be in a good position to carry on farming.

If a law is changed or amended, its effects do not disappear overnight from people's conscience. Their behaviour patterns will take some considerable time to adjust. Haugen (1994) describes in her Norwegian studies of inheritance practices, how there was rarely any change in the proportion of daughters taking over the farm after the law had been amended in 1974 to actually give them the legal background to do so. These Norwegian young women still followed the ethic of care in their rationality of responsibility, whereas the young men used an ethic of right and a technical economical rationality. Put another way, the boys choose to look after their own interests, the girls after the interests of others. Haugen gives examples of women not taking the farm because the younger brother showed interest and the parents preferred him or in another case moving to the husband's farm despite her own home farm being better suited (*ibid.*). Overall this results in only 5–10 % of Norwegian farm operators being female (Haugen, 1990)

In Scotland, problems can arise if the farm and the land is owned by a partnership. Then the asset of the farm could be treated as moveable asset and all heirs can claim a legitimate part of the partnership assets, which in some cases could destroy the business.

For tenants the issues are slightly different. None of the farms in this research was tenanted, but because tenant farmers are members of the farming community their practices

⁵⁶ 'Moveables' are chattels, cash and machinery, but also in the case of a partnership the land, if it forms part of the partnership's capital.

⁵⁷ These Prior Rights have been amended in 1999 (SI 1999/445). Therefore the spouse is entitled to the house in which the spouse was ordinarily resident at date of the deceased's death (or cash equivalent) up to a value of £130,000 (less mortgages). If the house is worth more than that, which was the case in most of the families here, then the spouse gets cash equivalent; furniture up to £ 20,000 and cash up to £35,000 if there are children and £58,000 if there are none.

are taken into account by their peers. In a secure tenancy it is important for the tenant to nominate a successor in the will. While the tenant farmer is alive, all is well. However, on the death of the tenant, theoretically the landlord in a full tenancy has to approve of the proposed successor, but the lawyer dealing with two of the biggest Scottish estates pointed out, that despite what the tenants thought themselves, it would be very difficult for a landlord not to accept an offspring as the new tenant unless he or she proved severely unsuitable, which would be very difficult to prove in court, if the farm was properly run. He knew of no female successors of a full tenancy⁵⁸. Another lawyer knew of one daughter in the south of England and a spouse in the east of Scotland, who became successors to full agricultural tenancies. The respondents themselves seem to have rather hazy perceptions of a landlord's actual powers in that regard. On two occasions the succession of a son in a tenancy in preference to a daughter was explained with reference to the possibility of a landlord possibly being hesitant in accepting a female successor. Failing a pension scheme, the farm remains the parents' main source of income so they would be concerned that a landlord might not approve of a female successor. As a result tenants usually retire later or not at all.

6.1.2 Summary of solicitors' replies

A survey was conducted to establish the experiences of law firms dealing with farming clients. Eighteen practices in the east of Scotland were asked to comment on their clients' practices regarding wills, the claiming of legal right and any observations they might have made since the law was amended in 1964. An overview of the 17 replies received is given below.

The overall consensus seemed to be that there is no imminent change to the picture of succession on (medium-sized) Scottish farms. The law is so clear on the question of 'will executions', that there are no wills contested. Only in the case of intestacy is there the possibility of a dispute, which in most cases is still settled out of court.

All firms as well as advisers and accountants, encourage their clients to make a will as soon as they get married, but quite often it does not happen until later in life. Some farmers, like other clients, are reluctant to think down these lines and some need up to eight reminders. Most have made a will, which they are advised to review approximately every five years. In general, the whole family is aware of the outline of the will.

⁵⁸ In another instance, the researcher interviewed a twice-divorced mother of four girls, who has managed to secure the tenancy on a very small holding. She described the doubts she encountered about her abilities to farm, but managed to overcome, when the old factor started to question her on her abilities as a stock-person. She reckons now that had she been faced with the present younger factor, she would not have stood a chance, because he 'does not know the work, but only his office'.

A son, though not necessarily the eldest one, is still the favoured heir of the family farm, with the other children, be they male or female, accepting their allocated share out of the remaining estate generally without any open resentment. This, the solicitors believe, is mainly due to upbringing on the farm, which establishes within the family fairly early on who is the successor and makes clear to the others, that they have little scope in challenging that. If there is a trend, it is that the parents are now more concerned about possible ill feelings amongst the children after the parents' death. However, they still do not necessarily demonstrate this concern with their cheque book, as several lawyers pointed out. Former generations do not seem to have had these qualms. Anderson and Rosenblatt (1985) also found in Minnesota that it was important to the parents that all members of the family considered the future set-up 'fair'. Only if things had not been discussed did they come across conflict later.

According to the lawyers, daughters are generally not considered potential successors. To them they do not show any signs of being at all interested in becoming farmers in their own right. None of the legal advisers can recall a family where the daughters show any active involvement in the working of the farm as such, and none where the daughters demand an increased share in the farm or even parity with their brothers. It is unlikely that girls know exactly what would come their way on the parents' death. The successors on the other hand know the farm would be theirs, their siblings mostly only have a 'rough' idea what will be left to them.

The trend that children leaving agriculture take an increasing share of farming capital with them, is still insignificant according to the lawyers⁵⁹. It may, they think, easily be offset by city money coming into agriculture from people who are interested to live in the country and buy agricultural property such as houses and cottages or convert steadings.

Individually, the lawyers have very clear perceptions of their clients' attitudes and value judgments. They acknowledged the efforts of the parents to give all their children something, but at the same time the farm has to remain viable. In general, they find that the resulting disparities are simply accepted by both generations.

Some lawyers personally consider this an unfair treatment, especially of the daughters. Their explanation is that farming families do not consider the farm as an asset, but as 'employer' (see 1.3). Therefore any person who does not work on the farm, such as a

⁵⁹ There was no evidence sought from accountants on this matter.

daughter, has no claim to it, which means they have to be grateful for whatever they are given, and usually are.

In one problem case quoted, the two sons got a farm each, the daughter got nothing and when she refused to sign the discharge she was considered to be 'awkward'. In another case the son got the farm and the daughter got a flat worth a quarter of the farm's value. She never complained.

However, should the succeeding brother decide to sell parts of the farm or the entire farm at some point in time for whatever reason, the sisters/parting brothers cannot expect to get a share of the proceeds.

The whole matter is complicated further by the inheritance tax laws. Up to date agricultural property is exempt from inheritance tax in order to retain the farm's viability under the heirs. This has far reaching consequences. There is ample criticism of this regime and its relief, but so far no changes have been made. In the worsening economic climate it is unlikely that changes will be made in the near future either. It is not the remit of this research to investigate the ins and outs of this tax relief, but suffice to say that without it there would be few farming families to pass their farm on and see the successor in a financial position to keep farming (see 2). The return on overall capital is so low in agriculture that there is not enough money generated to pay if inheritance tax was charged on transfer. The families would all have to sell up and thus valuable local expertise would be lost to the industry as a whole and this farming community in particular. An unpublished advice pamphlet which I received on request from our accountant says,

Under the present regime, there remains little incentive for a farmer to take any action to pass on the farm (during his/her lifetime) from a tax point of view (as there would be tax to pay if it was gifted or sold to the heir, author's comment). In many cases, on death there will be a 100% relief from inheritance tax and an uplift to market value for capital gains tax purposes (otherwise there would be a huge amount of capital gains tax to be paid, should the heir decide to sell after a certain stipulated time). Succession on death can therefore be tax efficient, so long as properly planned.

And this planning is very complex. As an example, if the parents gift all but the big house and a smallish piece of land to the heir, on their death the heirs might be liable to have to pay inheritance tax on the parents' big house and the land, because its agricultural status could be questionable.

6.2 Gender and succession

Summarising the outcome of the 4th Women's World Conference, the TAZ Newspaper printed the following comment (Author's translation), 'Despite more and more laws giving women equal rights, the United Nations complain that rights and realities are far removed from each other, particularly when it comes to property and inheritance' (TAZ, 8, 1995) as quoted in Schmitt (1997). This also applies in Britain.

Mulholland (1996) describes how 70 wealthy UK families handle gender, power and property. The wealth of 21 of these is land, meaning estate-based. Her findings make dire reading for anyone subscribing to the principle of equality between the sexes. The wives' contribution in monetary or intellectual property terms were hidden behind the image of their husbands as self-made entrepreneurs. One of her interviewees describes their business as 'his dream and my money'. These wives were frequently the main force in the start up phase of the business only later to find they were being 'refocused' and sent back to the 'home'. There they fulfill what they perceive to be conventional expectations. If they try to make a come-back, they are considered an embarrassment to their husbands, especially if they prove to have different ideas to him. This applies to their lack of input in decisions about inheritance as well. 'To protest would mean they are breaking the ranks. These women are owners in name only' (1996, p. 96).

I have made reference to this study because it is one of the few where farmers, even the ones in Mulholland's study, work on a much larger estate scale than the ones in this project, are directly compared to non-farming businesses. I believe that is important. Farm families are not the actors in an idyllic rural scene of the past as might be imagined, but real people who have to make a living for themselves and their families in a very real business world. This world is gendered overall and not just on farms.

Crockett and Gray (1997) found an outright reluctance in Australia to see the daughters inherit. Gasson (1992) also states a low priority for UK daughters inheriting farms. Overbeek *et al.* (1998) found that very few European women had inherited farms.

So it is not surprising that some fathers seem to look at their daughters as potential 'non-farmers'. They watch their sons carefully for signs of farming interests all the time trying "...not to push too hard and see what he is interested in," says Mr. Innes. His daughter, the eldest of three will have to make her interest visible. Lauren Innes says: "...unless she can persuade dad." No need for the son to persuade.

Mr. Innes says, that 'yes' his daughter would not be sent away, but it would be an awful lot easier if she went and worked elsewhere or married well. Does that mean he foresees conflict and wants to avoid it? She herself is uncertain whether her dad will let her come back and hopes "a girl can convince her dad that she can do the job". No such uncertainty for her younger brother. His dad thinks he is a mix of the two older girls. One likes to be indoors, the other outdoors. The father does not mention any lack of interest or commitment on the part of the youngest child. It is unlikely that the farm-interested girl would have the same certainty as the boy has as he sits down at the computer instead of helping outside and showing his interest and commitment in the more usual way. However, in a farm business someone with a flair for computing could be a definite asset.

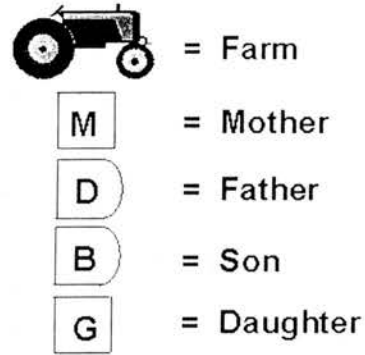
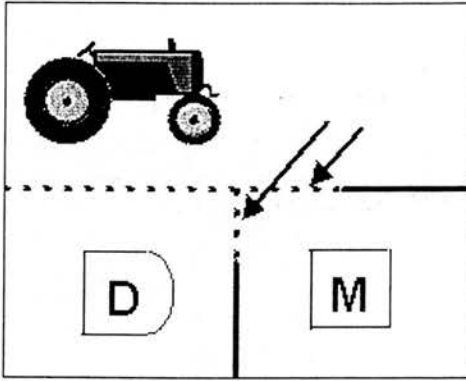
In a detailed qualitative study on German dairy farms, Vonderach (1993) shows that even in cases where the daughter does or intends to manage the farm, the parents still hope she will find a 'suitable' partner. Indirectly, this suggests that the parents do not support their daughters' aspirations in her profession fully, but hope for a more conventional farm set up with a man heading the business. The Innes's do not say that, but maybe think it.

Gender has a big influence on a person's habitus. This is particularly obvious in a farming context. For a farming couple the following graph can be drawn up (Figure 6a).

The membrane between the 'D' (Father) and the 'M' (Mother) can be either totally permeable, and symbolising a very thorough or only partial exchange between the two people. The same applies to the membrane between farm and the couple, showing their respective involvement in happenings on the farm.

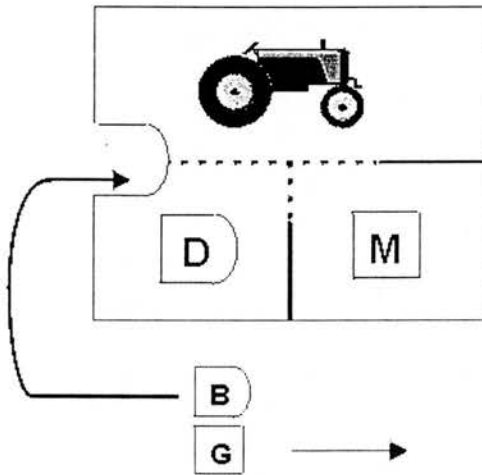
Figure 6b shows what happens when a child is born. From that moment the father involves the infant in any plans about the future and that includes succession to the farm. The figure symbolises how he can only make a 'masculine' type of space on the farm because he is a man himself. Should the child be a boy, he will fit into this space without problems and without having to spend a lot of energy overcoming gendered obstacles. If it is a girl things are different. It is easier for her to go out into the world following the arrow. This will cost her much less energy just to go with the flow. Should she decide to go against it, she might have to overtake or bypass a brother, convincing her mother and especially her father, that she really can farm.

(a) Before children



Arrows are pointing at the 'membrane', the dividing line between farm and couple. Each family will have their own variation of how much communication, physical or verbal, goes on between them and how that changes constantly.

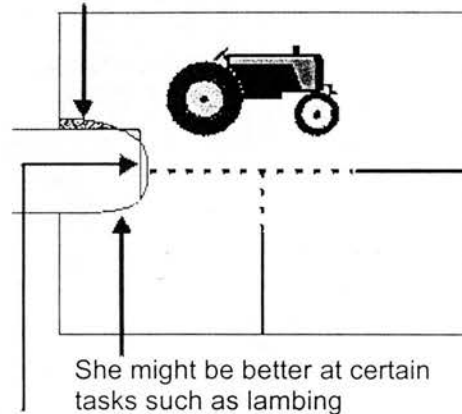
(b) Birth of a child



Straightforward path for boy as father makes room. For a girl it is 'easier' to move away from the farm than to circumvent brother and show father that she 'fits' (see 6(c)).

(c) How does a daughter 'fit'?

She might have problems with: heavy lifting, giving orders to traditional (male) employees, representing the farm in public, fulfilling the father's expectations of a father-son team.



Some of a father's expectations remain unfulfilled regardless of the heir's sex.

Figure 6 (a-c): Gender and succession.

This is assuming the mother has little direct influence on the way the farm is run, that she has not much scope to actively make space for a child taking over later. Should the mother be responsible for a separate enterprise, something like a pedigree herd as in the case of Mrs. Innes, she could easily pass that enterprise on to a certain son or daughter. However, a herd or most other farm enterprises need land. Does Mrs. Innes own part of the land as well to pass on with the herd? Would she want to see her land split off from the rest of the farm? Would that make the business less viable for the appointed heir? The 'membrane' of

Figure 6 a–c is therefore left partly permeable and the provision for an heir, the ‘inward bulge’, is on the father’s side.

In Figure 6c it is demonstrated how a girl would fill the role a father can set aside for her. It is a man’s role and she is a woman. Some aspects of it she will never be able to fill like a man (dotted area), e.g. heavy lifting, standing up to male prejudices of tradesmen or other men in the industry. Others she will fill better than a man (grey area). It is now widely accepted that women are just as capable, some say even better, at looking after young stock than their male counterparts. Anecdotal evidence points at accounts being done more diligently, if the wife does them. Some of the father’s expectations will remain unfulfilled by son or daughter (striped area).

However, things like heavy lifting can be overcome by appropriate measures, e.g. using different pack sizes or forklifts. Cockburn (1985) looked at the gender aspect of technology in general and points out that the actual units of work are political in their design. This means that items such as hay bales or bags of cement, feedstuffs or potatoes are traditionally tailored to what a ‘normal man’ can carry. With the increase in overall mechanisation such as the use of forklifts, this is not a real issue any longer, but a question of adapting the work processes.

On the other front, tradesmen will have to adapt or go elsewhere. But the daughter will need the farmer’s (which usually means dad’s) backing, his introduction, his willingness to make these changes within the process of handing over to her. A son might not need as many adjustments. It would be easier.

The parents will have to decide whether they are prepared to accept this trade-off. In some cases they will not have the option. It is the daughter or nobody (Petrie).

Parents will be the last to close doors to their children, as was obvious from replies to the vignette. Siblings will be less compromising. Boys are expected to want to be farmers. They have a distinct head start whether intentionally or not. Girls have to overcome three main obstacles. Firstly, they constantly have to demonstrate their interest in a way which finds approval by the rest of the family. Secondly, the business has to be seen to be capable of making room for them, while they may still be considered a risky successor compared to any brothers. Such succession could be problematic in most medium owner-occupied farms, but seems next to impossible on tenanted holdings. In the latter case where a choice has to be made it will be in favour of the son or sons, even if their interest comes later or they are less adept than the daughter (Mrs. Ballantyne, Jack Weston, Nora Hunter). Thirdly, handing

the farm over to a daughter could be seen as diminishing the father's achievement. "If a woman can do it, it can't be all that difficult, that relevant," might be an unspoken concern. Cockburn (1987) found that as soon as girls entered a 'male' training course that that course lost status.

Farmers do have to plan ahead. Even though their plans will have to be constantly amended due to changing circumstances (e.g. prices, weather, breakdowns, diseases), they still plan. Maybe they have hopes and dreams for the future, they plan for the day and act by the hour. This becomes obvious in stockbreeding but also applies to arable farmers. Passionate cattle breeders have their breeding schemes planned for years in advance. They are used to adjusting their hopes and plans depending on whether they get bull or heifer calves from their prize cow and selected bull. A heifer will be 'kept' as a possible star of the herd, the bull could make the stud name famous by his earnings. Why should they hope and plan differently when presented with a baby boy or girl? A boy will be a farmer and keep the farm and the retiring parents in the style they are accustomed to, while the girl will get married or nowadays have her own career. If there is no successor, the parents' future is more uncertain. They feel less secure that they can choose how they want to retire. A daughter is usually 'away' and hopefully no drain on the farm – she is not the obvious choice. In line with the rest of the population, farmers rarely have more than two children. "We have a boy and a girl and we stopped at that," says Mr. Weston, and Mr. Thompson voices similar thoughts. Some grandfathers and fathers voice their disappointment openly if there are no sons (Mrs. Ballantyne). The mothers, such as Mrs. Philips, definitely sense it. Mr. Ballantyne greets me after his wife introduces us. "Hello. How do you do. My three daughters and no one will succeed me." He does not even say: none of them, but 'no one' as if he is thinking of an outsider and does not even consider any of his daughters. Later he concedes that it takes nothing to be an arable farmer nowadays and Sandra can still do it if she wanted to.

The YF secretary,

Whether it is because the girls aren't expected to go into farming, you know, if they want to...not that they aren't expected to but more often they tend to be doing something else. If they want to, then it is usually like 'yeah. Great.' But it is more of a surprise.

Does that mean creating this surprise is something to be embarrassed about? Some people find causing others to feel surprised a very uncomfortable position to be in. Jenny Petrie finds it 'incredible' that her father says he will let her take on the farm. "Well, I suppose it is me or nobody else," she says. From the parents' point of view, why encourage something

that can't be afforded later? Why encourage Mary considering the farm is rarely big enough for Jenny? And they cannot afford to jeopardise their retirement finances. One if possible male heir is still considered the safest option.

6.3 Who are the successors and how are they established?

Ideally George would have liked to come here. Granddad's wish was that he'd be here. He used to go round with him in his Land Rover when he was very young. He died when George was five. Walter is going to go to P., a newly tenanted farm. It has to be a partnership for a while, but hopefully they will split later on. Maybe we will have to sell a bit down here...to buy the other place later on.

The Elrick's have three children (boy, girl, boy) and this is the answer Mr. Elrick gave when asked about the future of the family. The daughter is not mentioned. When asked about her, 'yes' she did help, in fact she still does when she is at home from her tertiary education, but she was 'never really that interested'.

The case of the Elrick family illustrates most of the spectrum of succession issues:

- how early the potential successor is named within the family
- the exclusion of the daughters from the ranks of potential successors
- the importance of demonstrating 'interest'
- the influence of the older generation and their expectations
- the fear of siblings falling out if they have to work together

Grandpa Elrick's influence manifested itself not just as a wish, but as a bequest. On his 18th birthday, Grandma Elrick gave George her share in the farm, which made him a partner. Presumably this is how her husband had left it in his will. Mr. Elrick has just amended his will to put the younger brother on an even footing with George. Joanna got some insurance money, but she has no share in the farm. She has put some money of her own towards the purchase of the lease of P., which is designated to set one of her brothers up on his own at a later stage. Assuming this is the insurance money she got on her 18th birthday, she is actively and willingly supporting the uneven split. Even if that money is a loan, it still does not give her an asset of her own. Her brothers are getting a farm each and she only money (see below about valuations in farming). Her older brother explains this with "it has always been like that", the parents with a lack of interest from their daughter. But she still helped at the time of the interview. During her early years she was outside just as much as her brothers. 'Being outside' on a (stock) farm in most cases means also

'helping' in some sort of capacity be it working gates, pushing sheep up in the pens, feeding chickens, taking lunches out...the girl would have done all that just as much as the boys, but she would have never heard anybody saying to her, that one day this will be hers, like her older brother did. And when her younger brother came along, he would try to copy his older brother and not his sister. Soon Walter replaced Joanna in outside tasks and she was left to help her mother with the chicken and the 'sheep away from home'. So she still helped, but on 'less important tasks'.

Based on Arnett's (1995) concept of broad and narrow socialisation, which builds on the assumption that different societies set different limits, Silvasti (1999) confirms that in her native Finland there were different socialisation limits set for (non-)successor children. This was achieved through a combination of rules and expectations. The parting children receives a gift or a flat, the successor the farm. The same can be said of the respondents here.

The rep. comments on the grooming of the successor, that it happens through a selective allocation of jobs. In the extreme it would be something like "you are a girl, you can't drive the combine". Usually things are more subtle. Joanna Elrick took the chance to stay inside "where it was warm" and leave the hard work to the boys. "She never liked the cattle anyway...", say her brothers. Her mother says "she wasn't determined". Both boys have always been very 'interested'. The interest manifests itself in various ways and the parents look out for signs of it, a factor which Keating and Little (1991) also found with New Zealand farm families.

"He has always been interested, she never was interested" were standard comments through all the interviews. Asked if the girl would have a chance to farm if there was a boy Mrs. Elrick spoke for many respondents of both generations: "I think it would depend how interested each one was. Joanna was never really determined." Presumably that means she has to be determined enough to push past her brothers, who after all have all the backing from the older generations?

On the other hand the pressure on the boys is still there. Parents say they do not want to push their sons (Weston, Innes).

Mr. Innes: "I would rather him just...you know not sort of push him too hard, just see what he wants to do and..."

U: "Would you be disappointed if he didn't come back?"

Mr. Innes: "Ach. I would be, but the way things are going just now"

This I took as meaning the father could understand, if he didn't come back to farm.

The younger generation appreciates the problem. Both YF secretaries confirm that the children do not get pushed into farming, but...the 'but' is there: the strong expectation!

While it is not really acceptable to liken a baby boy to a bull calf, hopes are nevertheless raised with the birth of both. The children sense this. The sons say, "dad would be disappointed if none of us would take up farming" (William Urquhart). "Dad would prefer (brother) to do the farm" (Lauren Innes). Such hopes are still clearly remembered by the older generation. "It would have broken dad's heart if I hadn't become a farmer, although he never said. But I did. This is all I ever wanted to do" (Mr. Stone). Symes (1990) also found that farming as such is what is important to the parting generation and not necessarily the actual farm itself. Three of the families have shifted farms within the last 15 years. Urquhart and Weston split up from the brothers, as I understand amicably, and Hunter had their lease terminated and went and bought their own farm. This is not in line with anecdotal evidence from Germany, where most family members try to keep the farm somehow, maybe rent it out, but keep it in the family.

Mrs. Philips, not a farmer's daughter herself and not involved in the farm, pities the sons for being subjected to such pressures (see also Crockett and Gray, 1997).

Mrs. Philips: "Sons are automatically groomed and expected, yes very much so, to follow their fathers into farming. (Husband) he never wanted to do anything else...but his brother, he wanted to join the Navy."

U: "He wasn't allowed to?"

Mrs. Philips: "No! I think it is very, very difficult... (husband) often says he might have been a vet if he hadn't been a farmer, but I think it (joining the farm) is expected of boys."

Cases of sons being forced morally or financially to come home and farm and where things have subsequently gone wrong were quoted on several occasions as warning examples.

The adviser thinks that nowadays the selection is more of a 'self-select' process rather than a 'push' situation. Gender does not seem so much of a problem any more. According to him, it is the fathers who see more than the mothers, that today women could do it just as well, because farming has changed, it is more mechanised, more things can be outsourced. The adviser said, "The one who likes gets and the other one...well I think they get the feeling or they get the...you know there is the sort of...mutuality that comes into it and...one of them goes." It is expected of them not to be a burden on the farm, which means on the succeeding child. Times are difficult enough.

6.3.1 'Farming is for life not just for Christmas'. Interest in farming

Being expected to show interest and actually showing it are closely related. Other disciplines such as Education show that pupils expected to be bad at maths end up performing worse. Several respondents clearly stated that boys show more interest in farming than girls because they are expected to and vice versa. Farming is very hard work and it can be very demanding, cold and frustrating, but it is also very rewarding. None of the respondents actively involved in farming wanted anything else other than to farm. They were quick to point out, that you have to like it to last, to be any good at it.

Growing up in a farming environment has a profound effect on the life preferences of all children, the parting ones as well as the successors. As Kreil (1995) found amongst German parting siblings, the wish to be on a farm is still there. It is so strong that they are looking for alternatives compatible with their 'townie' lifestyle such as gardening, outdoor sports or pets.

The interest to farm must be strong to succeed in it. All agree in that. You must want to do it. The commitment must be total. Nora Hunter and Gina Innes both shun that. Sandra Ballantyne, "they have got to really want to do it, because it is for the rest of your life if you are a farmer. You can't just, I mean, up sticks and leave, but...you can't do that. But you know farming is a burden for life not just for Christmas." She did not just use 'is for life', but put it stronger and added 'burden' to the slogan.

Mrs. Innes thinks that this interest comes with the genes. Her one daughter has this farming interest, the other one does not. This alludes to the debate about behaviour being determined by genes or by environmental factors, but assuming one child is very competent and keen, why should the next one 'bother'? The same happened between the two Urquhart boys. The older one is the farmer the younger one turned to sport and was rarely ever seen in the farmyard. He regrets that he had so little involvement and now feels rather incompetent.

The 'interest' as a factor demonstrating who is a potential successor, is not a new phenomenon. It was already acknowledged in the parents' generation. Even then some daughters showed keen interest but they had virtually no chance to farm in their own right. If they were lucky they married farmers and could get as involved as their husbands would let them (sisters of Mr. Weston, Mrs. Weston, Mrs. Elrick). Some girls were actively dissuaded from studying agriculture (Mrs. Weston's sister). "There is no future in it for a girl," was the parents' argument. However, any interest needs to be given a platform whereupon to manifest itself. Mrs. Elrick remembers how her father would never really

discuss things with his girls but only with the boys. She could not recall her mother's input in these discussions.

6.3.2 Who judges 'genuine' interest?

The question remains, who judges what is a genuine interest? How should 'proper' interest manifest itself?

The parents are constantly looking for 'real interest' a 'love for farming' a 'person willing and capable to do hard work'. They have to make judgements. But how even handed can they be? What do they consider demonstrates 'real interest'? Who goes out with dad (or mum) after lunch on a rainy day to check the sheep and open the gates? Who wants to sit with him in the combine all day long? Who wants to computerise the book keeping and field records? Most agree that "...girls can be just as interested as boys and also as capable, but it is not made as easy for them to demonstrate this interest," said Nora Hunter. Her mother added, "I think perhaps that girls have to show more interest."

How can children of both sexes show their interest? 'Pushing the brother off the tractor' is not an option even in a metaphorical sense. Fighting, especially in peak times, is very counterproductive and as such not appreciated. There are enough problems without having to deal with fighting children. Things need to be done, reliably and quickly. That requires practice and knowing your place in the team. There is no time for constant quarrels. Nevertheless, several parents voiced their personal surprise at the ways that the children did not as a rule fight amongst each other (see 6.6).

Cindy Thompson: "...a lot of my friends are farmers' daughters and we have got other careers so we don't have the time to show interest." Her mother asked how it came about that her daughter enjoyed her work on the farm, but she never really kept that interest up at all. "...I don't think she was encouraged that much to be honest."

Lauren Innes, who wants to farm, "my dad would probably prefer my brother to have you know the farm, 'cos he is more interested. Like he likes tractors and stuff, but I don't think like dad would say like I couldn't have the farm just because I was a girl sort of thing, like that but I don't know (long pause)." She herself judges interest in something her dad is interested in as well as having more weight than her own manifestation of interest or the actual hours she has worked on the farm. What is considered an 'important' task and what is not is crucial in the division of labour. As farming is a social coordination of tasks and subtasks, the kudos affects a person's standing. Who gets to do what job and who is barred from an activity by 'culture' or lack of expertise or time constraint due to other duties, it all

matters. Is milking more important than the children's homework? Is a tired homemaker more tired than a tired hay maker? Showing interest in a high profile job results in a higher standing.

Jenny Petrie, the future farmer, states that she has always got on so well with her dad, because they have the same interests. The way she describes her relationship with her father leads to the assumption, that she feels he trusts her more to carry on the farm because of their interests being the same, maybe because he sees her running the farm in a similar way to himself.

Any demonstration of a 'non interest' which seems to be equivalent to 'not working outside' gives room for the expectation that the person would be prepared to stand back and let the other child 'get on with it' (Mrs. Urquhart) (see also 5.2). On the other hand, if a child is interested, has a feeling for the farm, then it will accept that the farm has to go on, stay in the family even if that means personal sacrifices in order to ensure the farm's survival (Janet Hunter). Mrs. Petrie says about her older daughter, that she perhaps feels she has to do something else in order to leave the farm viable for her sister and therefore the family.

Demonstrating interest has to be met with approval as successor by the other siblings as well as the parents and maybe grandparents. Bert Thompson, when asked what would have happened if his sister had shown the same interest, says:

- U: "Assuming your sister showed interest, do you think you would have been on an equal footing?"
- BT: "Phew...probably. I mean if she actually shows as equal an interest as me there is no reason why she shouldn't have been."
- U: "Would you live with that?"
- BT: "I'd just have to (laughs)."
- U: "As long as she doesn't marry?"
- BT: 'As long as he doesn't want to shout (laughs).'

He would even accept a potential brother-in-law, providing there was no 'shouting'. I took this shouting as a cross between not insisting on 'a say' and being good to work with.

His sister says that he would probably have felt threatened, if she had wanted to be involved more. But she laughs and says he need not worry and that he is lucky that the farm is not an issue between them. He says she should be made the same, if she showed the same interest. Maybe he feels safe in assuming that his father's apprehensions about dealing with women in certain professions and his mother's acceptance of not going out to work because

of the father's wishes would make both judge any interest shown by his sister as not equal enough and therefore still allocate the farm to him, the son.

Keating and Little (1991) state that siblings seem to know before the parents, who is the successor. There was no evidence in this research to support this claim. If we ask people today what has happened 5, 10, 20 years ago, they will remember selectively. It seems easier to invent something in order to harmonize what we perceived as reality than than to forget (Berger and Luckman, 1976). This applies to siblings thinking back why a particular child was groomed as the successor as well. With hindsight it becomes clear who would have to become the next farmer. At the time of the event things will have looked different. The children will have tried to find niches they enjoyed and elaborate them as far as possible. If that meant helping outside, that was considered 'showing interest'. But what if there was only room for one (little) helper on the tractor, at the gate or in the shed? What should the other one do? Sit and wait for a turn? More likely a child will find something else to do or to play with. Does that mean showing less interest or not having had a chance, because the older, more skilled or just louder sibling, is already doing it? From personal observations as well as out of the interviews it seems that the parents will have tried to be fair to all their children, observing what their interests were and giving them as many chances as possible. It will have been difficult for them to remain totally objective, neutral to what each child did or what actual chance he/she had to become involved.

More than likely they will support the child that is most interested and looks likely to continue to work the farm in the same general way as the parents would have done themselves. The parents will decide what they feel will give themselves and their family the safest future in farming and that means usually to follow the tradition of a male successor.

Supporting a child interested in farming generally means to groom for succession.

6.3.3 Grooming a successor

How are the successors prepared for their task? The technical aspects are picked up 'as they go along' and are usually not the problem. The management side of a farm side is more difficult to learn. Only once they go to college or very occasionally at school do young farmers tend to come into contact with financial management for the first time. Hastings (1984) describes how any involvement in financial management will largely result from the son's own abilities and interest often as a result of college training. This seems late compared to their exposure to all other aspects of farming, but firstly, management is not 'obvious' work, secondly, the young ones are mostly not interested in it to begin with, and thirdly, 'paperwork' is not usually done at the proverbial kitchen table, but at night in a quiet

room after the youngsters have gone to bed. To go by personal experience as well as my data, it is not advisable to disturb a farmer or his wife doing paperwork other than ask whether they want a cup of coffee.

Hastings (1984) in the same paper, where he describes the 'ladder of succession', found it 'interesting' that the successors' confidence in management declined the more they found out about it. This is not surprising considering the complexity of farm management issues which are not obvious at first sight. It could be argued that this is to be expected given the reactions of bank managers transferred to the country and having to deal with rural clients for the first time, as some respondents as well as myself have witnessed.

If we take the case of 10 pregnant heifers as the base of a herd and ask where would we stand in 10 years time, we need to estimate factors such as conception rate (using Artificial Insemination or a bull), calving rate and mortality – all depending on the expertise of the person handling them on top of the animals' natural disposition, vet fees as well as the obvious feeding and housing requirements and the development of the cattle market (breeding stock and meat prices) or other farm products, which might use the resources for the cattle herd. We also need to consider alternative farm products. Then we need to take into account the taxation laws: because cattle are considered a capital item on the inventory and therefore have their official taxable values which are not necessarily the market prices, keeping cattle could mean that the cattle are not profitable as such, but can be if their mere presence on the books saves tax in the context of the whole farm business. Then the extra paperwork: each beast has to have its own passport stamped and updated. It is difficult to put a monetary value on this extra office work. The extra time it takes has to come from somewhere. The assessment of the overall resources needed to handle these ten heifers and their soon-to-be-born calves is essential.

This is just one example of **one** possible (new) enterprise a farmer's decision-making has to take into account, before attempting to put values on the existing and maybe competing enterprises and the life-span, repair and maintenance needs of machinery and buildings. All these factors within the overall equation of the farm business, have to be matched to the affordable and available labour capacities and to the needs of the family at various times. It is not surprising that bank managers and successors alike are overwhelmed the more they try to understand and the more they know about the farm business.

What is surprising is how little the fathers prepare their successors for this task. The worst scenario in any family business is a sudden death. Dunn (1995) shows that for a sample of over 6,000 Scottish family businesses, a succession will take place in half of them

within the next ten years. Sixty-nine per cent claim they had thought about plans for the future, but only 14% have actually sought professional advice. Even though these sample family businesses are by definition (>10 employees) not farms in the same league as the ones in this research, I still found similar behaviour amongst her respondents. I share Dunn's concern that the thoughts on succession have not been put into any formal succession planning. And planning for succession is crucial (see also Hutson, 1990). Dunn gives examples from the new Germany where out of the 156 family businesses which change hands daily, half will not survive the inheritance process because of 'non-existent or erroneous legal documentation' (1995, p. 25).

Theoretically, the best way to learn about management would certainly be the opportunity to run a separately-costed enterprise. There the successor could gain experiences with all aspects of management before s/he takes on the whole business. This rarely ever happens now. Sometimes the children were given their own animal(s) on stock farms as the foundations of their future herd and to keep them interested. This needs to be carefully monitored by the parents, as timing and degree of freedom are crucial to allow for a learning effect to take place. Too early and there are tears, too late and there is too much competition from other activities. There was no evidence of this practice amongst the respondents. In today's farm management there is no leeway for financial experiments or learning by doing. The margins and timeframes are so tight and getting tighter every day.

Only very profitable farms can afford to put aside enough resources to set successors up in a business of his/her own. This could be a separate farm which was bought or rented for that purpose or an enterprise within the business⁶⁰. All the while the parents keep farming as before. None of the businesses in this study could afford this. The Elricks come closest. They have rented another stock farm with the intention that one of their sons will take it on at a later date maybe even buy it. But they also know that the two successors, the daughter is not a partner, will have to work together within the business for some time later on. The danger of over-stretching the farm in order to set up sons on their own is a very real one (Crockett and Gray, 1997).

Hutson (1990) observed in Pembrokeshire, that the former habit of renting land for the extended family and setting up children with a unit of their own, even with help from the family, has been replaced by a 'generational incorporation'. Having children seemed to be

⁶⁰ For a detailed description of this type of starting up a successor see Errington (1998) where he compares four main patterns of succession. 'Stand-by holding' the successor is financially independent, but still shares some inputs, 'separate enterprise' when the home farm is big enough to set the successor up in a totally independent business such as a livestock unit, 'farmer's boy' the successor is used as a labourer with no management input, 'partnership' on an informal or formal basis.

an incentive for pushing the business further for these farmers. Any decisions in this regard were however, oriented towards long term rather than short term goals. If farmers did not pursue business expansion, they justified this because they did not have any children or only daughters (*ibid.*).

6.4 What is considered an acceptable share for the children who leave farming?

A vignette was used to approach the question of the acceptable share to be paid to parting children. Particularly in this context, I felt that my role as an insider would have been understood as ‘putting my nose into personal affairs’, if I had asked directly. In many instances the respondents referred back to their own situation in order to explain their point of view in more detail. The story: twins on a medium-size farm, one leaves for eight years the other continues working on the farm, then the leaver wants to come back. The parents are about to retire. What should they do? If one wanted money out, what would be a fair share? The story proved very ‘real’ indeed. Mr. Petrie actually had been away and worked overseas for eight years. When he came back he started at the bottom and worked his way up. “I hope I justified this position as time went on,” he says. But it is he who is in a very painful process of separating his business from his brother’s who did stay on during those eight years.

The fathers feel in control and had made wills, which they amend from time to time. Most state they will not let a situation arise which involves that much uncertainty as implied in the vignette for the child left at home on the farm. They either have or are in the process setting up the succession. All are being advised by accountants or by lawyers, as to what to do. The subject of inheritance tax seems paramount. The share for the parting daughter is only a matter of how much is left at the end without endangering the farm or the retirement (Weston, Stone, Hunter, Thompson).

The vignette was kept gender neutral unless the respondents asked for specifications. Most of the time the twins were considered ‘male’, which in itself is a clear indication that a farmer is always considered to be ‘male’. Only Mr. Innes considered the ‘vignette twin’ to be female, because he was talking about his own daughter at the time. For him the vignette could become a reality, so he took it as his own situation.

‘Fairness can be painful’: Several respondents felt they could not answer, could not think of anything, which was ‘fair’ to all children and also left the farm as a viable unit. Most do try. Mrs. Thompson tries for a long time. She weighs up the lessons she thinks she should have learnt from the bible, the story of the prodigal son returning and what she knows

about the farm's finances. Her husband's rather traditional attitude to women in farming and in general, as well as her commitment to both son and daughter causes her to show signs of distress. I find it difficult not to relent. Mrs. Thompson keeps trying so very hard. Her struggle symptomised the agonies involved in the balancing act between fairness to the children and farm survival, between loyalty to the farm and the individual child. Other mothers are not as explicit, but still committed to the farms' survival. The three mothers of 'only' daughters still respect their husbands' attachment to the farm. This is particularly surprising in Mrs. Philips's case. She is not from a farming background, works off-farm and has no involvement. None of her three daughters show a definite interest in agriculture. She does hope that they get 'their fair share' out of the business, but I assume, judging by her tone of voice, that this does not mean her husband's share divided by three, but whatever the partnership with the husband's brother can afford and still leave the nephew with a viable unit. It is therefore the nephew who will continue Mr. Philips' family tradition in farming, which is judged as more important than the individual daughter's share size.

The mothers all think an equal share would be unfair to the one who had stayed and worked on the farm, even if he (!) has drawn a wage during that time. The comments range from "you can't forget a daughter either" to "they need to get something" and "well, I have some money of my own and I would use that to help the daughter, so that the farm can continue".

The daughters as well show total understanding that the needs of the farm come before the rights of the individual. Even they place the 'right' the opportunity to work on the farm in line with the right to farm and own. If you have not worked on the farm all along, you are not entitled to a full vote in decisions or a full share of the business. Should you want to leave, the farm should not have to suffer let alone be sold. Sons and daughters think that which ever twin worked the farm **should** have a full share regardless of gender.

None of them know of any cases (neither could they imagine any) where the daughter has kept working and the returning son has been refused entry or his share. None of them think a returning daughter will even stand a chance, though theoretically they should be treated equal. However the 'equal' is immediately specified as 'if they work equally hard'. The judgement of what is equally hard work is difficult and usually highly subjective.

Mrs. Philips, herself not from a farm, feels her husband and his brother were hard done by, that their sister had got too much without ever having worked on the farm herself. This sister did not get an equal share and still 'grumbles' about it.

The only person who even considers selling the farm or the business to be able to afford equal shares is Lisa Philips, a medical student and one of three daughters. Mary Petrie on the other hand will rather not have any money out now in order to allow her sister to keep the farm in the family. (This implies that she still keeps a financial interest in the farm, which might have to be paid out in the future.) Gina Innes has similar feelings. These are two girls who always knew they did not want to farm. Both are prepared to step back and suffer financially in order to have the farm in the family as something to come back to. It is 'home' and therefore a refuge (1.3). Sandra Ballantyne as the middle sister of three has little hope for the farm once the parents are dead, but she still thinks that, as in the vignette, the person working there should have priority and a bigger share.

Mr. Ballantyne paid his sister and his brother at a time of his choice one third of the official value of the land (not the business). They then lent it back to him for seven years to give him time to pay them out fully, which he managed. He and his non-farming wife think that it is normal to treat all children the same, as he himself paid his brother and sister out on the value of the land, but not the business. After telling him about the lawyers' experiences with unequal payouts, I ask him whether he feels bitter about paying more to his siblings than other farmers have done? He says he is very pleased he has managed to do so and he finds it surprising, that there is not more equity amongst siblings. It seems that his father had decreed how the others would have to be paid out, so maybe he did not have a choice in the matter and just accepted it as 'given'. The succeeding son had been treated differently by his father from an early age to the extent that his present wife cannot help but feel sorry for her brother-in-law. He never really found his feet. This is not an exceptional case. For instance, Lauterbach and Shanahan (1998) looked at professional continuity in West German agriculture. Amongst their 437 interviewees, only 33% were taking over the farm. Of the remaining non-farming children, two thirds accepted work of a status considered lower than 'farmer', 20% equal and only 14% a higher status than their farming parents. No comparable study has been done for the UK but anecdotal evidence suggests that children from medium-size farms usually remain in the same status group, be it in agriculture or not.

'The time aspect': The problem of the 'acceptable' share for parting children is not so much the actual proportion of the estate, but the timing of the pay-out and last but not least, the tax implications. Time plays an important role in the overall process of succession. If the successors are given the reins too late, they could well have established themselves elsewhere and not want to come back any more (Lauterbach and Shanahan, 1998). Ideally

when the successor is ready to come home to work, his or her father should still have at least another ten years of active working life in him. So the 'child' works under him and gradually takes on more responsibilities. At the same time, the parting siblings have more or less finished their education and are looking for, or are in, careers of their own. They might need financial help to set up home or a business and they usually get it if the 'farm can afford it'. The adviser speaks of two female colleagues, both farmers' daughters, who live in very nice houses, more pricey than they can afford purely from their earnings. He presumes that they have received some help from their families. Both have brothers who farm the family farm. If we take a purchase of a flat at time X and compound its value until 10, 20 or 30 years later, when the farm actually is handed over legally, the straight comparison becomes difficult. It involves valuation of the farm and the flat at the time of the purchase of the flat and at the time of the transfer of the farm. What were the interest rates during that time, what the farm's earnings? The farm's earnings could easily be nil for several years. The value of farm and flat can both fluctuate. What point in time should the parents use to calculate the 'fair share'? What percentage of current assets adjusted for earlier transfers would be 'fair'? They do not know.

Generally, the successor keeps working under the understanding that all will be his/hers so there is no immediate need for money beyond drawing living expenses, even if s/he is made a partner (George Elrick). The other children leave to make their own ways. The parents/fathers are in their forties, still active on the farm and could go on for many years. The parents will die eventually. What claim will the non-succeeding children have then? All these years they gave no input and they probably could not have done so if they had wanted to. There was no room for them. Nowadays there is far less leeway to employ 'lost' family members on the farm as there was in the 60's and 70's.⁶¹ The non-successors are expected to seek work elsewhere in an off-farm career. The Hunter family exemplifies this. Mr. Hunter said he could not imagine his very farming-oriented daughters coming back later and challenging their 10 years younger brother's succession on the farm 'looking at the way they are intending at the moment'.

Asked why the girls would not come back to farm, who in both parents' eyes are also very capable and according to the father could farm on their own if they wanted to, the eldest daughter replies, "we just knew...we wouldn't want to do that all day." And the mother adds: "you are like me, you want to do other things as well." These statements of the women imply, that they do not want to accept the responsibilities involved in the running of

⁶¹ For a detailed discussion on the hidden unemployment see Errington (1988).

the farm as such. They want scope to follow their own interests, but are prepared to contribute, to help, but not to be tied down totally by the business. The boy is expected to come home 'if he wants to', but it is not considered very likely that he may not want to do so.

The father describes his daughters as "the girls were interested, but not...to be...own farmers." Confronted with the vignette, the father said: "the girls wouldn't do that (coming home after eight years) to their brother. They are not of that nature."

The acceptance of the farm as an employer, a livelihood, goes right through the family including the parting children. If they demand their equal share, they do not just split up an asset, but a livelihood. They have no legal or moral right to demand anything when they leave, because it would affect the parents' daily existence.

'Business aspects': The main problem lies in the difference between capital value and earnings. The adviser emphasises how a farm commits a large sum of capital to bring very little return and that this return comes with a lot of worries and hard work, but also status and lifestyle. The successor takes all of this over bit by bit until the parents die. No definite date can be set. Often the fathers do not see themselves ever fully retiring. Then there comes the will. Usually all know more or less what is in the will. The successor is unlikely to want to work on the farm for such little return if there was no secure future, no ownership in sight. If the parting siblings want to challenge the provisions in the will, they have to do this during the parents' lifetime. If they choose to do so, they are running the danger of being considered ungrateful for the help they have already received or being accused of endangering the family's future in farming and therefore risk being excluded from the family table as well as from the will. Their hands are bound, but it is never said; there are no threats only mutual understanding.

Another factor is the actual set up of the family business. If there are other relatives involved in the partnership such as uncles, these and their families would be in danger of losing their livelihood as well. So it is the responsibility of the bequeathing parent to make sure this does not happen, that the children do not give any problems or are not 'doing a good job on the farm'. The YF chair said she thought that most children from farms are so much 'au fait' with the financial situation of their family farm, that even if they were offered pay-outs by their parents at this very moment with farming in such a bad state, they would leave their share in the business until better times.

However this is during the parents' lifetime. Fights for shares can occur after the death of the parents and especially when siblings cannot work together. Mr. Petrie and his brother are at present splitting up their two-farm business, something which all Petries agree should have happened on the grandfather's death. Parents try to safeguard the business for these well-known eventualities, by setting their sons up in separate businesses. Both Mr. Urquhart and Mr. Elrick are concerned that the sons will have to work together for a certain time for purely financial reasons and hope they will not fall out. They need this cooperation to remain financially strong enough to be competitive.

The feelings amongst the younger generation were strongly in favour of the parents 'sorting things out beforehand'. Especially Jenny Petrie and her mother feel that the hardship they have to live through now during the rather unpleasant split from the uncle, could have been spared them if the grandfather had been clear about who should be getting what, instead of wanting to be "nice to everybody and not commit himself," remembers Mrs. Petrie. If brothers are left having to work together, this seems to bring more problems for the family business than demands from the parting siblings. The YF secretary speaks of a case where the eldest son left because he could not work together with his uncle. His younger brother could and therefore will take over from the father. Crockett and Gray (1997) are taking this issue further and state that the actual successor is not necessarily the best farmer, but the one who gets on best with his father. This should not preclude the daughters.

There are four farming brothers in the neighbourhood who fell out bitterly after the father's death. This resulted in a lot of property being sold to pay one brother out. One is now farming separately and the two remaining brothers are farming together, all on a dangerously small scale.

The legal status of a farming partner is a lot stronger than that of a parting daughter. She has no right to anything other than being left a share of the third of the moveables at her parents' death (see also 6.1.1). Anything else she might receive, such as from non-farm assets held by the parents, she will get out of the parents' good will. She cannot afford to be considered 'awkward'. Today the same applies to the parting sons. Haan (1994) confirms this.

The share handed to the parting children regardless of how and when, is still capital which was probably generated within the agricultural sector and which is in most cases leaving it, because it is very unlikely that any of the departing children will ever be able to farm in their own right unless they have substantial family help or make or marry into money. Evidence from the lawyers and from the respondents shows that the percentage of

the money paid to leaving daughters has been increasing . It used to be a nice wedding, a trousseau, a bit of cash, now it is a house or flat: still not an exact percentage, but 'more' than in the past. The parting sons on the other hand are not getting a farm, because the home farm cannot afford it in most instances. They get the same as the parting girls, depending on their circumstances. The impression was given by the lawyers that parents tend to be a bit more generous in setting up a parting son in his own business outside the farm than with the parting daughter. 'In the olden days it was a farm for each son and a farmer for each daughter' as one lawyer put it. Nowadays this is not the case any longer. Farmers marry more and more out of farming. Farms do not generate enough profit to allow for that type of expansion unless they have non-farming sources of income. After reviewing the literature on the subject of succession, Crow (1986) states that it is not a matter of attitude whether children come into farming but a matter of resources.

According to the chemical rep's personal observation it takes about five years for a family to sort out the childrens' shares.

Things get complicated when the farm is not just an 'employer' and a livelihood, but becomes an asset and/or an object of speculation. In the case of farm buildings or land being sold for development, as a quarry or landfill site, that part of the property is no longer part of the farm livelihood. Any proceeds are therefore no longer morally exempt from being split evenly amongst the heirs. If the proceeds from such a sale were used to reduce an overdraft, was this overdraft the result of bad farming of successor or testator, or of bad prices? The non-successors will have problems posing that question.

The grain merchant describes the case of two angry sisters who had not received much when the father died. Their brothers got a farm each and then sold land for a quarry. Mother and sisters thought they should have a share, but the brothers still maintained that they, the sisters, had never worked on the farm and therefore should not have any more payments than what they had received on the father's death. Asked whether the family was still speaking, the grain merchant says: "Oh yes, I think so."

What alternatives do these women have? They can put pressure on the already disappointed mother to withdraw any share she might still have in the farms. This would force the mother to take sides openly and split the family, maybe even make it difficult for her to stay in her marital home on the farm. Legally the sisters have no real case to make. Any complaints that they had wanted to work more on the farm, but never got the opportunity, are futile. They can only 'grin and bear it', which seems to be what they are doing. There is disappointment but no open conflict.

6.5 When and how will the parents retire?

The respondents in the project were in their mid forties to mid fifties. Thoughts of retirement are not very high on their agenda. Nevertheless they are thinking about it because, as Mr. Weston puts it, it is "...the most important decision we will have to take." Some have had good experiences with their own fathers handling it (Innes, Hunter), some did not (Petrie, Philips). The others come somewhere in between. One thing they all are sure of. They will retire gradually. None of the families imagined their father retiring fully let alone moving off the farm – maybe out of the farmhouse, but definitely not off the farm.

This can have its problems. Farm transfer⁶² was often delayed for too long for the good of the business, because the departing farmers felt insecure (Fennell, 1981). But succession is a very acute issue in all aspects of planning.

Mr. Innes speaks for many when he says:

I am hoping to have a good few years left. I would like, you know, maybe in another 10 years or so just to be able to take things a bit easier rather than, you know, busy times you would always...but when they are not so busy, it would be nice to go away for a few days or you know go to some (agriculture) show you weren't able to go before. Now when you are trying to go you always think: Oh, I should be doing this or that and you know it is always the same you have been away for a day or whatever, there is always something happened... .

Wives and children are aware of the fathers' and in some cases the mothers' inability to ever let go totally. Mr. Stone says he would quite like to lie on a warm beach during the Scottish winter, but yes of course he would be there to help during harvest. Mr. Elrick is apparently threatening to retire tomorrow when things go wrong, but nobody takes this seriously. This attitude to retirement is accepted maybe like something as inevitable as the weather (see also Potter and Lobley, 1992 and 1996).

Both parents will have to come to terms with retirement be it gradual or not. There are three fathers who have no sons in the sample; one has agreed to let his daughter take over, but he himself will not really retire: one will slow down, use more contractors and has already sold his cattle and, shoulder shruggingly, said the farm would probably be sold on his death; and the last still wants to be involved even if his nephew will take over, just like his uncle is still farming with him now at the age of 75, which means his share will not be available that readily to be distributed amongst his three daughters.

⁶² See definitions of transfer, succession, retirement and inheritance under 1.6.

An unemployed farmer can be a problem for the wife. Janet Petrie recalls a time when her father had no cattle and all the machinery was sold during the split up: "...and dad is doing nothing and it was just driving my mum mad, because he is always being out and they have been married for 25 years and it has never been the case of he is been in the house sort of seven in the morning. He has always been out. So that was driving mum mad, but I think he will be doing less."

The identity (see 1.4) of the retiring couple will have to be adapted. This reaches very deeply into the (father's) psyche. It might make him feel insecure stepping back. He will have to get used to say to the rep, the accountant, the banker that it is not himself who makes the decisions any more. Financial security will be an issue for him and his wife once the farm is handed over. Retirement has a lot to do with 'security', feeling secure in one's old age as well as seeing the next generation securing the farming tradition. Mr. Weston is in the process of planning for his retirement. He is very aware of the risks, even feels that with his two children he is more exposed than if he had four. He wants to be comfortable in his old age: "No matter what. If they go and make mistakes, that is fair enough, but as long as it doesn't affect us too much...and that is where it is very difficult juggling with the timing and that..."⁶³ Also, parents might need care and thus put pressure on resources. Finch (1993) found no common pattern regarding provisions for old age in the UK as such. Farm families will be no different. Terms are negotiated and the moral ones, 'the proper thing to do', are more important than the material ones. Repayments are expected and thus make the balance between dependence and independence a delicate one (*ibid.*). This applies especially for a farm family, where there is usually a lot of money tied up in property.

For the Netherlands, Haan (1994) confirms that, despite assigning monetary values to the estate, it is the moral code of conduct that counts for the heir and the non-successors. It is a privilege and a duty to receive the farm. All siblings seem to respect that. The parents need to decide whether the moral obligations are assurance enough for their old age, or do they prefer to rely on their own resources put aside? The danger arises if the successor make fatal decisions or their son's marriage fails (Mr. Weston). The parting generation tries to pre-empt any eventualities. Mr. and Mrs. Weston said, "you can't insure yourself against all possibilities. You have to take some risks." The Adviser's experiences confirm this. "There comes a time when the parents and successors reach a level of mutual trust which will allow

⁶³ Errington and Tranter (1991) could not find a relationship between business viability and farm size and whether the farmer wanted to retire semi or fully.

them to hand over and hopefully their trust in the son and his choice of partner will not be disappointed.”

But not only the older generation feels the risks involved with bad judgments. Bert Thompson thinks he will appreciate, “get(ting) someone else’s opinion, because you can’t...when you are young, you know you don’t want to make too many mistakes...in the end if the day he is...it is his business that I will inherit so...” One of the Hunter daughters is also quick to point to a neighbouring case where the son was given full rein too quickly – the father had died suddenly and the mother stepped back – and bankrupted a very profitable farm in a few years.

Divorces are relatively rare (see Berlan-Darque, 1985 who bases her work on figures from France). A case where the divorce settlement forced the sale of a farm in the Borders was talked about for many years all over the country (personal communication). If a farmer has not been made a partner by his father and then divorces, the settlement is not as destructive to the farm business than if he is. The neighbours commented in a recent case where one spouse had moved out: “Well he is lucky. He can afford to leave, his dad has not handed anything over yet.”

Figure 6d pictures the overall process. The ‘plaited cord’ symbolises the tripartite meaning of the farm: asset, production unit and employer/provider. It twists on itself over time.

Retirement, as symbolised by the box into which the cord disappears, can act as a buffer, as a sorting out zone where over time the family members discuss the implications of each others’ perceptions of the farm and learn to come to terms with it. This might be a total non-event, if all see the farm under the same light, that is, if their socialisation allows them to do so.

If only one of them knows about or emphasises tax and legal consequences, the others will not be able to follow suit with their expectations. The potential successor urging the father to make him/her a partner can be seen as impertinent, if the father does not understand the tax system. On the other hand the father can be seen as interfering and pushy, if he wants to make the potential successor a partner and the child only appreciates the moral obligations, but not the maybe long term financial gain for the family estate. A person boasting the largest X unit in Scotland, might be prepared to sell it tomorrow for a housing estate, if the price is right, refuse to do so on the grounds that this is the family heirloom and farming is all s/he wants to do. Then only an extreme situation like severe and costly illness

might make a sale acceptable to one or all members of the family. The cord turns again and a different scenario will affect the retirement.

In the UK it is difficult for tenant farmers to retire. The farmer's son has a much better legal position to be accepted by the landlord once the father dies and leaves the tenancy to him in his will. Should the father retire before his death, the landlord is free to choose another tenant or sell the farm. For fear of the landlord's refusal, be it well-founded or not, a daughter is practically never considered as a suitable heiress for a tenanted farm (see 6.2 the lawyers' views). As a result, tenants tend to retire very late or not at all.

Retiring from farming means as many different things as farming does. It is very much a matter of degree and is shaped by the individuals' preferences and feelings. The father with the chequebook firmly in his back pocket, but who is not seen in the farmyard any more, might call himself retired. His successor however is not in control. He might suggest this purchase or that, but he has to ask permission, and get the cheque signed.

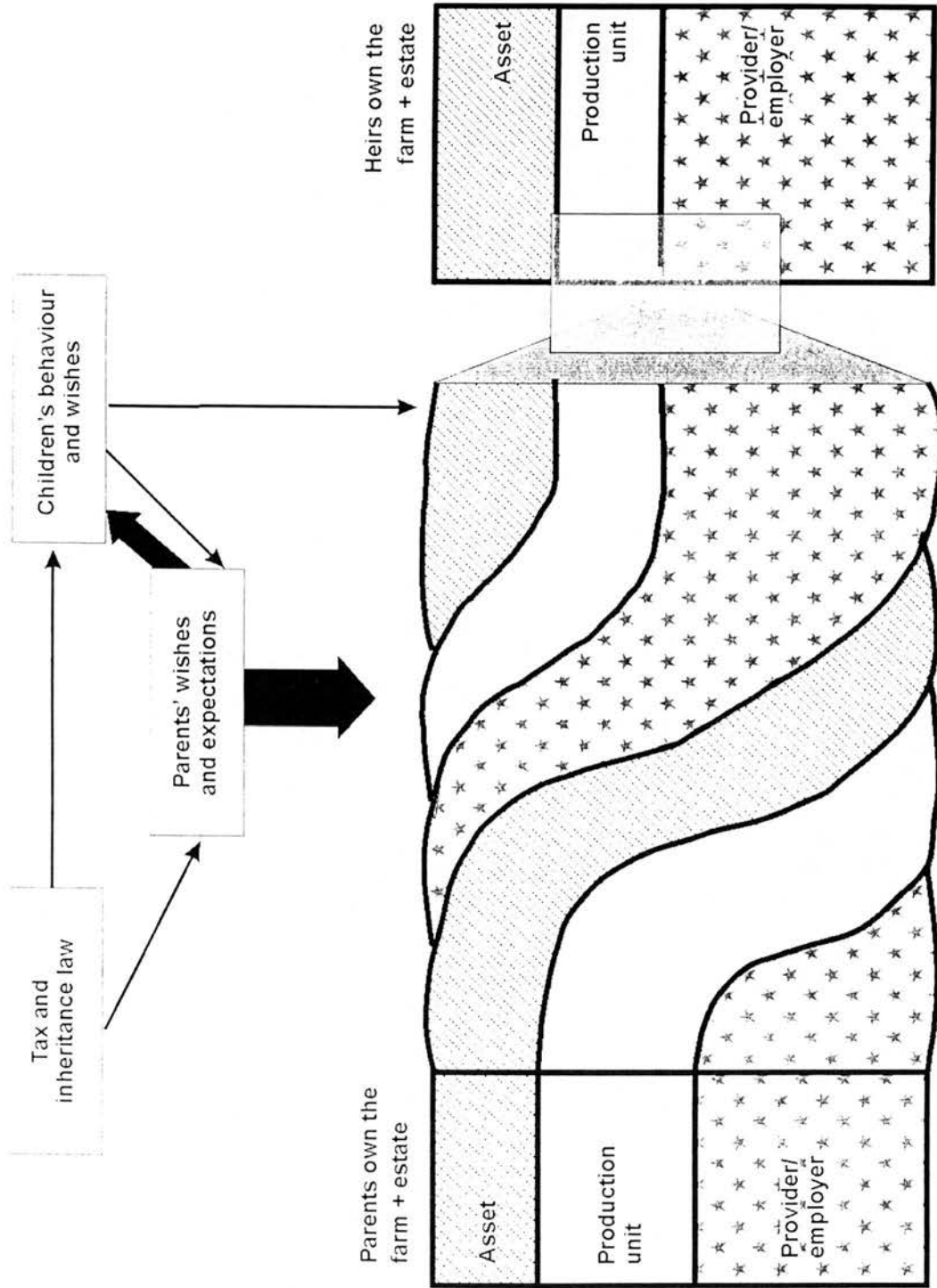


Figure 6d: Retirement within the overall process.

Initially, the son (in this section the successor is considered male as a reflection of what is happening in the majority of farm family businesses in Europe (see also Errington, 1998)) will go along with that but, later on, especially once he has a family of his own, he will want to have more control over his working life which will also have a bearing on his life with his family, e.g. working hours, holidays, budgets for family and farm.

Information on the set-up of the business is important as it determines the scope the fathers have for bringing in the successor to the business as they withdraw their own input and move towards retirement.⁶⁴

For the wives, retirement seems more attractive. Mrs. Phillips is looking for a bungalow in the village. "But it has to overlook fields, otherwise he won't be happy," she says. Mrs. Urquhart, Ballantyne and Stone hope to travel more extensively with their husbands.

However, they are all too aware of their husbands' attachment to the events on the farm. "They need to know what is going on," said the wives. Several retired farmers from my neighbourhood are seen frequently just taking a drive to the field to see 'what is going on'. Very likely it is the farm who is paying for the car and the petrol. Maybe this is a productive use of farm resources, maybe an extra pair of eyes might just pick this or that up in time to prevent it from becoming a problem. It definitely keeps them interested and maybe they still feel valued. Several of the fathers had their fathers thus more or less supervising them until they died. No feeling of resentment but again a shoulder shrugging acceptance only was shown. This acceptance might mean a certain subordination to the then still living head of the farm household. Only if the degree of subordination is acceptable to the successor as seemingly it was in all the families in this project, is there no conflict (Crow, 1986; Crockett and Gray, 1997).

⁶⁴ Mrs. Hunter, Mrs. Innes and Mrs. Elrick are partners and actively involved on the farm, Mrs. Ballantyne and Mrs. Thompson are full partners in the business. To what extent this was solely done for tax purposes can only be guesswork (the farm's profit can be divided and each partner can use their personal tax allowances and thus maybe save tax). Mrs. Thompson is a partner, but not involved in outside work although she does secretarial work. Mrs. Weston and Mrs. Urquhart do secretarial work, Mrs. Philips, Mrs. Petrie and Mrs. Ball are not directly involved. Furthermore, none of these five seem to be in partnerships. Mr Philip is likely to be in a partnership with his brother and his uncle. The Stones have a company structure and all family members have some shares in the business.

6.6 Conflict

The most striking feature during the data collection and parallel analysis has been the overall absence of open conflict. This came as a surprise having experienced very open and raw conflicts amongst parents and children on German and Australian farms.

Going back over the data some conflicts were mentioned – some historical, some ongoing, some hypothetical and some reached the proportions noted in similar situations in other countries. These are summarised in this section.

Rosenblatt and Anderson (1985) define the stressors involved in the transfer of the family farm. For the older generation they see problems such as identity change, perhaps change of residence, finding things to do with their spare time, observing changes in the operations of the farm, but also they might have to make choices between their children. The younger generation may be stressed by having to work under close scrutiny or experiencing siblings' resentment for possibly preferential treatment. They found in their study on Minnesota farms that there were differences in perceptions between the generations.⁶⁵ There was no overall planning and no clear decision process recalled by their respondents. The selection process they assume may begin as early as in primary school and was based on an implicit understanding, that in the end there was only 'really' one or maybe two sons available to take the farm over. They continue 'it seemed important to most offspring (especially to those who inherited the family farm) and parents to report that everyone involved thought planning for the farm transfer was fair' (p. 22). However they acknowledge that parents are often not aware of their offsprings' feelings of conflict. They found parents answering questions about conflict with the statement that there really was no other offspring available to take the farm on, therefore there was no conflict. They recommend early planning and open discussion of facts and feelings about the farm transfer. Their study is now 15 years old but based on the replies from this project and from the literature review, the assumption seems justified that their recommendations are not in place to any great extent (see 6.8: Practical implications).

Several parents mentioned their personal surprise about their children never squabbling, let alone falling out (Elrick, Stone, Innes, Urquhart). Mr. Innes recalls that even when the children had just one farm bike between them, there were never any quarrels. "They just took turns or hopped on the back." There are minor disagreements, but they come quite late, when the children are old enough to drive. Then they mainly concern who

⁶⁵ Weigel and Weigel (1990), who measured satisfaction and stressors in two-generation households, found that it was the younger generations that showed higher levels of stress. Neither generation was happy with the level of overall communication. Crockett and Gray (1997) confirmed this.

has the car and for what purpose. Disagreements about farm management decisions can involve both generations. Both Elrick men admit to a fiery temper, but reckon it is not really serious. The Stones might disagree about which tractor to buy; the Innes's about how many more pedigree cows to buy or should the money be put into a new seeder. Mr. Hunter recalls his dad giving him a lot of leeway to make mistakes, but was also quick to tell him if he had done something wrong. Mr. Hunter himself sees no reason to act any different with his children. When his daughters come home from University with new ideas, he listens to them and then they are discussed and a decision is reached, which everybody backs.

The YF secretary hears her colleagues grumble about the old men's old ways, but she would not call this open conflict. Here is an example from the Thompsons. Mr. Thompson wanted to work a field despite bad weather conditions. His son disagreed but went along and now says that he is pleased that they pushed ahead because the weather had turned for the worse that day and, after all, grudges in general were not kept for very long. Presumably it is difficult to sustain such ill feelings, if the workload has to be planned and coordinated all the time and especially if things go wrong everybody has to come to the rescue, e.g. when there are cattle on the road or the fertiliser gets wet.

The other YF secretary comments on the question of gender. She thinks that conflicts arise more amongst competing same sex siblings than amongst brother and sister. The girls in her experience are not expected to come out and work at all times, but "if they do want to, then it is usually, yes! Great!" She does not seem to think that the boys would feel as threatened by a 'helping' sister than a 'working' brother. Her choice of words implies that the girls' input is considered less productive, merely a helping hand, which is appreciated, but is not crucial, whereas the boys actually 'work', do a man's job.

These examples still do not come close to the level of bitterness I have encountered elsewhere. The process by which conflicts are prevented from arising are described for the families above in the preceding chapters of this thesis.

6.6.1 What is considered a real conflict?

George Elrick foresees problems regarding who would get the home farm and who would have to go to the new one. The parents had more or less decided that the older son is staying, but "the boys hadn't been told yet, but I think they know anyway."

It is not just the farm business that needs to be 'sorted out' but also future accommodation for both generations. Mrs. Hunter says she will not move out of the farmhouse "unless they carry me". Mrs. Elrick does not feel that she wants to move into her

husband's parents' house he has in mind for his retirement. She says she hates it. Will she go when one of her sons gets married and needs a house? Or will he move into the bungalow for the time being? What will happen if the second son gets married first?

Some respondents faced with the vignette feel 'need' would decide who gets the bigger house. The one who had children should have the bigger house, but not if they had been away for a long time and had had no input in the farm. However, in the Elrick's case the one who gets married before the parents are ready to retire and move out of the farmhouse, will move into the shepherd's bungalow. But what will happen when the second son wants his own house? Is the grandmother still alive and fit to live in her own house? Does the daughter-in-law want to live on the farm or is she working away? Does she want to move to the other farm? Is the shepherd ready to move out of the house there? Are there young children? "We will see nearer the time..." they all say. This uncertainty in terms of detailed planning has to be catered for and may only be resolved on the deaths of the parents, at which point the conditions of the will come into play. If nothing is done before death intervenes, "it is then that problems surface," recalls Mr. Thompson and the adviser, by which time there is practically no room for adjustments. The law as laid down in the will dictates who will get what and therefore in most cases who will live where (see 6.2.1). There is no scope for 'productive' conflict other than utterances of discontent or disappointment.

On several occasions the respondents give the impression that when the time comes, it is likely that what is practical at that moment will decide what will happen. There are so many imponderables which have to be considered, making hypothetical questions seem a waste of time.

When Mr. Urquhart and Mr. Weston's farm business was subdivided amongst the brothers, it was personal preference that determined who was going to be paid out, who went off to run the stock farm and who would stay on the arable and dairy unit. They cannot really remember an actual 'decision' being made, but things 'sorted themselves out'. And the mother, did she have a say in it? Mr. Urquhart: "...not really. I suppose she (sighs) she had an opinion which was listened to. I suppose.... There was never any sort of disputes or..." He distinguishes clearly between freedom of speech and power to act. Their father had the last say, the mother apparently just went along with it (see also 5.2.3.1 on decision making). In the same vein the father had made his sons partners when he thought the time was right. "No! it wasn't discussed. He just went along and did it." There was no conflict.

In some respect that father was 'doing the right thing'. He was sorting things out early. Half the fathers feel very strongly that this is the right thing to do. To set things up so

that 'he' knows where he, the son is standing in the business. Mr. Stone knows of an incidence where the father had not set things out clearly and where the farming brother had to sell up in order to pay out his sister. Mr. Stone: "I always thought that was dreadful." Again he obviously believes that the farmer has more rights than his sister.

Conflicts do happen, but they are rare. Farms have been sold because of sibling quarrels. Well known is one family of three brothers, where after bitter (even physical) feuds on the father's death, one of them was bought out by the other two.

Mr. Hunter knows of a successful farmer who has two sisters. All three got married just before the old man died. The will was so clear that the brother had nothing to fear. The mother was still alive but she was leaving her money in the farm so he could use that too. The sisters had had received lump sums each and they both had married 'good' farmers. With that Mr. Hunter implies that they would not need the brother's money. However, the brother had confided in Mr. Hunter, that if his father had not had set things out the way he did, he the brother would have had problems. The sisters would have 'fleeced' him. Asked whether this father had done the right thing by his children, Mr. Hunter nods gravely. Translated to his own situation, that will mean his actively involved and capable daughters will not get the farm, but the 10 year younger son will. Mr. Hunter assumes that they will have their own careers and even in the case of a divorce, they would not come home and lay claims on their brother. The older daughter thinks boys should be left to get on with it (the farm). She must therefore agree with her father's plans.

The second daughter says after thinking about the vignette's scenario, that, 'no', she would not move out of the house should her brother come back after she had been working there for eight years and yes, she could foresee problems if the girls had worked equally as hard (see 6.5) as their brothers. They would want equal shares in the business. "They wouldn't wear it," she says. But she herself is looking for a career away from the farm. "There is no room," she says. In the same vein her sister and her mother agree that if the boy had been the eldest son, 'yes' he would be working on the farm now, which means that there 'is room' but only for a boy. No conflict now and the chances are for none later. Accepting that there is no scope to contribute means her accepting that she cannot have an 'equal input' to the business. This inevitably means no equal share in the end.

6.6.2 What is 'equal input'?

Jenny Petrie, like Janet Hunter and several of the others, stated that the same sibling input needs to be recognised towards a similar share of the assets, but what does 'worked as hard' actually mean and who is going to judge that? (See 6.3.2.)

So many tasks do not have a clear value or a distinct price tag. They just contribute to the overall benefit of the family business. The monetary value of the business itself, the buildings, the fields, their possible development potential – now or in the future, such as on the parents' death – is difficult to evaluate for any given point in time. A beef herd's value before or after the BSE crisis or the Foot and Mouth outbreak are poignant examples.

It is even more difficult to put a value on labour contributed to a family farm. What is the labour worth that has gone into cattle just sold at the markets, when these cattle have eaten the unsaleable potatoes, have grazed the unploughable hillock and been housed in the otherwise unusable old shed and while doing all this accrued a substantial tax benefit?⁶⁶ Looking after up to 100 beef cattle is not a full-time job, so whoever will do it has to have other work as well. The value of the half hour, twice a day, 365 days a year looking after the cattle is difficult to compare to the seasonal hour spent on the tractor. The product price of grain or beef could change easily overnight, because of happenings on the world market. In addition to the difficulties of putting values on goods and services, there is the factor of personal judgment (see 6.3.2 and 4.4.1).

Lauren Innes wants to farm, especially farm with stock, but would step in with whatever else there needed help on the arable side. The viability, the profitability of farming, is becoming more endangered by the day. Her parents' farm will have to be able to stand up to these dangers in order to survive at all, let alone be split. Both parents are in their forties and are fit and still working on the farm. The five year younger brother seems to want to farm as well. He would be the traditional choice for a successor as he is male and can supposedly do all the work the father does without adapting any of the technologies necessary to accommodate a person with less physical strength such as a woman (or a man with a weak back). The viability of the farm would be strengthened, if it does not have to be halved or major pay-outs made. Any demands she might want to make will, to a certain extent, mean she is endangering the future of her farm, the place to which she feels a strong emotional attachment. If her brother had been older, she would have had less of a chance to become involved and thus as knowledgeable and competent as she is now. In a situation

⁶⁶ Breeding livestock are considered a capital asset rather than a trading asset such as grain, because their productive life extends over several years (over 10 years for cattle).

where the father can only take one child out to work with him the competition would have been non-existent in most families. Dad takes son, after all it is easier for him to relate to a son than a daughter (Secunda, 1993) and if the daughter complains, her chances to be taken out next time are even less. No father, or mother for that matter, will burden themselves with a recalcitrant child accompanying them, especially at peak times. Any person who has ever witnessed the hectic life in a farm household during busy times such as harvest will understand that in these relentless weeks, there is no energy left to deal with fundamental matters such as who will inherit the farm and is it fair that he, the son, is being taken out more than she, the daughter. Help is needed and not someone who is just 'being awkward'. Kraus (1993) notes observations of university courses, meetings and conferences, where women are regularly overlooked and frequently interrupted. If girls make themselves less heard in a classroom situation, why should that be any different in a family? The one who shouts loudest, sounds most competent and will most probably go out with dad until he (and it is usually 'he') is confident enough to do certain tasks himself. A girl will have to compete with that, show, as Mrs. Hunter says, even more interest than the boy, if she wants to be taken 'outside' and therefore be taken seriously. Similar situations arise within 'all boy' families (Urquhart). The eldest becomes the most interested one, the most skilled one, the younger one 'does other things', in this case sport. Nevertheless in this case it seems he can still count on getting one of the two farms, if he comes home after some years, despite his early disinterest. It is unlikely he could afford to be so sure if he was female.

If the daughter accepts that she cannot be taken out in busy times, come quieter times she may find herself being told that she has not shown enough interest. She just cannot win. As Lauren Innes says, "Well if the girl can persuade her dad..." Without dad's goodwill there is no chance for the daughter to even show her interest, let alone commitment. And there is definitely no chance for her to show open conflict while the parents hold the reins to their estate. This includes any discussions about the contents of the will. When the actual will comes to bear, it is usually too late to have an input in the distribution of which heir gets what out of the parental estate (see 6.4).

In the mixed families, the younger ones such as the teenage Elrick boy have to "be about all the time," so that they are ready to jump at whatever opportunity to be involved offers itself. They desperately want to emulate the older brother or the father. If the older sibling is female, the urgency is not as great. Dad will keep the farm going for a son to step into later, should he so choose. If the older sister is interested as well, her options are more limited. If she insists that the will is made out to reflect her input or to be paid an Award

wage, the parents still have the boy to fall back on or they can simply threaten to sell it all and divide it up. It seems very unlikely that she will say that that is what she wants, because at the moment the farm is still her parents' livelihood and pride.

Jenny Petrie's parents know that at some point they will have to dictate which of their two daughters will get what, and Jenny and Mary will have to come to terms with that. (The grain merchant, a farmer's son and the youngest of three, stated as well, "At some point dad just will have to put his foot down and that is that.") There is only one farm and that is not very big. The older one is already now prepared to accept she cannot get an equal share if she wants to see the family continue on the farm. She says she will step back in order to give her sister a better chance of keeping the farm going and at the same time acknowledges Jenny's interest and commitment.

How is this acceptance achieved? The grain merchant and farmer's son puts it down to "indoctrination all your life. If you grow up knowing that your older brother is going to get the farm...", he says. In his family of three brothers there is no conflict either.

What can the non-farming child do when faced with the prospect of inheriting so much less monetary value, but also less moral and quite possibly financial obligations? There is no open conflict, says the YF secretary. If a teenager rebels to the 'indoctrination' what can s/he do? Complain that again the older brother is taken out on the tractor, to the sale, etc? No farmer father will take a trouble maker out with them if they have so little time as it is. That means getting taken out less, learning less about the work, having less opportunity for legitimate peripheral participation and as a consequence of that, being less able and less often seen to show interest or show commitment. So it seems justified to give that child less.

It is easy to see why a child would hesitate to show commitment if the older brother is already nominated successor and the parents can leave the farm to whoever they choose. Should the child show his or her discontentment, then the adviser's answer, speaking for most farmers, is "Tough! It is either this or nothing."

The question remains open how it seems possible for two boys to give the same input and therefore deserve the same share (Urquhart, Elrick, Mr. Weston and his brothers), but not for a brother and a sister. Gendered task allocations paired with gendered expectations of both generations are a tall order which needs to be met for a girl in order to come close to have a chance to show 'equal input' and as a result gain the potential right of an equal share in the farm.

6.6.3 'Sorting things out'

When the parents, which in most cases means the owner-occupier father who may or may not have consulted the mother, try 'to sort things out' they see two main dangers to the future of their farm businesses. One is the potential conflict with non-family members, namely in-laws (Elrick, Hunter, Weston). Wives are known to bicker and feel hard done by where the brothers have worked together contentedly before (Mrs. Elrick's brothers' wives). Who lives in what house and does what work at what time, is also potentially a bone of contention. Divorce can pose another problem. "Pretty young ladies leaving with half the farm after a short marriage are seen as a very real threat" (Mr. Weston, Adviser).

Danger comes from pushing people to work together too closely. The Petrie sisters said they could not work together at all. Mrs. Ballantyne fears that a potential son-in-law would have a very difficult time having her husband as a landlord or boss. Mr. Stone is grateful for his farm being big enough so the boys can all have their own area of responsibility, with the eldest as the boss living in the big house. The girls are provided for via insurance policies. Mr. Elrick hopes that the two farming boys will manage to come through the initial period when they will have to work together to remain viable, as does Mr. Urquhart.

Both say that they would quite like their sons to go away "to Australia or something, just to get away and see something else." The impression is given that firstly they are not quite ready for their sons to come home (both are at the most in their early fifties). This either means they are trying to avoid incompetent involvement or open conflict or maybe both. Secondly, they say they feel that the young men needed more experience in other types of farming.

There is not much room for conflict while there is still a boss who owns all the business. Even if the successor is made a partner, the land is rarely ever included in these partnerships. In the really 'bad cases', so say the lawyers and tradesmen, the son is just a worker, but does not even get the equivalent of a wage, having to be content with just pocket money. This could be the case for George Elrick and Bert Thompson, but both feel things would be sorted out in good time and seem very content. Both have been made partners in the business and feel they have a 'very good lifestyle'.

6.7 Case study sequences – ‘Fallreihen’

The three families presented below are real people. They are neighbours. As families we have known each other by sight or by hear-say for many years. Every attempt has been made to conceal their true identity. Some adjustments to the description of their circumstances had to be made in order to achieve this. Their openness and trust have been wonderful and I hope not to disappoint them by describing the Stone family, the Petrie family and the Hunter family as a graphic illustration of the topics discussed in this thesis. Some quotes are repetitions, because they are considered essential to portray the families in their whole context.

6.7.1 The Stones

The Stone family farm 1,800 acres in the south-east of Scotland. The farm was purchased by their late grandfather in the fifties. He was the middle boy out of five sons of a farmer in the West of Scotland (all five families are still in farming today). Before buying Stonefield, he bought another arable farm in the East of Scotland, which is at present farmed by one of Mr. Stone's three sisters and her husband. The Stone's present farm still employed 14 men and 20 women in the mid sixties. Ten years later, the only son married a nurse from Leeds. In the beginning she did try to help outside, but as soon as she had children she felt there was no way she could do both... "and as the farm was so big it had a set routine and...there was no need for me to go outside." Later she points out that it is all a question of whether you can afford to employ people to do things. Did the husband want her to help with the farm? She said that when she tried to he told her it took him longer to explain it all to her, than do it himself. They came to an arrangement where she would not help him outside and he left the 'inside', the household to her. They still seem happy together and neither of them felt the need to question the arrangement to date. It suited the circumstances and still does.

She bore four children: Erica is now 23 and working as a nurse in England; Walter is 20, and seeing himself as the future boss of Stonefield; Tina is 19 and studying to teach PE; and Angus is 15 and still at school. It was the mother who explained the relevance of the hypothetical vignette to the family's history. Hildebrand (1999) confirms that it is usually the incoming daughters-in-law who take it upon themselves to become the family's memory. They attain an important function within the family by presenting the facts as they learnt them in talks about their new family, and thus gain status as they go along.

One of Mr. Stone's sisters lives nearby, single and supposedly not making any demands on the farm; the other one is married and runs the east farm with her husband. The

third sister initially did not show any interest in her share in the company given her by her father and married abroad. Later she decided to come back and claim her share. To Mrs. Stone's bewilderment, she was made welcome and a smaller farm within the business, up until then the residence of the Stones, was made over to her so she could run it with her husband and her sons. The Stones then shifted into the main house and the grandfather went to live, now widowed, on the farm in the East. Mrs. Stone admits her reservations about her husband's initial joy having his sister come back to live so close by. After all she was made to shift house, making room physically and emotionally. In the early nineties, the sister decided to sell up and go back to her husband's country. In order to make her unit a more saleable commodity the grandfather decided to add another 200 acres from the big farm. And so the farm was sold and 'Stonefield' left with its present 1,800 acres and only one farmhouse.

Mr. Stone describes the process as a demerger, resulting in three separate companies: "It was quite amicable, because...because my father was still alive. He decided who was to get what. I think if it had been done after his death, there could have been arguments. But it was all discussed within the family before any...actual...documents were signed so that everybody knew what everybody else was getting and there could be no arguments after that." The grandfather still held the absolute power and he used it (see 6.6.3). There was no point arguing then, in the same vein as it is futile wanting to argue with the testator nowadays.

The old man died aged 84 and working on the very day – something his son does not want to have happen to him. He wants to go and enjoy himself once he feels assured that the farm is being run 'properly' by his sons and they are getting on well together. He does not foresee any problems providing they are budgeting astutely and can agree on the way things are run. The eldest will have the house and be seen to be the boss because of his age. At the time of the interviews the children all had equal shares according to the mother, but she did not think they were aware of that.

Mother and father firmly believe that equal input and interest from the children deserves equal treatment regarding the farm. But – and the 'buts' come promptly – neither of the daughters have shown any interest and the sons always wanted to be out on the farm. From the daughters' perspective it looked slightly different. Mum and dad confirm that all children went out with their dad to look at the sheep and enjoyed that tremendously. The sheep enterprise was abolished and the farm now only runs cattle. Later when they came

into the teenage years the girls were more often seen to be in the house or out in town with their 'townie' friends than on the farm.

Tina says she always wanted to be outside, but "never really wanted to work on the farm though." When did she decide that?

TS: "During school (private school in town)...I don't know. I have never really been...I mean I helped out in the holidays, but not..."

U: "Were you asked or did you want to?"

TS: "...I wouldn't say I was. No. I think it was more of a...the boys (one older, one younger) were just...all the farm work. Probably quite old fashioned really..."

She still rides her horse nearly every day, which is probably the reason why she does not stay nearer to her college in town.

Addressing the brother,

U: "And you have always helped?"

WS: "Yep. Have always wanted to do it. It is just a way of life really. Hated school."

Analysing this sequence, the following question arises: did Tina see an opening to help? Her mother considers her to be very good with the stock, hence her wish to become a vet. She does not talk about this to me, maybe because she is embarrassed to admit that her grades were not good enough for vet school. She must have had similar exposure to stock to that of her brothers. From her statement it becomes clear that she did not experience an opening to help any further, because the boys were always 'there' and doing it all. If she had persisted, would she have had any recognition, any encouragement? It is unlikely that her dad, who did not encourage his wife, would have encouraged her or her sister.

When the older sister comes back on visits, she enjoys going around and looking, but again she shows no inclination to actually want to do something, to get involved physically. Tina herself always wanted to be outside, but that meant dealing with her horse(s). She says: "No, she wouldn't mind marrying a farmer." But other than being able to keep horses, she did not feel any strong desire to be involved in the farm. However, she voices a strong preference for life in the country as opposed to the town.

These answers can be put into context, if we imagine the family at lunch during the holidays. Dad would get up and leave, the sons run after him asking for 'a shot on the tractor' or have been asked to come. The daughter(s) are left behind to help mum tidy up lunch. Tina chooses to be busy outside with her horse. There is always work to be done, if

there are horses needing to be looked after. If the weather is cold, and Mrs. Stone is very aware of 'bad weather' and the effect it can have on the willingness to want to go outside and work in it, the girls can stay in or join their friends in town.

The father prepares himself for his son's learning curve. He calls it "breaking things as little as possible". But he did not give his wife the chance and has not encouraged any of his daughters.

Both Tina and Walter agree it is made easier for a boy to get involved in the farm. The mother 'blames' it on her own non-involvement that none of her daughters are. She compares this to a neighbour's daughter who is active on the farm and where the mother does all the cattle work (and now a lot of the paperwork) herself. None of the Stones think that the father could compensate for the mother's non-involvement. It does not occur in their own set-up, so they do not consider the option.

Similar deliberations are voiced regarding the succession to the farm. According to Walter it is all clear. Tradition shows the way. Tina, asked whether she felt okay about the prospect of her brother being the future boss of the farm, says she has no choice. The father says he is aware that his sons will be better off 'moneywise' but the girls will hopefully be provided for by insurance policies. They will have 'money in hand', while the boys will only have money once they sell. He reckons that if the sisters get married, they should really be "looked after by their husbands and they shouldn't be expecting to get a share of something that..." (his voice trails off). Earlier he said that the same input was equal to the same rights to the farm, but he does not actively allow the same opportunity for equal input for all his children. He strongly believes that siblings who had no input are not entitled to shares that would endanger the farm's viability. On the other hand, he is of the opinion that girls are perfectly capable to do any job on the farm: "I have no...no reason to think that girls can't do it. It is just that they don't really want to." In his words none of his girls have ever shown any intention to get involved physically. Even in their future life he can only imagine them getting involved as far as maybe the bookwork, but not work physically.

Recently he called a family meeting and asked whether they all wanted the farm to continue within the family. When they all agreed, he explained the necessary changes that needed to be made in order to make the farm's survival possible. Again all agreed that the farm should be carried on and it seems that the girls seemed to have accepted their brothers as the future successors. The original question of this meeting had been: 'Do or don't we sell up' and not 'who will succeed the father.' One is implicit of the other for this family. The result was that they made all but one man redundant. Mr. Stone will now do the books

himself with the help of an accountant. The farm 'wouldn't be as tidy'. Walter sees it as an easier way for his brother to join once he finishes school. Again the daughter felt she had to go along with the decision, which clearly benefited her brothers. Both boys can and want to come in and make a living on the farm. She will have to leave and make do with an insurance policy and a good education. (The boys have had the opportunity of a good education as well.) She herself said she never really wanted to get involved.

The mother says the children never argue. Brother and sister wanted to be interviewed together and none of the respective statements seemed to surprise or anger the other. The lines are drawn amicably and they all know where they stand. Tina comments: "Something I have seen, that if it comes to farms you all want to support each other. You are all in the same family." That means you support the farm and the person who farms it, first the parents and then their successor(s).

6.7.2 The Hunters

The Hunter family bought their present sheep farm three years ago and farm in partnership with Mr. Hunter's older brother. Prior to that they were tenants on a large hill estate. Originally the Hunters had farmed in the West. After the older brother finished school, the grandfather bought a larger farm, where they lived for 13 years before taking on the hill estate. Mr. Hunter is the younger brother, but as he married several years before his brother, he was given the farmhouse on the estate. Their parents were still working with them, the grandmother doing the books and the grandfather keeping an eye on things. Mr. Hunter appreciated the old man's advice and sees no need to change the way the handing over will take place when he himself will want to step back.

When the grandmother died, Mr. Hunter took over the bookwork until his wife had finished her book keeping training. Now she is doing it all, but he is still signing the cheques, despite her being the third partner in the present farm.

Mrs. Hunter is a farmer's daughter herself and has always helped on her parent's mixed farm. She has two brothers. The older one is farming her home farm. Her parents are still alive. She never worked in her field of academic training, but married straight after she graduated in social science. She was involved in outside work on the big estate she married into, but to a lesser degree than she is now. Her husband still remembers fondly how she worked the cattle while the two little girls were watching from their buggies. However there were times when she had 10 people for lunch and therefore not enough time to help outside. On the present farm she has her own flock of sheep to look after and at certain times of the

year she is rarely ever in the house. The household just has to wait until things are quieter, she says. She is a keen gardener (the cabbage she showed me proved it) and loves DIY work. Nowadays it is only Mr. Hunter's brother who comes for lunch. He lives in the nearby settlement and just comes up for the day. His wife is not involved and his son seems to be less keen on the farm than the ten year old John Hunter. The two older Hunter girls are very keen on all things to do with (stock) farming. Nora Hunter has just finished agriculture at university and Janet will finish next year. Both have done very well. Their initially reluctant father is now very proud of their academic achievements. Nora points out that if her little brother had been the eldest, he would now be working on the farm and not gone to study. The father agrees with that, but thinks that the way these last two years have gone, especially for stock farmers, he is encouraging his little boy a lot more to do well at school and not take it for granted that the farm will be there for him as his sole source of income. The farm would be too small to support three children let alone all the children if they wanted to come back, Mr. Hunter thinks. I presume that means if all get married, because it supports two families comfortably at the moment.

Nora Hunter thinks that most sisters would not put the farm under financial stress by demanding their equal shares of the business, especially at the moment. They would all be aware of the difficult times and realise that such demands "would put pressure on everybody, their brothers, their mothers and fathers and..."

All agreed that nobody is inherently a better farmer because of their sex, but some people have inherited a better eye for stock than others. And 'yes', girls do have more chance now than in earlier generations, but a lot still depends on the brothers' interest. If they choose to compete for the farm, the girls will usually agree (have to) step back.

The family is unusual in that everything from new ideas to the day's happenings are discussed in detail with all members. The children feel fully involved. Mr. Hunter reckons that may be only 10% of his neighbours would work like that. The succession as such has not been discussed, but he is counting on his 10 year old son John to come back and take the farm over under his and his wife's guidance. He believes the girls will be so engulfed in their careers by then, that he cannot see them wanting to come home. "What about a divorce?" I ask. "Oh well. They wouldn't do that to their brother. They are not that way inclined." I ask, "What about the son wanting to change direction and one of the girls take over?" He says that he has no problem with this and considers both girls to be perfectly capable of running a farm by themselves. But his preference is for the son, despite the girls

having pulled their weight all these years. Because they have done this he “would be prepared to help them if they needed a hand with a flat.”

U: “But only of the business could stand it?”

Mr. Hunter: “Uhu. I mean both, they have always stuck in well at home and helped whenever I was needin’ extra help...”

He describes lambing up to 1,000 ewes as ‘helping’ whereas this means a full-time workload in any job description. When the mother took ill, one girl handled this together with an assisting student by herself. Would he have used the term ‘help’ if it had been a son? Nora Hunter says: “He (meaning an older brother) would be working here.” She does not say ‘helping’ either. Hildenbrand (1999) in his detailed analysis of accounts of German farm families, emphasises the difference between the ‘helping’ of a family member, meaning no money changes hands, and the ‘working’ on the own farm and the ‘being employed’ working for a wage. He quotes one of his respondents: ‘Aber als Familienangehoerige ist man auf einem Hof nicht beschaeftigt, man hilft mit’ (*ibid.*, p. 49) (‘as a member of the family one is not employed on a farm, one helps with things alongside’).

Would Nora Hunter want to farm in her own right? Neither she nor her mother would, even although they know they could actually do it. The mother says she still wants to maintain her other interests and Nora says she feels: “The boys (brother and cousin) should just be left to get on with it.” “Even though,” she adds, “that is quite an old fashioned kind of way.” Should she marry a farmer, she would want to be involved in the farm, but she also “fancies to hold down a job off the farm.” She still would not farm in her own right.

The younger daughter, Janet, is more definite in wanting to farm. In response to the vignette, she says she would not move out of the farmhouse should her brother decide to come back after eight years, while she had kept the business going. She is dedicated to a special breed of sheep and always wants to have some involvement with them.

Mr. Hunter feels very strongly that things need to be sorted out very early so that the son knows where he stands. A warning example for him is a neighbour who claims that if the father had not set things out clearly in his will, the sisters would have ‘fleeced’ him and he would not be in farming now. The neighbour feels that a much bigger share is justified because the son worked (not helped, but worked) at home, all the time and the sisters, for whatever reason, did not. Mr. Hunter seems to side with the neighbour and not the sisters. I got the distinct impression Mr. Hunter feels the neighbour’s father has done well to preclude all problems by designating the farm to the working son and give the sisters the smaller share.

Mrs. Hunter is not as definite about who should do what. She wants to wait and see and does not feel she can make big plans now: "See what they are interested in. See what their involvement is and take it from there." What can the girls demonstrated interest be? They are 10 years older, fully qualified, with very good offers of employment and parents who are not anywhere near stepping back. They have no choice other than to leave and work elsewhere, leaving the farm open for the little brother to step into whenever he is ready. Janet will spend a year being based at home and either work from there or help, but she feels the need to explain that this is because she has a complicated joint injury to sort out and therefore it would be more 'practical' for her to come home and not take up the job offer in the north.

Both parents brought the children up the way they were brought up themselves "...which is just every day work, help one another, work together..." The girls feel part of a team. Young John, the same as his sisters earlier on, has his chores to do already now, aged ten. All feel this upbringing has resulted in a deep interest in farming and in particular in stock farming. The seasonality of arable farming in comparison to the everyday chores on a stock farm explains this preference, according to her mother.

Janet considers her interest as 'natural', "because we have always been encouraged to participate and because we have a strong interest in animals". She therefore equates 'animals' with 'farming'.

Tractor work is needed on all farms, but because farm machinery has become so much more powerful and potentially dangerous, the girls were not allowed to drive it until well into their teens. Now both are competent drivers. The older daughter was mainly taken out by the father, the second one by the uncle. Janet feels very strongly that even if her mother had not been involved on the farm, she herself still would have been, because of the father. Unlike the Stones, she thinks the involvement of the children and in particular the girls, all depends mainly on the father's encouragement and how equally he treats his children. According to her it therefore, "shouldn't just be the way the boy should get the farm (automatically)."

The girls now appreciate being made to help. Nora thinks it is far better for you and Janet agrees and says she was just made to put on an extra pair of socks on a cold day instead of being allowed to laze in front of television. At university, they experienced the difference between the students who were actively involved and the ones who were not. The latter students' level of understanding of farming is far inferior and they often are not able to understand certain practical connections in farming matters.

Mrs. Hunter is very definite in her views on how 'interest' comes about. It is circumstantial that her husband can cook because his mother died when he was very young. Husbands can only learn to cook if the wives will let them. Her mother still cannot bear to let her cut a turnip in half in her presence. She will do it for her.

"It all depends," Mrs. Hunter reckons, "Independent people will find a way. If that means learning to cook or learning to work outside...you do. There was work to be done on the farm, the children were there, so they would help. If they got interested along the way, well and good, but this was not the intention at the start."

Mr. Hunter comments on the decline in stock farming overall. His daughters' visiting friends barely ever talk about stock now. It is all crops. "Quite a lot of farms in xyz now, I mean there is nae stock on the farm. There is just growing grain. Well, I think it is sad. So the children lose interest. No stock..." Like his daughter, he equates interest in the farm with interest in stock. Stock does seem to make farming more accessible.

6.7.3 The Petries

The Petries are a very recognisable family. Several people have pointed them out to me as an example of what can go wrong if things are 'not sorted out' in time.

The grandfather's mother bought the present farm 70 years ago. She had five sons, some of them born abroad. Another farm was added 40 years ago, I presume by the grandfather. Mr. Petrie was the eldest of four.

One brother died, one became a partner in the farm. Their sister also held a minor share in the old company. Mr. Petrie himself went away to university and then worked on farms abroad for eight years before coming back and quickly working his way up in the hierarchy to become senior director. His younger brother, who has been living on the more recently purchased farm, had been working for the company all this time. His feelings when the older brother stepped in can only be imagined. The grandfather died 10 years ago, leaving equal shares to the brothers. "He wanted everything to be just rosy. Things should have been split then if not before," says Mrs. Petrie and the whole family agree. Jenny, the younger of the two daughters, wants to take over the farm later. She always maintained she was not ever going to farm together with her cousin. Mrs. Petrie also complained about the set up of the business for years. Last year Mr. Petrie, who in the older daughter Mary's words has "always been a bit of sort of burying his head in the sand about it all...", finally decided to initiate the split of the old company. Jenny was working abroad at the time and only heard about it on her return. All are still hurting and the financial future of the farm as

a family business is very uncertain. As soon as the split is finalised the parents hope to discuss with their daughters and then arrange things, so history will not repeat itself and cause so much bitterness and heartache as all experience at present.

Asked whether the parents could imagine both of them farming in their own right the mother replied:

“Oh, Mary (who studied geology) is quite interested too. She is a country person. She is not a town girl...but perhaps she feels she has to do something else...I mean they are only two so you must make them both the same. You give to one, you give to the other.”

But she does not say ‘give the same share’. Theoretically the parents want to give the girls equal shares, but “it has gone through my mind about the house,” says Mrs. Petrie. “They both want it.” Mr. Petrie: “Oh, dear!” Does this his comment mean he is unaware of his daughters wishes or that he prefers not to know about it, which would be in line with his daughter’s comment about him having a tendency to put his head in the sand? This is in line with the lawyers’ comments that the parents want to make the children the same but then bow to practicalities and one gets the farm and the others whatever is affordable.

Mary says, “anything for a quiet life” and that she would rather go to the bank for money to set up her own business, than jeopardise her family remaining on the farm. She is very happy with her younger sister carrying on. Even should the sister get married she suggests the family name could be retained by forming a company in the family name. Mary would very much like to have the farmhouse, but foresees that Jenny will probably end up living in it, if nothing else for practical reasons. She cannot imagine ever working or just living with her sister, but would still support her on the farm by leaving her potential share in it for the time being. She feels so strongly about keeping the farm in the family after visiting relatives abroad who showed her how much this particular farm still means even to them. For the future she foresees that her sister will have to get another job, but with Information Technology that should not be too much of a problem. If she herself has children (she is 23) she would very much like to bring them up in the country. She likes living in the city for the moment, but feels it is a privilege to experience a country lifestyle. Jenny was always interested in the farm and Mary was always interested in geology. Both were outdoors a lot, rode their horses and ponies and helped on the farm during holidays. “I wanted to. It was a good laugh and it was a bit of pocket money as well, you know.” Mary does not have any regrets about her upbringing and state school education. However, she thinks she should have been made to work a bit more on the farm, so she would now “have a lot more knowledge of what was going on”. Still she maintains, that “I suppose we are lucky, because

I have never been interested in agriculture as a profession...just never occurred to me to be a farmer.”

The parents are very aware of their role in having to dictate in the end what they will want to happen with their estate. Yes, they do want to discuss with the girls, but Mrs. Petrie points out that this is actually a “modern thought. In the olden days it was always the son even if he was the youngest.” She reserves judgment, especially in the light of any future partners the girls might choose. “Maybe that partner has a ‘good influence’,” whatever she might mean by that. She makes it clear that she knows that any inheriting family cannot ‘do’ anything, if a proper will is drawn up. They just have to accept.

In their childhood, the father took both girls out with him. Sometimes both of them would sit in the tractor with him. He enjoyed having them come and help. “They asked if they could help. It was a good thing to have them help.” But still he would not employ a girl on his arable farm, but give preference to a man. At the same time both parents think it is easier for a girl to farm nowadays, because there is not the same manual work involved.

Jenny has always been better at tractor work, says her sister. One of the neighbouring respondents mentions Jenny’s skills as something to be envious about. Jenny always enjoyed it and even got rather attached to a particular tractor. She cried when it had to be sold. I have only heard similar stories in connection with pet farm animals, both from boys and girls.

Husband and wife do not see themselves ever retiring totally. During a certain period following the initial break up of the old business, there was no work on the farm and the wife found it very difficult to have her husband still in the house after 7 a.m. Now they agist the neighbour’s cattle and he bought a forklift again, which means he is working outside again.

They cannot make any further moves before the old business is completely wound up. And then Mr. Petrie says Jenny can start with the bookwork straight away. “She can jolly well come home and do it once a month,” adds her mother. They will computerise it after the millennium.

Jenny feels much closer to her dad: “There is definitely a bond between dad and I, and mum and Mary. I am interested in quite the same things as he is. He curls and I curl sometimes.” This special bond allows her to think, that she will not be told she cannot farm because she is a girl:

Jenny: “No! No! that will not happen to us. If dad hasn’t thought I was going to make a go of it, he would have sold up last year, so ...”

U: "He gives you a chance."

Jenny: "Yes, which is incredible."

With this statement she shows her awareness of her unusual status as female successor. She does not take it for granted in any way. Asked if there had been a brother older or younger would things have been different? She does think, "girls would maybe show some interest, but are just...pushed away, if there is a brother. It is as if they are not taken seriously." Asked whether that would have happened to her, she said that maybe she would not have been as interested in agriculture.

U: "So is it because of your special bond with your father?"

Jenny: "Yeah! And because it is me or nobody as well I think. This is probably quite encouraging."

Neither she nor her family have any problems visualising Jenny giving orders to men. She has already managed the main part of a harvest together with the farm's two workers once on her own and thoroughly enjoyed it. She thinks she is quite bossy by nature and feels she needs to be. Her sister thinks she herself would have more problems on an oil rig as a geologist than Jenny with the farm workers or contractors. From personal experience with farm workers as against trades people, I tend to agree whole heartedly. Still there are certain jobs Jenny feels take too much physical strength for a girl to master, but then she says, "I just ask for help." The example she gives in that context does not quite prove her point. One of the workers was not aware of his own strength and always tightened the nuts on the tyres so tight that not even her dad could undo them. In a way this leads to the comparison other interviewees have drawn between a female farm worker and a farmer with a sore back. There seem to be many farmers with sore backs in my neighbourhood and nobody thinks any worse of them.

Discussion of the case sequences:

As in all case studies the question of generalisability is important. Schofield (1993) proposes to look for three scenarios (see 3.3). These have been analysed. The usual and normal is described for the Weston family. The exception, the 'what might be', is personified by the Hunters and the 'what can happen' by the Petries family. The ideal case could emerge from the Innes family, but again the outsiders' judgement of what is fair would be imposed.

The three families analysed above have been chosen to illustrate the overall topic and not purely to increase generalisability. All of them have sketched out the way the farm will be passed on. Nothing has been finalised as such. The parting children voice agreement

with their parents' intentions. Their socialisation has been successful. They still do not see the farm in terms of being a 'financial asset' but as a place to come home to (see 1.3). For the Hunter sisters to come home and help, the others to come home and feel "it is there for them for that purpose". This implies that the meaning parents and children give to the farm at this given point in time is based on the same assumptions and attitudes. They have managed to balance the farms' values between 'asset', 'production value' and 'intrinsic value' to everybody's satisfaction.

None of the parents envisage an abrupt or total retirement. Everything going well it will be gradual and partial. Their presence physically and financially will therefore act as a buffer between the state of ownership of themselves and their heirs (see Figure 6d). The heirs will use this phase to adjust their lives incorporating the parents' wishes and dictations. The law is entirely on the testators' side and the families know that. The receiving heirs have very little scope for challenging any parental decrees. They can appeal to the parents' sense of fairness, but because all have the same value system at present they would have no grounds for such a claim.

General attitudes to women in farming have changed during the parents' lifetime and continue to do so. Both generations agree that girls are just as capable of farming as boys, but that they are frequently not given the same chances to get involved and show interest as their brothers. Therefore, when it comes to the crunch, it is the boy who is given preference as the future sole farmer.

6.8 Practical implications

On several occasions during the interviews I was asked what they, the parents, should do to "get things right". I had no answer then and I do not have one now. Because I am not a judge. I can't be the judge. A particular family's plan for the future and subsequently the parents' particular will can prove a successful arrangement for a particular family at the time. But only that family can judge the outcome. However, from statements made by lawyers, respondents and neighbours, certain ground rules can be cited to help increase the chances for a successful planning for the next generation. Planning for succession is important to avoid problems in the future and needs careful thought and done in good time.

- Start planning early. The worst 'cases' according to the solicitors' interviewed, are the ones where the death of a family member, a parent

came as a total surprise.⁶⁷ Looking at the grandfathers, Mr. Ballantyne had planned, Mr. Stone had overseen the split up and Mr. Petrie had ‘sorted nothing out’ as his daughter-in-law says bitterly. It is the Petries who are fighting each other now.

- Be prepared to adapt your planning to changing financial and personal circumstances, e.g. revise your will at regular intervals. The solicitors recommend every five years, or as seen necessary, e.g. on marriage of an heir. Children might find other options than farming on or off the farm more conducive to their talents and life’s ambitions and that needs to be reflected in the will too.
- A special effort should be made in order to include all adult family members at the planning stage, so that both generations are allowed and able to recognise and weigh up the options and obligations. This is the place where the tripartite meanings of the farm need to be made explicit. Factors like financial obligations to creditors, moral obligations to the parents and development potential for farm property, but also the evaluation of changing the business structure to include other set-ups such as a company, partnership or tenancy. Solicitors, accountants and advisers could help to assess the consequences of scenarios such as intestate, compounded interest on lump sum payments in 15–20 years’ time, as well as pointing out the consequences of inheritance tax for the respective families. A multi-disciplinary approach is essential to help create a solution tailor-made to each family’s multifaceted scenario. Flow charts and spreadsheets could be designed to illustrate what the individual family’s very own situation could look like in years to come, using different interest rates, prices for inputs and outputs or land values. I had very positive experiences with computer spreadsheets as extension aids in the context of controversial stocking rates versus environmental concerns. Once farmers physically put their own data and expectations for future developments into a computer program, they were far more prepared to think and discuss alternatives than if they had just been ‘told’ by an adviser ‘what would happen, if...’

⁶⁷ Seminars were organised by the Scottish Agriculture College dealing with inheritance law, will making, capital gains and inheritance taxes, life insurance and pension provision. (See advertisement in the *Scottish Farmer* 3/2/01 inviting people to attend evening seminars in a local pub.) This could sow the seeds for future action but is probably too public a place for farmers to discuss their personal situation in the necessary detail.

Most importantly the family has to agree and decide on a scenario that feels right for them at the time. The measure for the 'right decision' is the contentment of all involved. If a family can agree on a set of values, intrinsic **and** monetary as well as a time schedule for pay-outs, there will be no problem, no surprises later on.

This might mean that the one who continues the family's farming tradition will get a lot more in actual assets' worth, but may have not much money to spend on every day living. Maybe the farming heir 20 working years later becomes the sole owner of 1,000 acres prime land or as it may be 1,000 acres steep hill country and an overdraft of half a million. If the parting heirs have been brought up to accept that, they have to be grateful for a good education or an early pay-out, a financial contribution to, e.g. buy a house or a business. Then it is not my role or the role of others to call it unjust. The question is are the siblings still speaking to each other? Have the parents had a contented retirement? Only then can the parents say they have done 'the right thing' by all. And what turns out 'right' for one heir might be very bad for another. The socio-economic framework not the parents will probably determine the overall financial outcome for the people involved (see Figure 6e).

6.9 The overall picture

Succession in farm families is as complex as it is important. Gendered patterns and expectations overshadow the whole process and result in a straight forward path for a boy and constant uncertainty for a girl. The parameters are set by the financial situation of the family.

The successor to the farm family business gets established tentatively very early. After that the interest demonstrated by him/her gets observed and evaluated by the father and sometimes the mother.

This chapter examines the way farm families pass their estate on from one generation to the next. Legal and fiscal rules and regulations are crucial for the framework of this complex process. However, the final decision on who gets what and how and when, is ruled by the parents' wishes and expectations. They judge 'genuine interest' in farming, they groom a potential successor from an early age and they convey their attitudes to their heirs by living them in front of them every day.

Boys have a head start. They are expected to be interested in farming. Girls have to show more interest for the same result. Handing your life's work over to a woman could be seen as devaluing it in the same vein that farm tasks lost or gained status once women were

involved or replaced. The father might be reluctant to make room for a girl. Still, the girl has no role model even if he does involve her.

This socialisation is from the parents' point of view successful, if it makes the heirs accept whatever comes their way. This can be very little financially for a parting heir, but it may be given at a time when it meant a lot. Any further claims are then often tacitly made unacceptable. Legally heirs have very little scope for challenging a will or confronting the parents' decision of assigning the farm to one, mostly male heir. The commitment to the farm is high.

Retirement, whether gradual, partial or total, can be seen as a period of adjustment, where the parents withdraw but are still in a position to influence what is happening on the farm and push for a certain meaning of the farm to be accepted by the heirs. The timing of when and what items handed over also plays a role in the transition between the generations. The whole family needs to see if and how the heirs can afford the parents' retirement as they planned it or whether it is too big a financial or emotional burden on the heirs.

Conflict arises if 'things have not been sorted out' as one of the respondents said, meaning if family members do not know and cannot accept where they stand regarding the estate and their own input into it. They see the plaited cord symbolising the tripartite meaning of the farm under a different light, which means there is conflict.

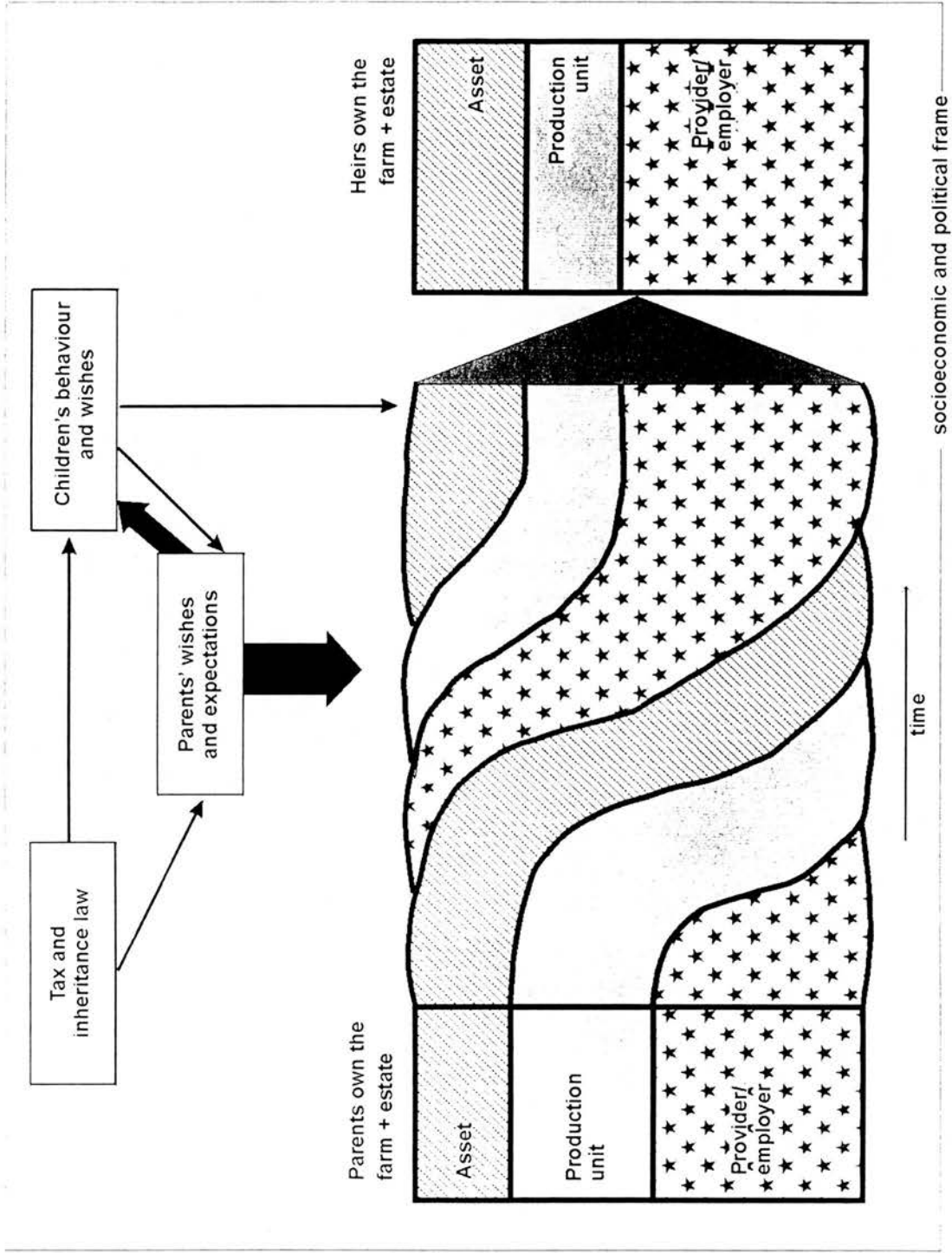


Figure 6e: The overall process.

The chapter closes with case study sequences of three out of the ten families. The Stones, a large family owned company; the Petries an all-girl family going through a painful business split from the uncle and with one of the daughters as the successor; and the Hunters, with two very farm competent adult daughters, but it is the ten year old son, who is pencilled in as the successor.

Ward and Lowe (1994) think there is a strong relationship between the economic viability of the farm and the commitment to succession. Potter and Lobley (1996) found that the successors' willingness to come into the business was very closely related to the income earning potential of the farms and the opportunities for off-farm employment. Fasting (1996) found that for German farmers even the drastic changes of the CAP did not affect the succession plans of the families. I would argue that the choice is a matter of time and degree. As the Weston's son says, if he had to choose his subjects at college now he would not rely solely on coming home to farm, but would study something which could be useful as an alternative. Mr. Hunter is now putting more emphasis on his ten year old son's education, something he did not see as so important before. Since these interviews, the outlook for farming has worsened considerably (see also 2.3).

Assuming that there is no real best point in time for the family's decision on succession, however there is a point in time when the underlying socialisation has influenced the business, and therefore the successors, to the point that it becomes very difficult to have a change of mind. The extra land has been bought, the shed built, the new scheme implemented, an 'old' scheme abolished, all of them long term and all of them relying on family resources. Can children see themselves living 'this' life under the conditions they have observed and, at least partially, internalised? Can they imagine an alternative? Would that be acceptable to themselves and their parents? Haan (1994) argues in his conclusions that it is specific family and kinship values that play a key role in succession and inheritance, and not only the selective force of the market. These values, this cultural capital as he calls it, is however not 'always readily available when it is functional for economic purposes' (*ibid.*, p. 300). This means that, if at a certain point in time when the family members' views of the 'plait' differ, the economics of the situation may demand a decision giving rise to potential if not real conflict.

Investments for the future have to be backed with a long term perspective. Once they are made there is very little leeway for a change of direction.

CHAPTER 7

Summary and Conclusions

*I am not afraid of the 'Last Judgement',
I am afraid of my grandchildren.
Whosoever survives their judgement
Need fear nothing more. (G.C. Lichtenberg (1742-1799) , Author's translation)*

Lichtenberg's statement reflects much of this project. In only a few lines he summarizes my motivation to undertake this work, he acknowledges the general unease of successive generations over the issue of how to do the right thing by all, and implicitly asks how a positive outcome can be assured. Most importantly, however, he puts responsibility for decision making back onto the family—and that is where it belongs. However, a central aspect of my work which Lichtenberg's remark does not address is that of gender.

The process of inheritance and succession in a farm family business is multi-faceted. It does not stand alone, but is increasingly drawn into a globalized economy, with fluctuating social and political agendas. Furthermore, it is constantly repeating, encompassing not only cycles for plants, animals and the business itself, but also for each family member, and it is within this complex global environment that the individual grows, is socialized into farm family business and learns about the farm every day.

Lave and Wenger's (1993) concept of *Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (see 4.3) ¹ offers insights into how this learning happens, showing how the proverbial farmhouse kitchen table becomes the focal point for primary education (see Chapter 4 Education and Social Life), and how that education is further enhanced by parents taking their children out to work with them on the farm, initially so that the children can be supervised, but then to have them help. All the while, even though Lichtenberg does not mention it, gender is an issue that is 'there' in the background. Parents, or other role models, farm routines and social contacts are all gendered, and everyday life on the farm follows distinctly gendered patterns. Bourdieu's (1984) concept of

'habitus' as a system of personal dispositions (see also Fig. 4 under 4.6) is used to illustrate the lives of farming people. As the habitus of a person can only be expressed via the body it needs to be either male or female. It structures and is structured by gendered influences.

The consequence of this simple fact is that the resulting individual differences amongst family members are not randomly distributed, but follow distinctly gendered patterns. Role models as well as access to LPP are gendered. A boy, for instance, would be expected, and invited, to come and sit on a new tractor whereas a girl would have to ask. The father will usually only make room for a male successor, because he himself is a man, and though some girls manage to stay involved, they need to be very determined and have supportive fathers and understanding mothers. A son wanting to choose a non-farming career will have to come to terms with the gap he leaves on the farm unless there is a brother to fill it, while a female successor, on the other hand, will have to find her own way of doing things (see Fig 6a–c). The balancing act between being a woman, a farmer, a spouse and a mother usually has no readily available role model.

Using Bourdieu's (1984) concept of 'habitus', Chapter 4 shows how these gendered influences are part of a person's education on and off the farm as well as in their social lives. There are two factors which need special mention: private education, and learning to accept the 'needs' of the farm. Private education, and to an extent social class, influence lifestyle choices and expectations and, in some cases, private schooling, with its associated non-rural peer pressure and time constraints, is perceived as turning children away from farming. Similarly, family farming also means being prepared to learn to accept the demands and limitations of working with 'nature' (see 4.3.2). Weather and market dependencies, long hours and boring routines all clash with expectations for a life in line with the increased emphasis on leisure pursuits of the rest of Western society. Many farm families on the continent as well as in the UK and Ireland, have no offspring prepared to take on this way of life for themselves. For these families, education can be seen as a way to escape farming. Those who want to stay do so with great enthusiasm, but also with concerns about the uncertain future of rural life. This enthusiasm is expressed very early in the child's habitus and thus in their involvement on the farm. The form this expression takes, whether on the farm, in the home, the office or the yard, is discussed in Chapter 5 where a description is given of what tasks the children will actually observe and what input they themselves can or want to give (see also Figure 6a–c).

For the sake of simplicity, the tasks can be roughly divided into farm business, office and family tasks. As in any family concern there are overlaps, however, and the allocation of these

tasks and all other farm-family decision making is not a clear cut process. Tasks are allocated according to availability, expertise and personal preference. The requirements of the farm dictate the 'job' and whoever is available, and whoever can and does not mind doing a particular job, will get it. That may involve children opening gates, teenagers driving tractors in the field, wives going for errands or attending to the grain dryer or to young stock. The practical involvement 'happens' in the sense of LPP. If a child is 'there', needed and ready to help, s/he will be asked to 'come' regardless of gender. If there are two children, the 'easier', more obvious one, will be taken along—the one who is more useful and needs less 'telling'. The overall aim is the smooth running of the farming operation and whoever fits that bill will be welcome. Out of 'help' grows expertise, routine, and finally a place on the farm. The first step to succession has then been taken.

However, there is a certain preference for farming with animals. It became clear during the investigation that female family members show more involvement in the farm if there is livestock. Wiebe (1995) notes that in Canada, women involved with stock tend to work more hours and to distribute those hours more evenly throughout the year, than do the women on arable farms. Likewise, in Scotland there seem to be more girls helping on stock and mixed farms than on purely arable farms, fact, that is also reflected in the higher proportion of female members in the Young Farmers clubs in livestock areas.

How does this apparent preference for women to work with livestock develop? One possibility is that, because working with animals is often split into small units of labour, it can be fitted in next to other commitments such as the running of the home. Some basic stock routines need little skill and are not dangerous. In mixed gender families, it is usually the boy who gets called away 'to help the men', perhaps with machinery tasks, while the girl is left to do the stock routines. She might enjoy being 'in charge' now or she might resent being tied to a chore.

Overall stock management rewards expert handling but there is scope for people with all levels of commitment and expertise to be involved as long as the overall organization of the farm business can accommodate it. Some farmers claim that women are more successful with stock, especially young stock, than their male counterparts. 'They care more, are more prepared to give a weak animal a chance' are frequent comments. This is not the place to discuss whether or not women are more caring than men, but the fact remains that where there is more stock in an area or on a farm, girls are more likely to be involved. Maybe the statement of one of the respondents: 'Well, you just can't love a field of barley' cannot be imagined to come from a man; as it was it

came from a woman. My seven year old daughter, who is growing up on a purely arable farm, makes similar comments.

The children are now educated, growing up fast and plans need to be put into place for their adult lives as well as for the parents' retirement (Chapter 6). These plans have been in the making for a long time. Farming by its nature, by dealing with things 'natural' has a very long planning horizon that runs next to one involving everyday decisions that need to be made. Buildings, blood-lines, crop rotations, and diseases, let alone financial decisions based on wrong assumptions, all leave their mark on future years. Similarly, the birth of children and their sex has an instant effect on the long term decision making process.

Decisions are over-shadowed by the way family members experience their farm. They look at it under three aspects: asset, production unit and livelihood/employer (see Figure 1b). Their perceptions change all the time. This is symbolized by the plaited cord that turns in time and thus gives prevalence to different meanings of the farm to different family members at different times and with differing emphasis. These tripartite meanings of the farm become most obvious when families deal with issues of succession and inheritance (see Fig 6e)

The parent calving the best cow will see the farm under a different light from the child being offered a high price for a field, or the one having to choose between either selling the whole farm or selling yet another cottage to finance next year's crop while hoping that a precarious financial situation will improve. Selling the whole farm might ultimately mean a higher standard of living for the family than ever would have been possible on the farm earnings, provided they can find suitable off-farm employment or can convince themselves to live off the proceeds of the sale. In making various choices, the respective meanings of the farm, as shown in the cord, are important. Because parents can exert the greatest influence on the decision process, conflicts will arise if their interpretations of the cord are not the same as their children's at a time of decision making. True, parents need to have willing, and hopefully capable, successors, but the heirs' wishes and expectations have only limited clout, symbolized by the different-sized arrows in Figure 6e. Both generations have to submit to legal and fiscal rules and regulations, but it is their respective habitus that will guide decisions about their future lives.

As fewer farm children remain on the farm, changes in succession between farming generations have a wide bearing on how other areas of agrarian society should be understood. Not only do farm workers have to find alternative employment, but so do many farm children. By emphasising this point, I do not wish to dictate a particular train of thought; rather I am aiming to

emphasising this point, I do not wish to dictate a particular train of thought; rather I am aiming to make this complex process of succession and inheritance more transparent, more manageable for researchers and farmers alike. If this thesis reassures people who are experiencing changes and encourages others to look for such changes, then it will have achieved its aim.

There are similarities with other family businesses. All have to strive for the best possible balance between work and life in close proximity.

For example:

- (a) The fishing industry has to deal with nature and its seasonal fluctuations, but not with the problem of looking after stock and crops since fishermen and women (but not fish ‘farmers’) are hunter and gatherers.
- (b) Small catering businesses such as bakeries and restaurants often have scope to involve their children and may also live in the same building as the business. They face seasonal fluctuations such as tourism and Christmas, but they have more immediate feedback for their efforts than do farmers who must wait until their crop is sold, or the progeny of a particular bloodline has been slaughtered, before they know how lucrative their efforts have been. The difference between the two business can also be seen in physical terms when one compares a second sitting in a restaurant or an extra shift in a bakery with feeding a hillside flock of sheep in a winter storm.
- (c) An increasing number of people work from home. Their work overflows into other domains of the family in a similar fashion to farm book keeping and phone calls. However, most home businesses are not as weather dependent as farming, have a shorter feedback period and shorter planning horizon, and need less capital. On the other hand, they do not reward an understanding of ‘nature’ in the same way that farming does.

The findings of this research make it possible to draw up a picture that shows how the habitus of members of farming families varies by gender, and to use this picture in a way that explains why daughters tend neither to inherit farms nor are unhappy about it.

Throughout this thesis I have argued that intergenerational change on farms needs to be appreciated as a complex whole that evolves over time. The previous chapters demonstrate how a

signs of change; but the changes are subtle. The whole essence of the analysis is to suggest that there must be many more such changes actually happening than appear on the surface. The impetus for change, especially in gender roles, is coming from all angles of society.

The investigation looked at ten families in the south-east of Scotland from the perspective of an insider—namely me. I am an insider in the sense that I have not only lived in the area for the past 12 years (see also 1.2), but have known local families for more than 20 years. The families form part of a wider, rural, society. This socio-economic context needs to be kept in mind when looking at the life choices of each generation and when examining questions such as

- What lifestyle can the families afford and when?
- What work patterns dictate their daily existences?
- What external factors, such as new rules and regulations or different political agendas, can enforce changes in the future of the family?

In addition, the labour market in general and the geographical location are further factors which cannot be ignored since what happens in each generation depends on what can *actually* happen, given these local, national and global constraints.

Chapter 2 gives a thumbnail sketch of the rural scene. Farming families may be rich in capital, but have relatively little cash to spend, let alone to share out amongst the children on succession. Nowadays it is very difficult for a family to set up more than one of its children in farming. The others have to go and find work elsewhere. This insight led to an investigation of the rural labour market in the south-east of Scotland as well as the related migration patterns. Despite the worsening financial climate all ten farms could, until comparatively recently, still afford a lifestyle roughly in keeping with that of their professional commuting neighbours. Hopefully the financial climate will soon improve, leading to greater returns for the families. For expenses such as private education or certain leisure pursuits, extra efforts needed to be made. For example, mothers' off-farm earnings were used sometimes used to pay for school fees.

However, the wife in a farming family is still, and has long been, responsible for the organization of the household, regardless of her other commitments on or off the farm or the paid help she might have in house and garden. According to the regional president of the 'Young Farmers', this situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

Again this type of task allocation is not really 'decided'; rather, it more or less 'happens'. The management of the household is just another task that needs to be done. For example, on one of the farms the farmer's wife came from a non-farming background onto a fully functioning

of the farms the farmer's wife came from a non-farming background onto a fully functioning farm, employing a number of staff. The only domain available to her was the newly created household. She did try to 'help' outside initially, but was soon sent back to the house, all in order to save time and energy (her husband's), which would have been needed to train her to do something which somebody else had done quite adequately up to the time of her arrival. Her presence upset an established team, and that cannot have been in the best interest of the farm. The smooth running of the farm comes first.

For the future, respondents as well as key informants foresaw an increasing necessity for farm families either to have sources of income in addition to that which is derived from the farm, or alternatively to be amongst those farms which have made the transition into the 'big' farming league.

Although the farms in the study are all classified as 'medium-sized', the first criterion used for selecting a farm for inclusion in the study is not based on acreage, turnover or profitability, but rather on the fact that it employed full-time, non-family labour. Even at the best of times there would have been no likelihood that either the turnover or profitability of a farm would have been revealed to me (the 'wife of a neighbour'), while the use of acreage as a selection criterion would have created problems in comparing stock farms with arable or mixed farms. The chosen option assumes that the farms were profitable enough to pay at least one worker's wages, as well as still being in a position to make the worker redundant should a further effort have to be made to save costs in order to keep the farm as a going business concern. The second criterion for selection is the presence in the farm family of at least one child between the ages of 17 and 22 years. This criterion is based on the hypothesis that these young people would have made some life choices, but would still not be fully established in their careers and personal relationships. The research proved this hypothesis to be correct.

It is very rewarding to have comments from all adult members of the family farms. These multiple perspectives (Ribbens *et al.*, 2001) result in a far more rounded picture than targeting either only the, usually male, farmer-owner-operator or the, usually female, homemaker-spouse-helper. Issues of gender are especially highlighted through subtle differences between the statements made by one group about another, and what was actually experienced by that other group. For example, fathers say all children had had the same chances to come and help, but the daughters say they never felt encouraged or expected to help.

Expectations usually create an initial interest, which results in an increasing involvement of a child with the tasks on the farm and in increased expertise, and culminates in succession and

inheritance. This chain is difficult to challenge, be it for the boy who wants to refuse to become the successor—if there are no other siblings—or a girl— if she has a brother (or cousin) who is interested. The parents' judgment of to whom to give what, and when, will reflect these many factors, including their gendered patterns.

For the farming families the inheritance process remains determined by the tripartite meaning of the farm, which finds an expression in the willingness of the family members either to move or to give up the farm or farming altogether. Half of the respondents in my sample are the first generation of their families to be on their farm, whereas other respondents represent the second or third generation of a farming family. This indicates a shift from the meaning of the farm as a home, a provider, and employer, and something that demands loyalty through the generations, to a meaning which give more emphasis to the farm as a production unit, which came at a certain price and which is now a good place to work and make a home on.

I think that, for certain more business-minded farmers, it has become more important to see the family continue in farming generally, rather than for them to remain on any one particular farm. Some German families I know about still go to great lengths to keep every bit of land in the family, even if none of the children is interested in farming and even if keeping the land means that the family must rent it out at low rates for long periods of time. Sales, if at all, only happen on the death of the parents and only if—applying the above findings—the parents had not been able to socialize their children into seeing the farm in the same way as they themselves did.

However, the parents in my sample have managed to do so. All four of the Petries accept that they want to do their utmost to keep the farm in the family; so the Eltons, the Stones and the Innes. Both Mr. Philips and Mr. Ball regret that they had not involved their daughters more in the farm and they have resigned themselves to the possibility either of a gradual retirement and a farm sale, or to handing the farm over to the nephew. The four remaining families who have moved to their present farm within the last 12 years all want their sons to continue the family tradition in farming, but do not rule out that they would be prepared to move 'if the right place came up'.

Looking again at the overall picture (Figure 6e), it becomes clear how important it is that all the children are socialized in a way that lets each of them see the farm, as symbolized by the ever turning plaited cord in the same light as the rest of the family at the same time and in relationship to his/her personal socio-economic opportunities. Only if a child's habitus allows that to happen is there no conflict and everybody is happy with their share.

Figure 6e is set in an overall socio-economic frame to symbolize that a farm cannot be seen as a isolated unit, but only as part of a wider economy and society. The farm in the personified sense dictates a necessity; the resources (financial, geographical and human) are limited; the outcome, yield or profit (despite vast technological progress) remains uncertain; and the goal is a cross between the family members' habitus, their wishes and expectations and the success of the business.

Retirement is usually used as a zone of transition, as a buffer, a time when 'things get sorted out' (see grey box in Figure 6d). When there is no heir to the farm, it is a time for phasing the business out: the new shed is not built, but the old one patched up; the machinery is not upgraded but a contractor brought in to do the work; whole farm enterprises are scaled down; cattle are sold to ease the workload; and the family seeks a new balance of the tripartite meaning to allow for retirement and the heirs' chosen future. If there are heirs, they have only limited choices. The designated successor can refuse, but that usually means disappointing the family, in particular the father. True, the parents are likely to say that the son, and it is still mainly the son, will not be pushed, but the son 'just knows' that dad would be disappointed (some say 'heart broken') if he were to refuse and no other heir were available. In some parts of Europe in a situation where there is only one possible heir, this sometimes allows the heir to dictate the terms for succession.

Some of the heirs leaving the farm might have received a share of the estate, however small, at a far earlier stage. At the time the initial share is given, the gift is not usually weighed up in terms of whether it represents a fair proportion of the overall estate. Instead it is evaluated on the basis of whether the child needed the gift at the time (perhaps for a flat, a business or for education) and can whether the farm could afford it. What the implications of accepting the gift might mean for the parting child are rarely spelled out, creating potential difficulties for the future. Although acceptance of an early gift is unlikely to have been explicitly stated as preventing a child from any future claims to the farm estate, it is usually implicit that by accepting this payment, they have less, if any, say later on. Just when that 'later on' will be, is uncertain, but at the very latest it will be when the farm owner dies and their will comes into force. Legally, there is little scope for disputing the will (see 6.1.1). Most families rally together in order to minimize inheritance tax payments. Especially for an heir who intends leaving the farm, a choice might have to be made between leaving the money in what would have been, until then, an inheritance-tax exempt farm—a choice which would entail leaving money to the farming sibling—or alternatively, claiming a bigger share but having to pay a large proportion of it to the

Inland Revenue. The moral dilemma is there. What should the heir do? Leave the farm, into which the parents have put so much of their working lifetime, in a way that meets with their approval? Or try to push for an equal pay-out and endanger the future success of the family business, as well as paying a lot to the ominous 'taxman'. Even with the best of intentions, exact calculations and mathematically even splits can only be attempted in retrospect and even then with great difficulties. What rate of interest, for example, should be applied and when, and for what effort?

What can the parents do and what should the heirs feel they want to accept? The answer lies within each family and there alone. One question was in the air at most interviews, sometimes verbalized, sometimes not; namely, how to find out what can be done. There seems to be a definite gap in the services available to farm families, a gap that requires a multidisciplinary approach. Families need to be able to tailor their plans for the future to their very own situation. For that, they need to know about the options that are available for structuring their business arrangements, not only for the present but also for the future, all the while taking into account the family's own business needs. These options need to be clearly understood, which sometimes causes problems given the legal and fiscal jargon involved. Advisers, solicitors, accountants, and neighbours can all voice opinions, and can help lay out consequences (see 6.8: Practical implications), but there is and will be no right or wrong decision. The respondents of both of the generations that were interviewed think that 'things should be sorted out'—meaning that it should be made clear who will get what, and when. It means that the parents are aware that at some point they will have to dictate what they want to happen, but more importantly, the succeeding generation is aware the heirs will and can accept that decision. In that respect, in particular it is rewarding to have answers from all family members to the same issues. If all see the farm in the same light at the same time there will be no conflict. Their socialisation into their roles accommodates their habitus with its definite aspect of gender.

Out of discussions with respondents and my neighbours, the answer to the question of who it is that appears to have made a smooth succession, has only one reply; a reply that comes slowly and thoughtfully, but rather definitely. It is:

“Apart from a few exceptions, the ones where there is only one son in the family.”

In all other cases where there seem to be no obvious choices being made it is generally felt that everybody, however great or small their involvement with the farm, is kept in limbo with the business suffering as a consequence. Any daughters who might have been asked to keep their share in the business for the time being can be equally affected by their difficult status. Where the

parents have set sons up in their own units, the viability of those units is typically uncertain. In situations where one brother works under the other, there are often thought to be hidden tensions, ready to explode once the father dies. However, nobody talks about the sisters, what they want and what they actually receive from the estate. Their voices are usually not heard, a fact the lawyers confirm.

Comparisons of respondents between contemporary and previous generations suggests that parents are now more concerned about the acceptance of the allocated shares by all their children than their own parents were. Gendered roles seem to be more flexible and are more likely to be questioned. Parents no longer take it for granted that a girl will either not want to be involved or is incapable of farming herself. Nonetheless, they still think it is an awful lot easier for all involved if she stands back and leaves the brother to get on with it. Even in all-girl families, the first thought of the parents is still towards a potential farming spouse being in charge of the farm, rather than their own daughter. But things are changing, albeit slowly.

As the traditional image of the Scottish farmer fades, there is more room for new scenarios, including women farmers. However, at the same time, the industry itself is contracting. More farmers than ever are being forced to sell up. Their farms are bought by expanding neighbours or city commuters—and the land is then rented out to the neighbours. The number of ‘hobby farmers’ or ‘lifestyle farmers’ (people who buy a farm and run it, but do not depend on income from the farm) is increasing. There is more scope than ever for new ways of doing things. Contracting, consulting, and temping, are all ways of being involved in farming, of contributing to the family farm business, or as an alternative to it. Potter and Lobley (1996) point out that ‘It may be, that this pattern of part-time succession becomes an important pathway into full-time farming for the next generation of farmers; it is a process which deserves further research’ (p. 304).

None of these new avenues are barred to women in the same way as inheriting the family farm has been. Nobody asks why the boy got the farm and the girl not, but not *vice versa*. This still has not changed.

If a woman chooses to marry ‘onto’ a farm, she will continue working either in her own career or bring her skills into the farm. The conflict which will arise when children are born is the same as for other working couples. But gendered expectations have changed in that respect in farming as well. It is no longer so frequently taken for granted that the wife will stay at home and do all the family tasks.

The bequeathing parents will have to become familiar with these changes in society. A farmer is facing a higher load of administrative work and fewer practical tasks. Technology is becoming so complex that it frequently has to be taken care of by specialists. Routine work with livestock is still unavoidable, but more and more is out-sourced to countries, where, due to different climatic and political conditions, food can be produced at lower prices than in Britain. Non-agricultural sources of income, as well as using Information Technology, offer very realistic alternatives to the traditional image of the farmer and the office worker. It is now possible to farm and do something else besides. This is mentioned by several of the younger generation. The working wives' income is, or will be, needed for the farm and with it, maintain a farming lifestyle. The step to the husband and wife both working off-farm and the farm being run by contractors or on a part-time basis, is no longer as great as it was. Whether the transition will actually occur will depend on the demands of career, farm and family and the priorities the couple chooses to set.

These changes affect the gendered character of farming drastically. The farmer giving orders to contractors does not have to be a man. The farmer finding the most profitable combination between stock, arable and leisure using the inherited property, does not have to be either a manual worker or to work full-time on the farm. If parents can see these changes as opportunities, rather than threats to their traditional lives, they are more likely to view succession for all their children on the basis of natural talent rather than gender. The first signs are showing.

Shaken up by the ramifications of the Foot and Mouth crisis, other earlier export set backs as well as political and environmental regulations, it is conceivable that agriculture will have to be redefined within British society. We have lived through centuries of deciding farm succession mostly on the grounds of tradition rather than suitability or aptitude. Maybe now is the time to draw on and reward all the farm families' resources and that means counting in the daughters.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Guide

PARENTS:

This research deals with agriculture as a career for the next generation. I am particularly interested how you judge the potential for your own children in farming in Scotland. Hopefully at a later stage I will compare this to other countries.

Your interview will be strictly confidential. Any information from it will only be used anonymously or in summary statements. If you like I can send you a summary of the report. Please feel free to ask me at the end of the interview, if you would like one.

First I would like to ask you about your attitudes to farming in general and then this farm in particular, then talk about your plans for your children's future.

Farming:

- What do you think will change in farming over the next 10–20 years?
- Do you see computer technology or the internet have any impact?
- What about organic farming?
- Please describe this farm.
- How many people are working on it (full time, part time, family members' involvement and financial awareness?)
- What does your input into the farm consist of?
- Who has or will have a say in major decisions such as property deals?
- What do you think will happen to this farm?
- What changes would you personally like to see happen on this farm? Ideally?
- How satisfied are you with your standard of living?

Family:

- Please describe your parents' farm or occupation.
- Your most vivid childhood memory?
- How old were you when it was decided what would happen to your parents' farm? Were there any discussions about it?
- How much older or younger are your brothers and sisters? What are they doing now?
- Is that what they wanted to do?
- What about yourself, are you doing what you wanted to do when you were a teenager?
- Please describe briefly your education and work history?

- What did you want to do differently in the in the upbringing of your own children? Time with them?
- Have you any definite ideas what you would like your children to do?
- Can you imagine any of them farming in their own right?
- Whom do they socialize with? Does a farming background of future partner matter? Do you encourage them to go to the Young Farmers?
- If there are conflicts within the family, what are they generally about?
- Who does the housework, helps with it? Who can cook?

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following general statements and explain.

1. Boys are more likely than girls to show interest in the farm
2. It is made easier for a boy to get involved in the farm than for a girl.
3. When there is a boy a girl will not stand a chance to take over the farm later.
4. Boys are usually more capable farmers than girls.

Vignettes :

- (a) Twin children on a farm; one leaves for eight years the other one keeps farming; the leaver wants to come back and the parents are ready to retire. What should the parents do?¹
- (b) On a medium farm three daughters have left, the fourth child is working it. Parents want to retire and the sisters want money as well. To settle this, is the farm more likely to be sold if the young farmer is a boy or a girl?
 - What advice are you giving your daughter for her later life?
 - And your son?

What you have been sharing with me has been very interesting and will help me a lot in my research. Do you know any other families with children of a similar age to yours whom you think I could talk to?

¹ The Innes family gave me a real life example of another vignette (b in the Appendix I) which I used, when the respondents did seem rather detached from the topic, as in the case of the two Philips girls and Mrs Urquhart. In all other cases I did not think this was necessary.

SONS AND DAUGHTERS

First I would like to ask you about your attitudes to farming in general and then this farm in particular, then talk about your plans for your own future and maybe your brothers and sisters.

Farming:

- Please describe this farm.
- How many people are working it (full time, part time, casual, family members' involvement and financial awareness)? Does the farm depend on your help?
- What do you think will change in farming over the next 10–20 years?
- What role do you see computers and the internet play for the farming industry? Organic farming?
- What do you think will happen to this farm?
- How satisfied are you with that?
- What changes would you personally like to see happen on this farm?
- Who has or would have a say in big decisions such as property deals?
- How satisfied are you with your standard of living, way of life?
- How much older or younger are your brothers and sisters?
- What are they doing now? Does that correspond to what they wanted to do when they were teenagers?
- At what point were you offered different things to your brothers/sisters?
- What qualifications have you got up to now? Are you aiming at? Employment history?
- Who advised you, set an example for you?
- How do you see your future? Is that different from what your parents want?
- What is your most vivid memory of your childhood?
- If there were any conflicts in your family what were they about?
- Who does the housework, helps with it? Who can cook?
- Would you have done things differently in your parents' shoes? Bring children up differently?
- Who do you socialize with? Would it matter to you whether your future partner has an agricultural background /interest? Do you go to the 'Young Farmers'?
- [When was or will the future of this farm be decided upon?]
- Could you imagine farming in your own right? If yes, under what hypothetical conditions?

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following general statements and explain.

1. Boys are more likely than girls to show interest in the farm.
2. It is made easier for a boy to get involved in the farm than for a girl.

3. When there is a boy a girl will not stand a chance to take over the farm later.
4. Boys are usually more capable farmers than girls

Vignettes:

- (a) Twin children on a farm; one leaves for eight years the other one keeps farming; the leaver wants to come back and the parents are ready to retire. What should the parents do?²
- (b) On a medium farm three daughters have left the fourth child is working it. Parents want to retire and the sisters want money as well. To settle this, is the farm more likely to be sold if the young farmer is a boy or a girl?
 - What advice would you give a farmer's son who is two-three years younger than you?
 - And a farmer's daughter?

What you have been sharing with me has been very interesting and will help me a lot in my research. Do you know any other families with children of a similar age to yours whom you think I could talk to?

² The Innes family gave me a real life example of another vignette (b in the Appendix I) which I used, when the respondents did seem rather detached from the topic, as in the case of the two Philips girls and Mrs Urquhart. In all other cases I did not think this was necessary.

APPENDIX II

Profile of the families in the project

These profiles were drawn up to help the reader to identify individual respondents within the thesis. However, in order to preserve their anonymity the farms' descriptions have been kept to a minimum.

1. The Weston Family

Mr. Weston is the middle son of three, has a sister who was not included in the farming set up under his father and is a full brother to Mr. Urquhart (4). His wife comes from a farming family, but has never had any involvement then or now. She is a trained teacher, but has not taught since her marriage and considers herself busy enough as a homemaker. They have two children both went to private schools. The daughter is 23 and training to be a CA, after completing her university degree very successfully and travelling extensively. The son Jack is 21, has finished college, and is now back on the farm working with his dad.

They came to this farm 11 years ago, when they split from the brother. The farm is well laid out and purely arable. Father and son are both aware of the need to grow or cooperate in the future to survive.

2. The Stone Family

They have four children, two boys Walter, aged 21 and 15 and two girls, 23 and Tina, aged 19 and live in a large house. Both boys want to farm, the eldest one is already working there now. The eldest daughter is working as a nurse in England; the second daughter failed to be accepted to do veterinary science and is now training to become a PE teacher. All children attended fee-paying schools. The farm is still one of the largest one for the area and mainly arable. Mr. Stone was an only son, but his sisters were each awarded one other farm, which at some point meant losing a substantial part of this farm to one of them. Mrs. Stone is not from a farm herself and has no input in it, however both parents claim, that they discuss any major moves, such as recently making most of their staff redundant and simplifying the farming operation. All family members are shareholders in the family business; some do not know this.

3. The Innes Family

The lifestyle of the Innes family is in stark contrast to 2. None of the children went to private schools. The mother is very actively involved in the cattle side of this mixed farm. She is a partner in the business. The eldest daughter, Lauren is very interested in farming and has hopes to be allowed to come back and farm the stock side of the enterprise while her five-year younger brother does the arable side. The middle daughter, Gina does not like farm-work and has chosen to become a teacher. The farm has been expanding over recent years and the business seems to be able to cope with these extra obligations financially as well as with the additional work load.

4. The Urquhart Family

Mr. Urquhart is Mr. Weston's younger brother. When they sold their father's farm, he bought his present farm. Subsequently, because of public land requirements, he was able to sell some of it and buy a second farm nearby. If need be, each of the two boys Donald, 21 and William, 19, who are both at college, no sister, could have their own farm and house, but considering the scale needed in farming today they would have to cooperate somehow. Each on his own would be struggling. Mrs. Urquhart does not come from a farm. She was a secretary before her marriage. She is not involved other than a little typing if needed. William did not show any interest in the farm, but concentrated on his sport, which he now regrets. Still, he decided to study agriculture at College.

5. The Hunter Family

They have recently bought their present sheep farm, after being tenants for 25 years on a big hill estate in the vicinity. The mother is now more involved than ever and runs one of the flocks of sheep. Before, she was catering for up to 10 for lunch. Mrs. Hunter is an exceptional woman in several respects. She has a university degree, and is very vivacious and eloquent. She nearly died of a sudden illness last year which would have emphasised her strong opinions.

Both girls Nora, aged 21 and Janet, aged 19, have been to university and are very capable farm workers as well as having no problems getting offers for employment in farm management offices. The son is 10 and already a very talented stock person. The Hunters farm together with the father's brother, who does not live on the farm. He has a young son as well. The children go to local schools.

6. The Philips Family

They have recently paid one brother out of the business and moved closer to the village into rented accommodation near the farm Mr. Philips is in charge of now. In contrast to the former farm, this one's emphasis lies on the arable side, with some store cattle. Mr. Philips is enjoying the challenge of managing a different enterprise and does not seem to mind having his 70-year-old uncle being in the yard before him in the morning. None of the daughters, who all have been to private schools, show any interest, despite having to help on the other farm with the young stock. The mother is a nurse and not from a farm.

7. The Ballantyne Family

Mr. Ballantyne has recently simplified his farm by selling his suckler herd of cattle and now has a purely arable farm. Mrs. Ballantyne is a committed PE teacher and not from a farming background. She has always worked part time. The children were educated privately. Mr. Ballantyne has managed to pay his younger brother and his sister out on straight thirds on the land and is very proud of this. All three girls have gone or are still going to university, but Mrs. Ballantyne has a feeling that privately educated children lack direction when they finish school. The middle daughter, Sandra, aged 21, seems the only one who could be imagined to take on the farm if she wanted to, but there is little hope she will. She would have to pay her sisters out and that would be difficult.

8. The Petrie Family

The family is in the process to separate their business from the husband's brother. Finances are unsettled, there is no machinery and the arable farm is of a size which makes it very likely

that whoever is going to farm it, will need another source of income. The two girls Mary, aged 23, and Jenny, aged 20, have always helped outside. The younger one has decided to take over and her father is backing her. The older one, who has always been interested in geology rather than in farming, is keen for the farm to stay in the family, but she would like to have the house. The mother is from a smaller farm and not very involved. The parents are at a loss about what to do, as the legal battle with the brother is not yet settled and very distressing.

9. The Thompson Family

The Thompson family has moved to this area following Mr. Thompson's brother, but are farming separately from him. They missed their cattle so much that they have just finished adapting a shed to buy in store cattle in the future. The son Bert, aged 21, has finished college and started to work full time with his dad. The mother trained as a teacher. She comes from a family of doctors. She feels she cannot go out to work because her husband resents her not being present at all times, even she does not work outside. The daughter Cindy, aged 20 is training to be a teacher. She helped for several summers with tractor work, but feels she has never had any encouragement to become more involved in the farm.

10. The Elrick Family

The Elrick family run a good size stock farm in the foothills. They have bred several very pricey rams. Recently they rented another stock farm one hour's drive away, which will be for probably the younger of the two boys when he will be made a partner at the age of 18. George, aged 20 was made a partner when he turned 18. He got his grandmother's share.

The children went to a local school, but their sister Joanna, aged 19, had one year at a private school, which the parents feel they maybe should have done earlier. She wants to be a nursery teacher. She is not a partner. The mother works outside and inside a great deal. She comes from a farm and is a partner.

Profiles of the key informants interviewed directly for the project.

Adviser

Barclay is a man in his late fifties, married with two grown up children. He has been a College adviser for a long time, but would actually have preferred to farm himself. He is highly respected in this his area and beyond and is considered to be committed to farmers. His knowledge of farming is all round, which is not very common any longer. He is supervising several advisers and has insight into approximately 250 farm businesses at a deep level and a further 500 on a more casual basis.

Chemical Representative (Rep.)

Jake has been a chemical representative, working for the same company for 15 years. I have known him for ten. He is in his late thirties, very outspoken and direct. I think he probably also is quite observant and knows fairly early if something is wrong with one of his clients, if something has been bought or sold or whatever. He seems to make a point to get to know the whole family. He was very cooperative and talked amazingly freely after I assured him of the confidentiality. He is married and lives in the Borders. He visits personally approximately 50 farms and knows another 200 rather well.

Grain merchant

Robert is a well dressed man in his late thirties, who is not the hard line businessman, he would like to be and works for a small company in the area. Married with children his wife works and their two children go to a fee-paying school. They live in the city and both their children go to private schools. He himself is one of three sons of a vet and a female farmer. His brothers now work the farm, but he received an equal share out of it when he left. Together with his colleagues in the office he covers approx. 300 farmers and has good knowledge of the farming community in the research area as well as where he grew up.

Young Farmers' Secretary for East Lothian

Vicky, aged 23, is the eldest of four children on an good size arable farm in the foothills. One of the brothers is more academic than the other and is studying engineering at university, the younger one, 18, is very interested in the farm. Her younger sister is still at school. Despite the parents attending fee paying schools themselves, their children went locally. The mother is from a well known farming family in the area and has been working full time off the farm for quite some time.

Young Farmers' President for the Borders

Gillian is in her late twenties and has one younger brother who works on the farm and a younger sister at college doing horse management. She is a trained agronomist, but is now working for a feed-merchant in a near by town and living at home. They are tenants on a mixed farm with a large well known piggery. She seems very enthusiastic about the Young Farmers and has detailed knowledge of all the clubs in the Borders as well as quite a few in other regions.